The Open University

Adaptations to major curriculum change: the case of Further Education lecturers

Thesis

oro.open.ac.uk

Adaptations to Major Curriculum Change:

the Case of Further Education Lecturers

SANDRA MARIA SIEMINSKI

PhD

2010

Sandra Maria Sieminski B.Sc Hons Sociology, MA Government and Politics, PGCE.

PI: M7094490,

Discipline: Education

Abstract

In the late 1980s and 1990s, like other sections of the UK education system, Further Education (FE) was subjected to major institutional change. Furthermore, there were significant government interventions in the curriculum of FE colleges: the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and subsequently of the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE). The introduction of GNVQs in the early 1990s involved a substantial change in the working practices of FE lecturers. Not only was there modification to the content to be taught but the roles of lecturer and student were transformed. In 2000, GNVQ was replaced by AVCE. This too involved considerable modification in the work of FE lecturers, in some respects a shift back towards the situation prior to the introduction of GNVQ, but also introducing new elements.

These changes are the focus of this thesis. The fundamental character of the switch to GNVQ, and the subsequent move away from it, provide a distinctive context for exploring lecturers' responses and adaptations to dramatic and rapid change. Understanding these is important if we are to grasp the factors shaping the implementation of curricular policies, and their effects. This case study attempts to deepen understanding of the significant factors which influence policy implementation by investigating how recent curricular reforms in FE came about, and how lecturers responded to them, on the basis of data from documents and interviews.

The conclusion reached is that how a policy gets implemented will reflect previously prevailing working practices, along with practitioners' views about the sort of education they are engaged in, about their central professional task, and about how it ought to be carried out; views which will be shaped by different career trajectories. These factors determine attitudes both towards the goals of any new policy and towards the operational procedures it imposes.

Contents

List of abbreviations

A level: Advanced level

AB: Awarding Body

AS level: Advanced Supplementary level

AVCEs: Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education

BTEC: Business and Technology Education Council

CBI: Confederation of British Industry

CPVE: Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education

DES: Department for Education and Science

DfE: Department for Education

DfEE: Department of Education and Employment

DfES   Department for Education and Skills

Edexcel: Educational Excellence Foundation

FE: Further Education

FEFC   Further Education Funding Council

FEDA   Further Education Development Agency

FEU   Further Education Unit

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

GNVQs: General National Vocational Qualifications

HE: Higher Education

LEA: Local Education Authority

LECs: Local Enterprise Companies

LRC: Learning Resource Centre

LSC: Learning Skills Council

NATHE: National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education.

NCVQ: National Council for Vocational Qualifications

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education

PGCE: Post-Graduate Certificate in Education

PCSC: Preliminary Certificate in Social Care

QCA: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

RBL: Resource based learning

SCAA: Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority

SEAC: Schools Examinations and Assessment Council

TECs   Training and Enterprise Councils

TDLB: Training and Development Lead Body

TUC: Trades Union Congress

TVEI: Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative

VET: Vocational Education and Training

YT: Youth Training

YTS: Youth Training Scheme

Introduction

The FE (Further Education) sector of the UK education system was subject to two major curricular reforms during the 1990s, and these occurred against the background of wider, substantial organizational changes. Initially, there was the development of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), then subsequently of the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE). The first involved a radical shift in pedagogical regime towards a competence-based approach, in which the main focus was on the assessment of outcomes. By contrast AVCE involved a move back towards a more traditional, academic form of qualification. My focus in this thesis will be upon the development of these curricular initiatives, how lecturers in FE colleges responded and adapted to these fundamental shifts in policy, and how implementation of these qualifications varied across different FE contexts and cultures.

My interest in this research developed from my own experience of FE teaching during the 1980s and 1990s, shortly after GNVQs were introduced. During the 1980s I acquired experience of curriculum and course development of health and social care courses. When I returned to FE in the early 1990s I was asked to deliver a number of GNVQ units to Advanced GNVQ students. The GNVQ unit structure and some of the methods of assessment (multiple-choice tests) were very different from those that I had previously worked with. This led me to reflect on approaches I had traditionally employed for teaching health and social care students and to adopt some new practices. I was aware that several of my colleagues were also struggling to adjust to the new regime. Some colleagues were more prepared, and found it easier, to adapt their practice than others. I wanted to understand why this was the case.

The need for research

While there has been a considerable amount of research on the managerial changes that took place in FE during the early 1990s and lecturers' responses to these, there has been less work on the curricular changes, and how these were actually implemented. There has been very little work on the implications of these changes for lecturers' sense of their own professional identity and their practice. Indeed, there has been relatively little investigation generally of the perspectives of FE lecturers. Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) argue that:

> There has been a steady growth in academic research interest in
> the FE sector, and from it an increasing flow of publications, but
> in terms of what we know about FE teachers they are perhaps
> only marginally beyond the 'shadowy figures' stage.
> (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009 p. 967)

James and Biesta (2007) make a similar point. They argue that:

> What constitutes professionalism in FE is an elusive concept.
> Although professional work in FE has been subjected to a
> plethora of initiatives in recent years, 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 p. 126)

It is important to recognize that FE lecturers are a diverse category, not least in terms of their patterns of recruitment and training. Bathmaker and Avis (2005) note that the majority of teachers working in the compulsory sector are likely to

have progressed directly from school to university and selected teaching as their first career choice, even though in recent years there has been an increase in the number of older recruits. In contrast to this, many further education lecturers enter the profession without any formal training or background in teaching, but after working in other occupations. Although a range of teacher training opportunities specific to the sector has long been available, it was only made mandatory, and then only for new recruits, in 2001. Therefore, lecturers working in FE do not currently share a common training, a background that might contribute to the development of a distinctive professional identity.

Many lecturers will have entered FE holding qualifications related to particular commercial, public sector or technical work. Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) suggest that the diversity of academic and vocational qualifications of FE lecturers, and the diverse entry routes into the sector, make for a rather fractured professional base. Along the same lines, Robson (1998) argues that:

> The diversity in the background 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. Other
> professions have their sub-groups, too, such as nursing, for
> example (which divides psychiatric, geriatric, paediatric and so
> on) and members of these sub-groups or 'segments' (Bucher and
> Stelling, 1977) share a specific professional identity, an
> understanding about their role and about the nature of their
> discipline, as well as its relationships to other fields. In the FE
> college, however, the divisions between segments are more
> marked than they appear to be within the field of, say, nursing;

there is little common purpose amongst the groups of staff in FE

(as already noted) no shared mandatory training which might,

arguably, help to bind the professional group together as a whole.

(Robson, 1998, p. 594)

In their path-breaking early work on FE Gleeson and Mardle (1980) drew

attention to the significance of the prior occupational socialization of FE lecturers

and how diversity in this affected their work with students. Robson (1998)

concurs with this, noting that:

Most further education teachers retain strong allegiances to their

first occupational identity. This identity is what gives them

credibility (as well as knowledge and skill) and it is therefore

understandable that much value attaches to it. They have

experienced initial occupational or professional socialisation in

one context, and are in the college precisely because this process

has been successful and in order to socialise other (the students or

trainees) to the same norms and practices. …

The technical teacher appears to see him or herself chiefly as the

engineer, the secretary, the welder, the fashion designer or the

surveyor or who happens to be teaching. The staff in such

departments do not (either collectively or individually)

consistently see themselves as educators.

(Robson, 1998, p. 596)

Entry to the FE sector often begins with a part-time teaching contract which,

after several months or years, is then extended through an offer of more teaching

hours or a full-time post; James and Biesta (2007) refer to this as the 'long-interview'. They explain this incremental entry into FE teaching as the product of the uncertainty about demand for services in any academic year, as colleges respond to changing market conditions and policy developments. In the light to this, they suggest that flexibility is key asset in securing employment and note that many lecturers recurrently find themselves teaching new material and working outside their comfort zones. In their research they found flexibility to be visible over the course of the professional biographies of a number of their respondents. Seeing themselves as professionals:

> they recognized and valued both the obligations and responsibilities that came with this identity. Whether or not it was currently felt, a sense of autonomy was highly valued – not for its own sake, but because of the necessity for continual adaptation to different learners and circumstances, the opportunity to deal with the unexpected and the serendipitous in student learning, and for solving problems. Many tutors also valued the opportunities they had for their own professional learning and action, an idea closely linked to autonomy.
>
> (James and Biesta, 2007, p.130-131)

More recently Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) explored how FE lecturers construct their professional identities. They adopted a social constructionist perspective, in studying lecturers' lives and work, against this background of recent reforms and the wider political, social and economic contexts. Their findings suggest that biography is a significant factor in determining and

explaining how lecturers undertook their work in the classrooms, and in the construction of their professional identities. They argue that:

> There is a sense in which FE teachers' biographies can, … shed light on the interactions between professional identity and agency and how this impacts on their professional practices in times of change.
>
> (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009, P. 968)

A significant factor was found to be lecturers' value systems which incorporated a view of FE's role in compensating for previous educational disadvantage. Lecturers felt that their primary responsibility was for the social well-being of their students. They found that lecturers:

> conceived of their proper professional role primarily in terms of establishing supportive relationships with their students, rather than in terms simply of imparting a body of knowledge on the basis of subject expertise. … As they presented it, 'successful' teaching and learning was based on establishing appropriate relationships, as it was these which provide the necessary basis for changing students' understanding of themselves as learners and their learning behaviours.
>
> (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009, p. 970)

Previous research studies suggest that lecturers' vocational background, biography and values all contribute to the development of the diverse professional identities found amongst lecturers working in FE colleges. My research focuses on this issue, in the particular case of vocational educational lecturers teaching

Business Studies and Health and Social Care. In order to understand their responses and adaptations to the GNVQ and AVCE an attempt is made to consider the impact of these various factors on their perceptions of their role. I explore the characteristics that they have in common and how far differences in background and values may account for ways in which they approach their work, bearing in mind the different institutional contexts in which they operate. In Chapter 2 consideration is given to research studies which have explored teachers and lecturers responses to curricula change and 'new managerialism', since these may provide insights into the responses and adaptations of lecturers to the GNVQ and AVCE reforms.

The structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 outlines the institutional developments resulting from the incorporation of colleges. Consideration is given to the impact of aspects of 'new managerialism' that many colleges adopted. This chapter also discusses the views of some commentators who have suggested that the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council gave rise to a performativity culture (Hyland, 1996). One result of institutional reform and the incorporation of colleges was that many lecturers working conditions changed through the issuing of new employment contracts. As a result of this the workloads of these lecturers in the sector increased. I suggest that an appreciation of all of these developments has a bearing on the way that lecturers' responded to curriculum innovation.

In Chapter 2 I have surveyed some of the literature focusing on the impact of neo-liberal educational reform and restructuring in relation to the work of FE lecturers' and teachers' working in the compulsory school sector. The key debate that commentators have engaged in, in relation to this, here concerns the influence

of structural forces and the scope for individual agency in explanations of adaptations to working within the new managerialist performativity culture. Models of responses and adaptations outlined in this chapter inform the research method selected and the data analysis presented later in the thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach adopted for this research. I explain that I adopted a longitudinal case study approach to investigate how these GNVQ and AVCE curriculum policy changes were implemented in particular FE colleges. The longitudinal nature of the research enabled me to explore the dynamics associated with implementation over a sustained period of time. I adopted a qualitative approach for my research because it has enabled me to obtain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and adaptations of informants. However, I also consider possible threats to the validity of my findings. Finally, I explain how the data produced was used to develop a typology of adaptations which provides some indication of the range of variation in the attitudes of lecturers towards the reforms, and how they set about implementing them.

In Chapter 4 I explore the rationale for the introduction of pre-vocational educational courses in further education colleges. I draw attention to the context of mass youth unemployment; and the arguments about the need to prepare young people for the labour market, by equipping them with appropriate skills and qualities, that surrounded this development. I suggest that educationalists promoting new vocationalism had wider ambitions than economic relevance: for they were committed to a new kind of curriculum that incorporated the personal needs of students and a commitment to several features of progressive educational ideology more generally. I propose that BTEC courses were developed within this

tradition, and that course teams and lecturers experienced a substantial degree of professional autonomy in designing and delivering courses that could be tailored to student needs, as well as meeting curriculum objectives set out by the awarding body. I then move on to consider how towards the end of the 1980s, attempts were made by policy-makers to develop a more coherent approach to FE provision, with the establishment of the NCVQ. I explain how the GNVQ was designed in the context of a vision of a post-Fordist economy, with its requirements for a flexible and adaptable work force. Within this context, many organisations adopted Human Resource Management approaches to workforce management which emphasised 'empowerment'. These principles also informed the GNVQ design, students being charged with greater responsibility for their learning than on traditional educational courses. I suggest that while some features of the GNVQ may have been empowering in some respects however, control is exerted through rigid specifications and that empowerment and control have been packaged together, which gives rise to tensions. I argue that in meeting the requirements of GNVQ many lecturers experienced major challenges to the way they carried out their work.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of data collected during the GNVQ phase of the research. Three main form of adaptation are detected in the data and a typology is presented showing the range of responses. First, there are the 'constrained professionals' who expressed negative views about GNVQ and to many aspects of the new Managerialism. These lecturers aligned themselves with 'old' public sectors values and felt deprofessionalised by the new regime. The second form of adaptation described is that of the 'committed newcomers', who are recent entrants to the FE sector. They did not express criticisms of mangerialism and

15

they felt comfortable with the requirements for GNVQ. Finally, there are those lecturers who engaged in 'strategic compliance'. In relation to Managerialism, this form of adaptation is well documented in the literature (Shain and Gleeson, 1999), and it is used here to describe a mixed response to curriculum reform. The informant who fell into this category appeared hold a mixture of managerial and old public sector values within her professional identity. Although she noted a reduction in her professional autonomy she was able to describe where she still had scope for agency.

Chapter 6 provides a brief overview of the subsequent phase of GNVQ curriculum development which culminated in the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE). It considers the political agenda surrounding the emergence of the AVCE and the key characteristic of the qualification. I then move on to consider how the role of the lecturer is redefined in the delivery of this qualification, which I suggest involves a shift away from what was demanded by of the role of the lecturer delivering the GNVQ. I argue that there is some similarity between the AVCE and the old BTEC National in terms of teaching strategies recommended by the awarding body.

In Chapter 7 I report on my data analysis from the AVCE phase of the research. I identify four broad responses to the AVCE which form the basis for the categories developed to describe these. These are: 'committed lecturers' who shared many of the characteristics of the 'committed newcomers' identified in the GNVQ research in that they were not critical of the changes and they felt they could exercise greater professional autonomy within the AVCE than they had been able to within the GNVQ. The second category identified were 'critical compliers' who held negative views about changes in the curriculum and

assessment model and the institutional and political context in which they carried out their work. The final two responses were 'strategic compliance' and 'creative compliance'. These describe informants who held somewhat mixed views of AVCE. In the case of the first response, they complied where necessary but deviated in the direction of their own commitments where this was possible. With the second, the lecturer also adopted creative strategies to address deficiencies that they identified in the qualification's structure.

The final chapter, the Conclusion, summarises the key findings and suggests that lecturers' responses and adaptations of lecturers will reflected their previous working practices, their views about the sort of education they are engaged in, as well as their judgements about their central professional task and how it ought to be carried out. Moreover, their attitudes will relate both to the goals of the new curriculum and even more to the operational procedures imposed upon them. Most of them were forced to develop modes of work that enabled them to meet the new requirements, but these were also be shaped by their own previous modes of operation, the nature of the knowledge and skills they had, as well as their attitudes towards the reforms. The implications of this research for teacher educators and policy-makers are also then considered here.

Chapter 1 The Institutional Context

The Further Education (FE) sector has a unique role within the UK education system. Its origins lie in various initiatives to provide access to additional knowledge and skills to young people after they have left school, both those directly relevant to occupational work as well as a broader liberal education. It underwent a variety of institutional changes from the days of mechanics institutes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the FE colleges of today. The sector has grown and been transformed in diverse ways, as a result of changes in its external environment. Relevant here, on the one side, are the various forms of provision of specific occupational training offered by employers and by government, and, on the other, the development of sixth forms, sixth form colleges, colleges of higher education, and the considerable expansion of university provision over the course of the second half of the twentieth century.

An important background trend is, of course, the progressive extension of the school leaving age and, more recently, the huge growth in the proportion of the age group staying on beyond compulsory schooling, and the increasing numbers of students being entered for 16+ and 18+ qualifications of various kinds. There was rapid growth of the sector in the 1960s which can be accounted for by the changing nature of the post-war occupational structure and the expansion of the service sector. It was during this period that colleges began to offer GCE O level and A level courses for young people who did not have the opportunity to undertake these at their secondary modern schools. In the mid-1970s there was a demographic bulge in the 16-19-age-group which strengthened the trend of staying on in full-time education past the statutory school leaving age.

Also of relevance has been the growth in adult education provision, and changes in rhetoric and function associated with this. The expansion of this kind of provision meant that colleges were not tied so closely to the fortunes of industry. Gleeson and Mardle (1980) suggest that some colleges saw new possibilities arising from such diversification in relation to extending educational opportunities. FE colleges were viewed by several commentators (Crosland, 1974, Cantor and Roberts, 1974) as providing a second chance or a means to be socially mobile. However, it should be noted that there have always been some important internal divisions within the clientele of FE Colleges, both to do with different areas of work for which students were being prepared and accordingly to how narrowly focused their preparation was intended to be, and for example whether the courses were pre-vocational or amounted to in-service training. Ainley and Bailey (1997:8) note that the core business of Further Education is still the provision of vocational education of some sort with four out of five qualifications achieved by college students being vocational. However, in some colleges the academic curriculum, which developed from liberal studies courses that supplemented vocational provision, has expanded to be the dominant provision on offer.

Another key external factor has, of course, been changes in the level of unemployment, which have affected not only numbers of students applying to colleges but also their chances of obtaining jobs at the end of their courses. In the mid-1970's when a long period of economic stability was undermined by a rise in oil prices and the collapse of traditional industries, recession and high levels of unemployment followed. These developments led Edward Heath's Conservative Government to intervene in the sector, through the Manpower Services

Commission (MSC), a quasi-autonomous organization funded by the Department of Employment (DE). The MSC provided ear-marked funding for the provision of courses and schemes for unemployed 16-18-year-olds and adults. It can be argued that, through this intervention, the DE had encroached on the Department of Education and Science's (DES) territory by introducing innovations into further education. And the governmental interface between education and training became increasingly important and challenging in subsequent years.

Finally, it is worth noting that there have always been tensions within FE among the demands of various stakeholders – notably, governments, employers, and students themselves – and amongst competing conceptions of the functions of FE. As with other areas of education, competing educational philosophies can be identified, ones that are closely related to broader social philosophies. In his influential account of the development of educational provision in Britain, Raymond Williams (1962) distinguished between three such philosophies, linked to powerful forces within British society: 'old humanists', who argued that education should be liberal in character, introducing students to 'the best that has been thought and known in the world', to knowledge and experiences previously restricted to the cultural elite; the 'industrial trainers' who saw education as having a more narrow purpose linked to teaching the skills required and instilling appropriate social attitudes for the workplace so as to further industrial prosperity; and the 'public educators' who saw education as a right with the growth of democratic society, and as necessary for developing citizenship. While Williams was writing about the first half of the twentieth century, aspects of these divisions could still be identified in later policy debates. Thus, Ball (1990), in his analysis of the 1998 Educational Reform Act, drew on Williams' work, employing similar

categories. For example, he reconceptualised the 'old humanists' as 'cultural restorationists' seeking to re-establish traditional standards and an academic hierarchy. By this time, these views had come to be associated with the Conservative New Right, though they also had a significant presence within the DES. Eccelstone (2002) suggests that OFSTED later came to be representative of this position, especially under the leadership of Chris Woodhead. The views associated with the 'industrial trainers' have been voiced by a mixed alliance of representatives comprising business and finance interests, politicians and curriculum developers such as the Further Education Unit (FEU) within the DES. Aspects of the views of the public educators have become embedded within proposals put forward by 'liberal humanists' who are associated with progressive, student-centred approaches to learning and with promoting access for disadvantaged learners.

In the late 1980s and 90s, like other sections of the education system, FE was subjected to major institutional change. Furthermore, there were significant government interventions in relation to the curriculum of FE colleges: the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and subsequently of the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE). These changes are the focus of this thesis.

The introduction of the GNVQ in the early 1990s involved a very substantial change in the working practices of FE lecturers. Not only was there a significant modification of the content to be taught but the roles of lecturer and student were transformed. In 2000 GNVQ was replaced by AVCE. This too involved considerable changes in the work of FE lecturers, in some respects involving a shift back towards how things had been before the introduction of

GNVQ, but in other ways introducing new elements. FE lecturers are, of course, by no means alone in facing major changes in the organisation and specification of their work. Such change has occurred across compulsory schooling and the public sector generally. However, the fundamental character of the switch to GNVQ and the move away from it a few years later provide a distinctive context for exploring teachers' responses to dramatic and rapid change. Understanding these responses is important if we are to grasp the factors shaping the implementation of curricular policies, and their effects.

Moreover, changes in curriculum and modes of pedagogy were by no means the only reforms impacting on the UK FE sector in the 1990s. There were also wider organisational changes. With the implementation of the 1988 Educational Reform Act (ERA) and the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (FHEA) colleges of further education and universities experienced the most radical administrative transformation since their inception. Significant changes that impacted on lecturers' work included modifications in funding mechanisms for further education, the development of new quality assurance systems, and the introduction of new contracts of employment.

During this period, then, FE lecturers experienced a series of complex reforms, each having its own trajectory. Their responses to GNVQ and to AVCE must be seen against the background of these other reforms and their effects on employment conditions, work contexts, and the nature of the student body. In the rest of this chapter I will outline these changes and look at some of the literature discussing the implications of institutional reform.

Institutional reform

Prior to the implementation of the 1992 Act, FE colleges were maintained by LEAs, and financed from the central government's Rate Support Grant and local rates. These arrangements were criticised by the Audit Commission/OFSTED in a report entitled Unfinished Business (1993). The report suggested that standards were too low and that FE Colleges were inefficient. It drew attention to low levels of participation and poor retention rates in these colleges. It was also acknowledged that provision was uneven, with some LEAs' funding levels being higher, in relation to the service provided, than those of others.

   The then Conservative government accused LEAs of creating a framework that was rigid and unresponsive to change. It was held that 'improvement' in the further education sector had been hindered for too long by bureaucratic control and the dominance of 'supplier' interests. These interests were thought to be, in many cases, politically and ideologically misguided – in other words, promoting values inimical to enterprise and national competitiveness. The Government argued that participation rates in further education could be increased and that standards would be raised if colleges of further education were exposed to a competitive 'quasi-market' and became more entrepreneurial. Support for the introduction of a market came from an identifiable strand of Conservative ideology that prevailed in the 1980s, namely the neo-liberal view that education is a market commodity that should be treated like any other business product. Mather *et al* (2007) comment on this:

> Central government policy since the 1980s towards public services in the
> UK has been dominated by neo-liberal ideals about the perceived
> superiority of the free market as means of providing public services most

economically, effectively and efficiently.

(Mather *et al*, 2007, p.109)

The neo-liberals believed that the introduction of greater competition into the sector would lead to more efficient use of resources.

As a result of the implementation of the 1988 ERA Act and of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, further education and sixth form colleges were incorporated as independent institutions so that they were no longer under the control of local authorities. On the 1st April 1993, newly constituted governing bodies were established. Prior to incorporation, teachers and local authorities were well represented on governing bodies. The main objective of the 1992 Act's provisions concerning governing bodies was to increase the influence of representatives of local industry and commerce, and to reduce the impact of local authorities (Cantor *et al*, 1995). College Principals became Chief Executives working to these newly constituted governing bodies, who assumed responsibility for: determining their educational character and mission; the effective and efficient use of their resources; safeguarding their assets; staffing and management. Ainely and Bailey (1997) report that, shortly after incorporation, governing bodies had few, if any, local educational authority representatives but always had one nominee from the employer-run Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The legislation effectively emasculated the LEAs and strengthened the central authority of the state as well as giving greater autonomy to individual colleges.

Subsequently, colleges were empowered to provide education and training, supply goods and services, acquire and dispose of land and property, enter into commercial contracts and borrow and invest, as well as to set their own

frameworks for pay and conditions without necessarily referring to national norms. This resulted in the introduction of new lecturer contracts, to replace contracts based on the Silver Book which had offered relatively favourable conditions of service. Mather *et al* (2007) found that:

> Immediately following incorporation, college managers, under pressure from the funding council, implemented new contractual arrangements for lecturing staff that immediately increased annual and weekly lecturing hours thus dismantling the so called jointly determined "silver book" contract and increasing the rate of absolute value in Marx's terms. Lecturers in the three colleges in this study are now required to undertake twenty three hours teaching per week with provision for an increase in this limit to meet staff shortages, student demand and so on. This has increased the time that lecturers spend in the classroom and, additionally, their preparation time outside of class thus intensifying their workload.
>
> (Mather *et al*, 2007, p. 115).

Thus, the move to drive down unit costs brought increased workloads for lecturers, with more teaching hours, a reduction in annual leave and new systems of staff appraisal. This generated much conflict, which was fought out in a dispute about national bargaining rights versus local agreements.

The Funding of Further Education Colleges

Strong central control to oversee this development was provided by the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) (later superseded by the Learning Skills Council and its regional offices). The FEFC was one of

what the Chair of the 1994 Nolan Committee in Public Life called 'the big quangos' that became increasingly common at the time. The Secretary of State for Education appointed the first Chair of the Council from industry: he was the former Chief Executive of Boots the Chemist. The DfEE had the power to appoint FEFC board members to provide 'guidance' and other reserve powers under the 1992 Act. Prior to these arrangements, representatives from local authorities and other existing stakeholders involved in funding further education would have held such responsibility. The amount of funding the FEFC received to distribute was decided by the Treasury, whose power in this regard had been enhanced by the 1992 legislation. Organizations such as college corporations and TECs and LECs can be seen as 'little quangos' which entered into contracts with the FEFC to deliver services agreed in advance.

FEFC informed colleges that they were to be given a key role to play in contributing to National Education and Training Targets (NETTS) which were first formalized for the UK by the CBI. These were influenced by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), who had set ambitious targets for foundation learning in compulsory schooling and lifelong learning. In order to meet the targets, an increased number of young people over 16, as well as adults, needed to participate in education and training at all levels in order to raise the proportion of qualified workers. The FEFC set colleges an overall target of 25 per cent growth in student numbers over the first three years of its operation, to be funded by a 16 per cent increase in resources. Hence, an important function of the funding methodology was to bring about expansion at lower unit cost.

This funding methodology also encouraged colleges to help meet NETTS by giving higher levels of funding to courses that led to recognised qualifications.

Essentially, the formation of the FEFC stemmed from a desire on the part of the Conservative government to transform the further education sector into an agency serving business much more directly and effectively than in the past. Reeves (1995) notes:

> Further education colleges, then, are expected to contribute to the economy by raising the education and training standards of the nation's work force. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) has defined the courses that the government will fund (through the Funding Councils) in pursuit of national economic renewal. The colleges themselves have to operate at local level to meet national targets in contexts that differ widely in terms of social class, occupational structure, and economic aspiration.
> (Reeves, 1995, p. 32-33)

The means envisaged for doing this were not simply central control, in the sense of state bureaucracy. It is a model taken from business in which central office sets the targets and provides a framework, and also monitors performance but in a situation where various parts of the business are given considerable autonomy, under the discipline of the market.

The FEFC established a framework for the inspection of colleges reported in Circular 93/28 'Assessing Achievement', which was supplemented by a framework of performance indicators published in Circular 94/12 'Measuring Achievement" (FEFC 1994). The FEFC collected information on student recruitment, continuation or retention rates, achievement of primary learning goals and value for money. It also signalled an interest in value-added measurement of attainment. By the end of 1993, after an extensive consultation exercise, the FEFC

announced the new funding system, which came into effect in September 1994.

The system that was introduced was the one most favoured by 94% of colleges

who participated in the consultation process. It was a complex funding

methodology which broadly divided student learning into three sections -

described as 'entry', 'on-programme', and 'exit' 'achievements'. This method of

funding was based on units of provision, which took into account the need to

provide students with careful guidance in relation to their initial choice of study

programmes, to teach them consistently, in order that they achieve their ultimate

qualification aim, or some other equally satisfactory outcome:

> Under the new system there is an important set of relationships
>
> between student guidance and choice of programme, the retention
>
> of students on programmes, and the achievement of satisfactory
>
> results. If any one of the elements fails, there is an adverse effect
>
> on the funding received by colleges.
>
> (Cantor *et al*, 1995, p.103-104)

So, the FEFC funding arrangements and powers of inspection, together with the

installation of new audit and quality assurance systems, ensured that institutions

came under the orbit of control established by the central state. With these

measures the Conservatives effectively achieved structural control over the

management of further education and training institutions. Central to this

institutional reform was a change in the approach to management of the sector,

referred to in the literature as the 'new managerialism'. Pollitt (1990) suggests that

new managerialism can be understood as a generic package of management

techniques which include:

- Strict financial management and devolved budgetary
  controls

- An emphasis on efficient use of resources and increased
  productivity

- The extensive use of quantitative performance indicators

- The development of consumerism and the discipline of the
  market

- The manifestation of consumer charters as mechanisms for
  accountability

- The creation of a disciplined, flexible workforce, using
  flexible/individualized contracts, staff appraisal systems
  and performance related pay

- The assertion of managerial control and the managers'
  right to manage.

  (Pollitt, 1990, p.125)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the institutional developments resulting from the incorporation of colleges that form the background to the curricular reforms and their effects that will be my main focus in subsequent chapters. These developments weakened the influence of local authorities and increased that of business interests. Incorporation did to some extent strengthen the independence of individual colleges with the new powers that they gained. However, the

establishment of the FEFC meant that colleges were also subject to a strong

framework of control. The principles of new managerialism that have been

adopted by colleges and the FEFC have given rise to a performativity culture

(Hyland, 1996). This, combined with new conditions of service, changed the

working conditions of FE lecturers. The impact of these institutional

developments on lecturers is explored in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 Educational Reform and Adaptations to Change: A Brief Review of the Literature

The developments which took place in further education colleges in the 1990s must be seen as part of attempts by successive governments to restructure education in England, beginning with changes to compulsory schooling in the 1988 Educational Reform Act (ERA). That Act introduced the National Curriculum, which specified what children were to be taught at different ages; and this was reinforced by the introduction of tests at Key Stages. Subsequently, greater direction was given about appropriate pedagogic approaches, especially in relation to primary education and the teaching of literacy and numeracy. In addition, quasi-markets among schools were established, with the intention of raising achievement levels and increasing parental choice over school selection with the aid of information gleaned from league tables of school performance.

As outlined in Chapter 1, subsequently Further Education Colleges also experienced major policy interventions, the incorporation of colleges, the establishment of market relations, and the introduction of competence-based qualifications which specified the content of learning, and thereby reduced the scope for lecturers to influence the curriculum. In both compulsory schooling and further education new forms of management and quality assurance mechanisms were put into place to support these developments.

In recent decades, sociologists have considered the impact of these kinds of neo-liberal reform on public sector professionals such as teachers, nurses, social workers and civil servants. There is debate within the literature about various aspects of these developments. Some commentators see public sector

workers like teachers and FE lecturers as being de-professionalized by these changes, and as experiencing feelings of oppression as a result of the imposition of new forms of external control over their work. In contrast, there are commentators who suggest that within the context of the new managerialism there is scope for individual agency, whereby actors can become strategic operators who still exercise significant control over their conditions of work. Gleeson and Knight describe these two perspectives by suggesting that:

> The [first perspective] denotes issues of structure, in terms of how the professional is conditioned by material changes in working practices 'globalization', audit, inspection, 'managerialism', and institutional hegemony. The [second] focuses on agency in the way professionals construct meaning and identity (e.g. resistance, compliance or creative engagement) in the often asymmetrical conditions of their work.
> (Gleeson and Knight, 2006, p.278)

Apple (1986) gives priority to structural forces and suggests that the intensification of work is a characteristic of late twentieth-century capitalist societies, building on the work of Braverman (1974). According to these writers, in response to the capital accumulation crisis, pressure increases in the public and private sectors for increased efficiency. And the imposition of new contracts of employment which contribute to increases in face-to-face teaching hours combined with new forms of assessment have contributed to the intensification of teachers' and lecturers' work (Apple 1986, A. Hargreaves 1994). It has been argued that in relation to school teaching intensification has resulted in:

- reduced time for relaxation and re-skilling;

32

- chronic and persistent work overload;

- a reduced quality of service;

- separation of the conceptualization from the execution of tasks, making teachers dependent on outside expertise so that they are reduced to technicians

(Adapted from Woods *et al*, 1997, p. 6)

One of the purposes of this thesis is to discover whether the experience of FE lecturers parallels this.

Central to the processes of regulation and intensification involved in recent educational reforms is a discourse which supports its practices. This discourse emphasises notions of 'accountability', 'efficiency', 'choice', 'quality' and 'competitiveness' as part of a drive to establish a new set of values (Esland, 1996). According to Esland, this discourse has been used in an attempt to elicit the compliance of FE lecturers by fostering their commitment to new modes of control over their work, and to encourage their support in the development of new forms of institutional culture. Ball (2003) contends that the focus on outputs in education has given rise to a 'performativity' culture, which represents a new form of state regulation that has an impact on teachers' work because:

> It requires individual practitioners to organize themselves in response to targets, indicators, and evaluations. To set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation.
> (Ball, 2003, p. 215)

Hyland (1996) notes the rise of performativity culture in Further Education and claims that the behaviourist conceptions of human performance which have informed the introduction of competence-based qualifications, and the development of quality assurance mechanisms - such as, target setting, performance indicators and outcome related funding have resulted in widespread feelings of de-professionalisation. He claims that:

> Recent policy developments in the public sector have led to allegations of widespread de-professionalisation (Chitty and Simon, 1993) in teaching, health and related spheres as a result of centralised commitments to the ideologies of market forces and input/output efficiency and accountability … Large numbers of professionals feel 'overstretched and under-valued'.
>
> (Hyland, 1996, p.168)

Theorists who subscribe to arguments about de-professionalization draw on the work of Braverman (1974) who argues that the principles of scientific management developed by Frederick Taylor have had a profound impact upon the organisation of work under capitalism. He claims that some professional jobs, such as nursing and teaching, have become more and more routinised as a result of being divided into specialist tasks with the skill content of the work being reduced. Technical rationalism, which underpins these changes, is a feature of this scientific management. Woods *et al* (1997) apply this concept to school teaching:

> Deprofessionalization involves the loss or distillation of skills, routinization of work, the loss of conceptual, as opposed to operational, responsibilities, the replacement of holism by

34

compartmentalization, work and bureaucratic overload, the filling

and overfilling of time and space, loss of time for reflection and

for recovery from stress, the weakening of control and autonomy,

and, in general, a move from professional to technician status.

 (Woods, *et al*, 1997, p.84-85)

However, some commentators report that educational reform has brought

with it opportunities for re-professionalisation. For example, David Hargreaves

(1994) has challenged the view that the school reforms had led to de-

professionalisation and de-skilling of teachers and suggested that there were

positive outcomes associated with this process. He argues that one unintended

outcome of school reform had been the development of a new professionalism.

This involved movement:

away from the teacher's traditional professional authority and

autonomy towards new forms of relationships with colleagues,

with students, and with parents. These relationships are becoming

closer as well as more intense and collaborative, involving more

and explicit negotiation of roles and responsibilities. The

conventional classroom focus of teachers' work is now set within

a framework of whole-school policies, and the planning and

implementation of agreed priorities. In relation to the curriculum,

there is greater concern than in the past with continuity and

progression for students and so for better co-ordination between

teachers. The strong focus on student learning and achievement as

well as on institutional improvements leads to more sophisticated

models and practices of professional development. Teachers are

not merely working more co-operatively; they feel a stronger

obligation towards and responsibility for their colleagues.

(Hargreaves, 1994, p. 424)

Here, Hargreaves claims to be describing a 'new professionalism' based on collaboration and collective responsibility for what goes on in schools. He contrasts this with the 'old professionalism' which he suggests was characterised by a 'culture of individualism' whereby professional autonomy amounted to the freedom of teachers to exercise autonomy within the privacy of their classrooms. Within this culture, professional problems were not shared but carried by individuals who were reluctant to discuss them with colleagues for fear of seeming incompetent. According to Hargreaves, this culture led to an avoidance of collectively working with colleagues and a concern with maintaining peaceful co-existence (p.425). And this reinforced a division between senior management and the rest of the staff. Hargreaves sees this mode of operation as having been a barrier against innovation and reform because it provided opportunities for teachers to hide behind the protective shield of individualism and resist change. In contrast to this, the 'new professionalism' is characterised by a collaborative culture which incorporates a strong sense of professional autonomy. Within this culture, leadership and management responsibilities are distributed across the school, with all staff having the opportunity to contribute to these functions, according to the issues needing to be addressed, the circumstances at the time, and the available talent (p.429). Hargreaves claims that:

A collaborative culture retains a strong sense of professional

autonomy, but without the isolation that arises in the culture of

individualism. There is a professional autonomy that is a property

of the school and the community of teachers, rather than the

individual teacher (Grundy, 1982). Both individuals and groups

are valued in a collaborative culture. This creates a climate of

trust which allows staff to talk openly about their problems …

(Hargreaves, 1994, p.426-7)

Hargreaves' claims about re-professionalisation may offer insights into professional responses and adaptations to educational reform not only in relation to compulsory schooling but also to the post-compulsory education sector where, as we have seen, similar sorts of change have been introduced. However, his account was written shortly after educational reforms had been introduced and their impact was only just beginning to be felt. Therefore, his claims can be seen as somewhat 'speculative', a shortcoming which he himself accepts. Furthermore, one might question his account of 'old professionalism' and the extent to which it was characterised by the degree of individualism he describes. Hargreaves suggests that there is a need for teachers to adapt or adjust to the educational reforms but this begs the question of whether the nature of the changes imposed are perceived by teachers to be in the best interests of the children they teach, and whether they offer appropriate strategies for the raising of achievement levels. Educational values and teachers' views about appropriate pedagogy, which have been challenged by recent reforms, are not explored by Hargreaves but may well provide insights into responses and adaptations of teachers and lecturers to reform. These issues have been of interest to researchers focusing on different sectors within the education system, who have carried out empirical research, some of which is very briefly outlined below.

Further Education lecturers' work

There has been some research on FE college lecturers' responses to the institutional changes that took place in the sector in the 1990s, but little that has looked specifically at the effects of the curricular reforms. Avis (2003) notes the changes that have occurred in perceptions of the lecturer's role in FE colleges. He argues that during the post-war period teacher autonomy amounted to legitimated teacher professionalism, where teachers were seen as curricular experts who knew best how to meet the needs of their students. The Thatcher governments and the New Right in the 1970s undermined this view of teacher professionalism. Within further education colleges today, he suggests, the 'good lecturer' is now institutionalised as a facilitator of learning who is able to access and use a range of learning resources and techniques, from classroom practice to the use of information communication technologies (ICT). He argues that this amounts to a technicist construction of teaching which represents a departure from the previously dominant legitimated teacher professionalism.

Esland *et al* (1999) note that the 1992 FHE Act placed demands on Further and Higher Education institutions for staff monitoring, customer services, quality assessment and required them to introduce 'efficiency savings' while simultaneously increasing student recruitment. They argue that, in response to these requirements, institutions invented new forms of strategic management and adopted approaches to human resource management (HRM) in keeping with the state's promotion of the 'New Public Management' throughout the public sector.

These authors claim that HRM has become a major instrument for the management of change. They note that HRM is concerned with all aspects of management, including contracts of employment, recruitment and induction of staff, appraisal, training, promotion and rewards. In addition, Equal Opportunities

policies form part of an HRM brief. The authors are not suggesting that a uniform

approach has been adopted by all FE colleges but that several features have been

incorporated to enable HRM to perform a mediating function between an

institution's curricular and teaching inputs and assessment outputs, by providing a

means of identifying flexibilities in each by allowing curricular and staffing

policies to be dealt with together. They explain:

> This is especially likely to happen where curricular content and
>
> assessment outcomes are closely related, as is the case with
>
> competence-based NVQs and GNVQs. In effect, what HRM is
>
> able to do is to assist the process of scaling down the curriculum
>
> resource inputs while seeking ways of reducing the cost of their
>
> delivery. An institution adopting this policy is then able to
>
> rationalize its outputs in the terms which its own logics have
>
> defined. In this way a circular process is created in which
>
> curriculum and teaching inputs are specified in terms of the pre-
>
> defined outputs – themselves usually based on a mix of
>
> assessment and quality measures and completion rates. If the
>
> assessment and quality measures are expressed in terms of
>
> individual levels of 'competence' – which are themselves linked
>
> to output-related-funding – there is considerable scope for the
>
> process to be rationalized down to its basic, lowest cost level. If
>
> this means scaling down the knowledge required from lecturing
>
> staff, or reducing teacher-student contact hours, or standardizing
>
> assessment procedures, then that is no more than what a number

of respondents' claim is happening.

(Esland *et al*, 1999, p.166)

The impact of the new forms of strategic management which link curriculum and teaching inputs and assessment outputs is most acutely felt by main grade lecturers operating at the chalk face who express feelings of deprofessionalisation. Esland *et al* (1999) quote one main grade lecturer's response to this situation referring to her responsibilities for teaching GNVQ:

> The whole GNVQ thing is deprofessionalising. You are reduced
> to the level of a check list. The old quality assurance guys with
> their clip boards, the time and motion guys, well they've just done
> that. All the respect of a lecturer's role becomes diminished with
> the GNVQ and we become more like manual workers rather than
> autonomous, professional people who work under their own
> steam, actually manage their own workload, have that autonomy.
> I don't feel I have that to the same degree as I used to.
>
> (Esland *et al*, 1999, p.167)

However, Esland *et al* (1999) do not report a uniform response to the new business ethos being promoted in colleges of further education with the aid of HRM strategies. They identified three responses to the new institutional environment. The first group were described as the 'embracers' of the new culture. What is interesting to note here is the professional background of this group: they had been recruited from industry and had little or no experience of public education. The second group, the 'dissenters', felt that their professionalism and long-standing commitment to student learning was being

40

undermined by the new business ethos. This group was depicted as 'dinosaurs' by the embracers. The third group were the 'pragmatists', who were often middle managers. They accepted the new demands because they believed that working with the new system was in the best interests of themselves and their students. The response of the middle managers identified by Esland *et al* (1999) mirrors Shain and Gleeson's (1999) research findings, which suggest that these staff often perform a mediating role between senior management and lecturers by engaging in the challenging task of translating policy into practice in ways which are acceptable and make sense to both groups.

Randle and Brady (1997) argue that although new managerialism has contributed to a deskilling and de-professionalizing of lecturers, there is evidence to suggest that the dominant discourse of managerialism has not been incorporated into their professional identities. They argue that lecturers retain a commitment to 'public service' values and to teacher autonomy that are fundamentally opposed to managerialism.

Deterministic accounts of the impact of managerialism in FE colleges have been challenged. Seddon (1997) analysed the changing conditions of lecturers' work in a managerial context. She notes that 'public sector' concepts of teacher professionalism, such as professional autonomy and service to the community, are being challenged by market liberal reforms committed to privatization and deregulation, but she suggests that these have provoked new responses and adaptations within the workplace. Thus, she argues that the impact of such reforms is not to be interpreted simply as leading to the de-professionalization of lecturers. Rather, she claims, this process of de-professionalization takes place in

conjunction with forms of re-professionalization as part of an ongoing 'politics of knowledge, power and social organization' (p.228).

Shain and Gleeson's (1999) research findings lend support to Seddon's analysis, suggesting that lecturers' responses to reforms may offer possibilities for the reconstruction of professionalism. They investigated the impact of the 1992 Further and Higher Educational Act on teaching and managerial cultures in further education colleges. They considered how changes in the structure and the funding of further education had impacted on and influenced professional identities in the workplace. In their research, they explored the trends towards de-professionalization and re-professionalization in the managerial and competitive contexts of further education. They contend that different lecturer responses arise from ambiguities and contradictions in the further education workplace. Analysis of their data revealed three types of lecturer response:

Compliant (these lecturers were appointed on new contracts, they were generally positive about the change and happy to be flexible, and they had internalized the dominant discourse towards lecturers in FE prior to incorporation as being lazy and complacent. Some of these lecturers were able to bridge both old and new cultures).

Old timers (these lecturers retained Silver Book contracts and they found it difficult to see any positive aspect of the reforms, their responses to change were filtered through their existing commitment to 'old' public sector professionalism, such as reward for expertise, professional autonomy, and further education's role as a public service that is adequately funded).

Strategic compliers (The majority of respondents fell into this category. These lecturers held mixed feelings about the reforms and were critical of some aspects but accepting of others. For example, flexible learning was not perceived negatively if it was properly resourced. They were also concerned with the process of learning and not just the outcomes. They had found ways of collaborating effectively with colleagues to bring about improvements within the competitive environment that had been created. These lecturers were committed to the widening participation agenda).

These findings led Shain and Gleeson to suggest that:

> changes are occurring in terms of what counts as being a 'good lecturer' in FE, through mediation of managerialist discourses that emphasise flexibility, reliability and competence. Though there is evidence of some incorporation of lecturers into this discourse (Compliance), it is by no means complete or uncontested. Rather, residual elements of 'public sector' or 'old' professionalism are drawn on and reworked through lecturer practice in order to 'make sense of' the changing conditions of work in managerial and competitive contexts.
> (Shain and Gleeson, 1999, p. 459)

This finding led the authors to conclude that the strategic compliers' responses could be seen as a reworking of professionalism. They are cautious about employing universal definitions of professionalism, noting that the concept has different meanings in different contexts, for different people. However, they do acknowledge the presence of core values that influence the routine practices of the majority of lecturers in their study. These consist of models of quality defined by

process, a commitment to widening participation, and recognition of the need for collaborative working practices. This leads them to conclude that *both* deterministic accounts of de-professionalisation and optimistic hopes for the birth of a new professionalism in FE are unreliable.

More recent research undertaken by James and Biesta (2007) constitutes the largest longitudinal study of teaching and learning in further education colleges. Their research makes a significant contribution to debates about structure and agency in relation to the work of professional lecturers. It involved studying the complexity of relationships that exist between teachers, teaching, learners, learning, learning situations and the wider context of learning (p.11). Significantly, they argue that teaching and learning cannot be decontextualised from the broad range of social, economic and political forces which influence them. They draw on the term 'culture' to indicate the complexity of relationships which have a bearing on practice and suggest:

> Learning would depend upon the complex interactions between the following factors, among others:
>
> - Students' positions, dispositions and actions, influenced by their previous life histories
>
> - Tutors' positions, dispositions and actions, influenced by their previous life histories
>
> - The nature of the subject content, including broader issues of 'disciplinary identity' and status, as well as specifics such as syllabus, assessment requirements, links with external agencies or employers, etc
>
> - College management approaches and procedures, together with

organisational structures, site location and resources

- National policies towards FE, including qualifications, funding and inspection regimes

- Wider social, economic and political contexts, which interpenetrate all of the other points.

(James and Biesta, 2007, p.12-13)

A central concept within their theoretical framework is learning cultures which should not be confused with a course or programme of study, or a particular learning site. Within any one colleges or department different learning cultures may be present. They define learning cultures as:

the social practices through which people learn. Learning cultures exist through the actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants. They exist through interaction and communication and are (re) produced by individuals just as much as individuals are (re) produced by learning cultures, though individuals are differently positioned with regard to shaping and changing a culture – in other words, differences in power are always at issue too. Cultures, then, are both structured and structuring, and individuals' actions are neither totally determined by the confines of a learning culture, nor are they totally free. A key question that a cultural approach to learning brings to the fore is that of the interplay between 'constraints' and 'affordances' in a learning culture.

(James and Biesta 2007, p. 23)

James and Biesta (2007) are therefore concerned to provide an account of the complex relationship between structure and agency in their analysis. Their research revealed that many lecturers were critical and felt constrained by the funding mechanisms which related to recruitment, retention, outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms. They acknowledge that new managerialism and audit accountability can encourage pathological forms of compliance on the part of lecturers, which may manifest themselves through fabrication and gamesmanship in relation to a whole range of performance targets set for colleges. However, they also note the possibilities for professional resistance and non-compliance, alongside the opportunity to engage in what they refer to as 'creative mediation' of targets and procedures by making them work for both lecturers and students.

Gleeson and Knight (2006), reporting on the findings from the same research project discuss the concept of 'creative mediation' in relation to the adaptations of lecturers working within the context of new managerilasm. These authors offer two vignettes from their research to illustrate how creative mediation can be seen in the strategies adopted by two lecturers. The first is a tutor introducing the use of mobile phone text messaging with her students to improve communications with the college. This allows the lecturer to complete the register with 'notified absences' to meet audit requirements relating to registration and inspection criteria which affects college funding and the allocation of resources. In addition, she claims she has been able to use this technology on 'her terms' because she has also found it provides a useful medium to facilitate communication with her students about assessment issues, academic worries and complaints and therefore she is able to provide support in response to the issues tutees raise. Gleeson and Knight (2006) suggest:

This is also a way for her to mediate the conflict between her

sense of professionalism as a tutor (knowing about and effectively

helping 'hard to reach' tutees), and the bureaucratization of the

tutor's role (its reduction to the tick boxes on the register showing

'notified' absences). This 'success' can be chalked up. Once in

touch she can watch these students and offer help in more

meaningful ways than either auditing procedures or scheduled

progress tutorials allow. The example reveals a critical and

creative way of dealing with external pressures and professional

issues in situations that can be potentially threatening to both

students and tutors. Thus professionals are not simply passive and

self-serving, when dealing with externally imposed forms of

performance management and surveillance.

(Gleeson and Knight, 2006 p.285)

The second example that these researchers offer focuses on the work of an

NVQ work-place assessor, Gwen. They note that one of the problems with NVQs

is the conceptual separation of learning from competence-based assessment in the

workplace. This separation can place tensions on the work-place assessors who

feel that they need to go beyond the official definition of their work by providing

support for the acquisition of competence prior to assessment. Gleeson and Knight

explain that Gwen's working practices overstep what is officially required for her

role by engaging in counselling, teaching, unconditional personal support, the

negotiation of learning opportunities with students and their line managers, as

well as forward planning and intervening at critical moments when trainees may

be at risk of failing. Gwen believes that her role needs to incorporate all of these

tasks if trainees are to achieve their qualifications and government targets are to be met to satisfy employers' demands. She recognises that her practices go beyond her job description and that she is not rewarded for her 'value added' input, but her professional judgement is that it is necessary to ensure success.

Clearly, a requirement for the exercise of this sort of 'creative mediation' is that there is scope for it within the conditions of work. When the researchers visited Gwen at a later date for a second interview they found that the space for this mode of operating had been curtailed. There had been changes in the funding mechanisms for NVQs which had resulted in a college review of how work-based assessors should work with students. The outcome of this was a reduction in face-to-face contact with trainees and an increase in 'e-type' assessment materials that resulted in Gwen spending more time working by computer from her office. This development was not welcomed by Gwen and she eventually chose to leave.

Reflecting on these examples of lecturers' responses to changing conditions of work Gleeson and Knight claim:

> There is, therefore, more to these illustrations (Celia and Gwen) than simply making the point about dualism, and the separation of agency and structure. The subtle interplay of identity, gender and the micro-politics of the labour process challenges both a deficit view of the professional and a sociology that is drawn into normative evaluations of 'the good, the bad and the ugly', of the conditioned professional by economies of performance, league tables, targets, audit and inspection. The tendency to stereotype professionals as 'artful dodgers' strategically operating at the margins of the market, through self-interest, compliance or

altruism, ignores the moral and ethical conditions in which

professional identity, goodwill and trust (habitus) is constructed

and exploited in a performance culture. …

What we have sought to illustrate here, especially with the

examples of Celia and Gwen, are the ways in which practitioners

mediate dualism in the tensions and contradictions between

agency and structure experienced through the context of their

working relations with students, clients, patients or colleagues.

(Gleeson and Knight, 2006, p.288)

These authors argue that researchers who emphasise the de-professionalizing

aspects of reform portray teachers' and lecturers' responses to ethical and

existential tensions as complicit or strategic. They suggest that consideration of

issues of identity may provide another means for reconsidering how

professionalism can be reworked in preferred ways. They emphasise the

importance of professionals' biographical resources which enable them to reassert

their identities in an attempt to reconstruct professionalism through resistance and

contestation.

Coffield *et al* (2008) argue that national policy inevitably impacted on all

aspects of lecturers' practice. They note that colleges of FE must meet targets for

recruitment, retention and achievement to secure adequate funding for their

survival and this pressure cannot be ignored. Furthermore quality assurance

mechanisms steer practice. They note that lecturers are:

accountable for distinct aspects of their practice to college and

local authority managers, inspectors and awarding bodies, all of

whom make their own paperwork demands, their autonomy is

strictly constrained, to a degree which would surprise colleagues

in higher education.

(Coffield *et al*, 2008, P.110)

In this study Coffield *et al* (2008) explored the extent of professional agency that managers and tutors felt they still had. Their research makes, what they claim, can only be a cautious contribution to debates about FE lecturers' professionalism since their main focus was on impact of policy on teaching and learning. The authors asked respondents about the factors which influenced their approach to teaching and learning. The pressure to meet targets was reported to be influential as was a commitment to a particular value base. Coffield *et al* categorised responses in terms of 'economies of performance' which relate to paperwork and targets etc; and 'ecologies of practice' which they describe as being based on learner-centred values in terms of meeting learners' needs and a commitment to helping learners to succeed, especially those who struggled and not been particularly successful previously in learning situations. Most lecturers in their sample talked about both.

The authors found some diversity amongst college lecturers with regard to perceptions of policy and change and how the pressure to meet targets was dealt with. They accounted for such variation in terms of the wider economic and social situation of the institution, the personal values that managers and tutors applied to any situation and their professional traditions. Significant, factors included management priorities within the institution and the style of management adopted. The nature of professional cultures within various departments and course teams

were also found to be significant, as were the number of years of experience lecturers had in the sector and the type of contract of employment that they held.

Coffield et al (2008) suggest that the dynamic of 'strategic compliance' within Learning Skills Sector (LSS) has changed. They note how in a period of modernization:

> Policy levers operate through top-down Managerialism, markets and elements of social democratic discourse. This can focus on student retention and achievement as means of inclusion, and are intended to appeal to policy-makers, managers and tutors to justify or make sense of prevailing policy.

> …We found areas of agreement within colleges and other sites of learning about what should be done to improve learning and achievement but dissent results from the effects of top-down performance management: constant reorganisation, meeting targets and accountability, related paperwork. Within this context it could be argued that strategic compliance has moved, to a degree, from a struggle between tutors and managers to a struggle between institutions and the system, in which all parties within institutions and within the wider LSS find themselves under pressure from accountability and politically driven changes in priorities.
>
> (Coffield *et al*, 2008, p. 151-152)

These researchers did not find examples of outright resistance to policy and policy levers. They suggest that this was dissipated because lecturers' values were in

keeping with the broad aims of policy, especially in relation to widening participation and raising achievement. However, they did find expressions of criticism about how the sector was working in practice. Several respondents suggested that the need to meet targets was an influential factor influencing their practice. However, in some settings this pressure was absorbed by managers, lessening the impact on lecturers. They found that despite being weary of paperwork demands and increased accountability that lecturers could exercise a degree of professional autonomy. Lecturers felt that there was scope for professional agency in terms of decisions about how to teach and how much time to devote to meeting the needs of individual learners. They explain:

> Our research, which corroborates the findings of other
> researching the effects of policy on education (e.g., James and
> Biesta 2007; Wallace and Hoyle 2005), has found that policy
> levers interact with other factors at all levels of the system, as
> well as within institutions. In doing so, they are also mediated and
> translated within the LSS as different actors achieve a degree of
> agency or freedom at the practice stage of a policy process (Bowe
> et al. 1992). We should not, however, overestimate the power or
> the ethics of professionals in these situations, because they are
> working within systems of top-down power. Nevertheless, policy
> levers, as remote forms of steering, present policy actors with
> spaces to interpret them as they apply their own values and
> intentions in a system, which the government also attempts to
> influence ideologically. In doing so, policy actors at different
> levels of the LSS do not reverse policy, as such, but make its

outcomes far less predictable.

(Coffield *et al*, 2008, P. 146-147)

Research undertaken by James and Biesta (2007) and Coffield *et al* (2008) have utilised the concept of learning cultures to capture the complexity of relationships involved in learning and for analysing the roles of all those involved in teaching and learning. The important point they make is that learning cultures are not static and that they are produced by individuals as much as the latter are shaped by learning cultures. A particular strength of this perspective is that it takes into consideration issues of power and the influence of social, economic and political forces in accounting for particular configurations of teaching and learning practices. It also alerts us to the possibility of variation in practices, as actors achieve a degree of agency in the way they implement policy.

While these discussions of lecturers' adaptations are illuminating, a great deal more work has been done on the effects of reforms on teachers working in the compulsory schooling sector, some of which is considered below.

Secondary school teachers' work

Marshall and Ball (1999) explore the relationships between teachers' sense of self and work in secondary schools in the 1990s. They consider teachers' perceptions of their role in the past, what it might be, and what it has now become. They identify emotional responses to educational reform and suggest that:

> One way of thinking about the processes of educational reform
> over the past decade, in the UK and elsewhere, is in terms of a
> shift in the locus of commitment and control. Essentially, the
> logics and disciplines of reform have come to articulate and

animate schools in terms of 'competition and standards' (see Ball,

1997; Ball 1998; Ball and Gewirtz, 1997). Control has shifted

primary emphasis on professional decision-making to a primary

emphasis on accountability, from self to 'the system'. Hence the

sense of loss, of alienation.

(Marshall and Ball, 1999, p.74)

All the informants in Marshall and Ball's research noted the influence of external factors on their work and expressed some resentment regarding the lack of consultation about policy decisions generated centrally and within the schools themselves. In one instance, a teacher talks about an 'amorphous system' that devalues his work. Another teacher uses the language of conflict to describe 'them and us' relations between the teachers and the Senior Management Team. A third respondent describes her school as being divided into clusters like 'competing companies' when she talks about award choice events. In this instance the internal market is portrayed as a barrier to the creation of a collaborative culture working together for the whole school. Marshall and Ball suggest that what respondents indicate is a loss of attachment. The production of values and meaning are generated from locations which are external to the teachers themselves and the spaces that once existed for consultation and debate have been closed down.

Marshall and Ball's informants expressed feelings of loss and frustration not only about their changing working conditions, but also about how they are expected to carry out their roles. The institutions and the teachers' own role are described as becoming impersonal and even distorted. They explain that they now feel compelled to give more support and attention to 'talented' students at the expense of those who need particular help. This, alongside other aspect of their

practice, is at odds with their value base and the related perception they hold of the teacher role. Marshall and Ball explain:

> there is a strong sense of the shifting focus of commitment and potential disappearance of meaning from the classroom and from relationships, between teachers as teachers, and between teachers and their students. Indeed, in the world of educational reform and new school organizations,'teaching' is almost an epiphenomenon. … What these teachers are saying is that they are now in a position of adopting pedagogies and making decisions about their use of time that go against their professional judgments about best practice; and these constraints are not simply practical, but also constitute what Woods *et al*. (1997) call an 'assault on values' (p.84). Furthermore, in three of the four examples discussed here, the value concerns of the teachers are related, in particular to the reorientation of their practice towards the needs and interests of the 'high achieving ' student and away from others.
> (Marshall and Ball, 1999 p.77 - 78)

Marshall and Ball (1999) argue that, although teachers acknowledge some benefits of change, their views on the negative consequence arise from thoughtful consideration of practices in the past. Their values are challenged, with teaching perceived to be no longer valid in its own right unless it can be 'accounted for'. These authors contend that teachers' sense of loss, guilt and confusion relates to an authenticity of 'teaching' that lies at the heart of the educational enterprise and that generates the commitment and meaning that underpin the efficacy of practice (p.80).

Primary school teachers' work

In the context of the primary school, there are some positive accounts of responses to education reform which lend support to David Hargreaves' speculative claims about the emergence of a new form of professionalism. For example, Cooper and McIntyre (1996) found that the introduction of the National Curriculum had proved to be an effective stimulus for collaborative planning, shared professional learning and the development of teacher professional craft knowledge. Similarly, Gipps *et al* (1995) claimed that there was evidence of increased professionalism emerging in the area of teacher assessment, and Pollard *et al* (1994) suggested an 'emergent professionalism' amongst teachers who largely complied with the reforms and saw them as necessary measures to remedy previous deficiencies in the system.

Other researchers acknowledge some positive outcomes arising from restructuring but they also draw attention to the negative impact of reform on teachers' work and on their professional identities:

> Among the positive features are a welcome for the order and framework of sound planning, new opportunities for self-development, an increase in ownership and control of one's teaching, the ability to 'engage' with others and greater expertise. The negative features are a mirror image of these: bureaucratic and work overload, diminished selves, loss of ownership and control, distance rather than engagement, and an atrophying of skills. … But the balance on the whole strongly favours the negative.
>
> (Woods *et al*., 1997, p.84)

Woods and Jeffrey (2002) argue that primary teachers have had to reconstruct their identities in response to reforms of the education system in the context of global trends and the state of 'high modernity'. Their view of identity incorporates social identity, personal identity, and self-concept. Social identities are structured by expectations about the teachers' role. Assumptions about social role may be gleaned on the basis of appearance, behaviour and location. However, this aspect of identity is not necessarily fixed and may change over time, in response to changing expectations about the teacher's professional role. It is an assigned aspect of identity. Personal identities are constructed by actors about themselves and are derived from the meanings attributed to the self by the actor, which are brought into play during the course of interaction. There may be consistency between one's social identity and personal identity but often there will not be.

In their research Woods and Jeffrey explored primary teachers' personal identities and were then able to consider the consistency or inconsistency between these and the social identities inscribed in educational reforms. Drawing on Nias's (1989) research findings, they make the case that during the Plowden era there was a high degree of consistency between teachers' social and personal identities. This integrated self incorporated two major sets of values: humanism and vocationalism. The former is characterised by the emphasis placed on person-centredness, caring relations and holism, with 'good teaching' focusing on the individual development of the child and opportunities for active and discovery learning, and curriculum integration. Vocationalism concerns the teacher's relationship with her work, where teaching is seen as a professional vocation.

However, since the 1960s, society and the education system have undergone radical changes which have had major implications for teachers' work and their professional role, and therefore for their social identities. These stemmed

from criticisms of the child-centred philosophy combined with a loss of 'elementary trust' on the part of the public. Educational reforms have challenged the Plowden self-identity; new values have come to dominate educational practices which sharply contrast with those of the previous era. The new values are reflected in increasingly centralised control of the curriculum and the establishment of education markets, along with the new forms of management and quality assurance mechanisms to support these developments. Woods and Jeffrey suggest that, in this new environment, everyday assumptions are challenged. They consider the impact of these developments on teachers' work:

> In education, these developments have been reflected in the growth of economic rationalism and technicism, an emphasis on marketability, efficiency and performativity, the growth of management systems and of audit accountability, and attacks on the moral systems, such as child centeredness, which appear to have run counter to these (Woods *et al*, 1997). These processes demand attention, and teachers have been forced to reconsider their beliefs, values, role, biographies, and ambitions in ways they had not anticipated. As Hargreaves (1994, p.17) puts it, 'The fragile self becomes a continuous reflexive project. It has to be constantly and continuously reaffirmed'.
> (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p.90)

These authors relate these developments to global trends, and acknowledge Giddens' (1991) thesis, which holds that in the current state of 'late' or 'high modernity' there are changes which have an impact on the self in new ways. The

notion of a high degree of trust in much of everyday life, based on personalized relations, has been eroded. Trust is now embedded in processes and abstract systems. High modernity is also characterised by 'risks' of a global origin, which expose individuals to opportunities as well as to harm. Giddens (1991, pp. 189-196) suggests that the self in late modernity typically confronts four major dilemmas:

1. The degree to which the self is unified or becomes fragmented;
2. Whether one appropriates the changes to one's own concerns, or feels powerless before the scale and depth of the changes;
3. The question of authority versus uncertainty;
4. Personalised versus commodified experienced.

Giddens suggests that the dilemmas induce 'fateful moments' as the individual considers the risks and possibilities associated with them. In doing so, taken-for-granted ways of operating are called into question. He contends that in responding to these dilemmas there is scope for the role of agency, and the possibility for re-integration as well as disintegration, for opportunity as well as risk. He suggests that a key aspect of self-identity is the 'ideal self' which provides a channel for the narrative of self-identity to be worked out.

Woods and Jeffrey's research into the reconstruction of primary teachers' identities provided data which they tested against Giddens' hypothesis, alongside identity theory in general. They concluded that the restructuring of education had an impact on some teachers' identities, especially mid-career professionals. They argue that the four dilemmas Giddens identified clearly shaped these teachers' experiences of self in late modernity. Fragmentation of self manifests itself in the desire of teachers to retain old values in a context where there was pressure to adopt a new persona which incorporates managerial and marketable aspects of the

new teacher role. The reduction in teacher autonomy created feelings of powerlessness, a sense of having no influence over change and experiencing a loss of trust. Teachers expressed feelings of uncertainly about their work and role and their vocational commitment in the new order. The pressure to provide a commodified rather than personalised educational experience was supported by audit accountability, which placed emphasis on the abstract and the universal rather than on personal and localised practices. In the new regime the 'good teacher' is no longer defined with reference to personal qualities but rather judged by competencies. Woods and Jeffrey argue that:

> These challenges have thrown up new dilemmas for teachers, and represent 'fateful moments' in the careers of their identities. In trying to resolve the dilemmas, teachers have engaged in identity work, characterised mainly by identity talk, and a number of emotional and intellectual strategies. The result has been a partitioning of the old Plowden self-identity, with the 'real self' being largely withheld from the new personal identity and the sense of vocationalism being set to one side. The new personal identity in teaching represents a more instrumental and situational outlook, with the substantial self finding more expression elsewhere. Identity work is still in progress and seems set to continue while teachers have to find ways of relating to two or more competing discourses.
>
> (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p.89)

These authors report that this was:

not just talk. … teacher talk conveyed a great deal of feeling.

This is important, as the strongly traumatic negative feelings

induced by the assigning of the new social identity – those of

guilt, shame, fear, shock, etc. – needed to be countered if the

personal identity were to be salvaged. … they have been

disempowered, and are trying here 'to generate identities that

provide them with a measure of self-worth and dignity'.

(Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p. 98)

The majority of Woods and Jeffreys' informants displayed a commitment to maintaining the Plowden self-identity, rejecting the new assigned social identity. These researchers noted that teachers adopted a number of strategies to preserve their identities in the new environment that they had to cope with. All of these indicated the fragmentation of their old substantial self-identity and some form of separation from the role expectations associated with the new assigned social identity:

- Self-positioning – a determination to maintain the Plowden self-identity
- Refusal – maintaining the same level of humanism, as defined earlier
- Self-Assertion – expressions of determination, superiority, anger, thoughts of resignation.

These processes required the development of new personal identities that would enable the teachers to meet the current requirements without actually adopting a commitment to the new social identity. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) found that personal identities within teaching had become more 'situational', generated to cope with different situations and purposes. One strategy that was identified was that of 'game playing' (Goffman, 1959): teachers would 'play the game' for the

OFSTED inspectors by displaying the performance that the latter would value. But this behaviour was not 'for real' and required a degree of distancing from their sense of 'self'. Of course there is a price to be paid for this strategy, as Casey (1995) suggests, since it can lead to teachers experiencing ambivalence about their self-identity, when confronted by authority in a low trust environment. These teachers adopted a form of 'strategic compliance', which entails acceptance of the system they are working within, while simultaneously retaining private reservations about the new expectations of their professional role. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) conclude:

> identities are thus in flux, there is no settled state. There are signs
> of multiple and situational identities that were not there before in
> the integrated self-identity. … personal identities are not static,
> but alter with time.
> (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, p.105)

Jeffrey (2002) also studied how primary teachers adapted their professional practice in response to OFSTED inspection. He attributes changes in practice to the dominance of 'performativity' discourse which emphasises the importance of outcomes and targets. Like Ball (2003), he makes the point that performativity is not only an accountability system but also a discourse, because the practices involved incorporate values, generate certain kinds of behaviours and affect personal relations. In the case of primary teachers, the new discourse challenged the dominant humanistic discourse that had developed in the Plowden era, and in doing so it had a profound impact on their professional relations with others. Jeffrey's research revealed how the performativity discourse affected

62

primary teachers' relations at three levels: with students; with colleagues; and with local advisors and inspectors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have briefly surveyed some of the literature which focuses on the impact of neo-liberal educational reform and restructuring on the work of lecturers and teachers. The key debate that commentators have engaged in relates to the influence of structural forces and the scope for individual agency in explanations of adaptations to working within the new managerialist performativity culture. Optimistic accounts of change in schools argue that the new conditions allow for the emergence of a new professionalism based on a collaborative and collective responsibility for what goes on within them. It is argued that teachers can now play a more active role in planning the curriculum and have an influence over the development of institutional policies. Other authors have acknowledged that teachers may be positive about some aspects of change but on balance their views negative about the impact that these reforms have had on their professional role.

With regard to further education lecturers' work, Avis (2003) notes the 'good lecturer' within the new culture of further education is now institutionalised as a facilitator of learning who can access and use a range learning resources and technologies. He argues this equates to technicist construction of the teaching role which represents a departure from the previously dominant legitimated teacher professionalism. Randle and Brady (1997) suggest that the scope for individual agency has been reduced with structural factors contributing to the de-skilling and de-professionalisation of lecturers. However, they do not depict lecturers' responses as simply passive and note that there is some resistance which is indicated by lecturers' retention and commitment to 'public service' values.

Esland *et al* (1999) suggest that HRM policies have played a role in redefining institutional priorities and professional behaviour, through responses to these are by no means uniform. These researchers, like Shain and Gleeson (1999), identify different responses to the new working environment which are related to role and professional biography. They note the scope for a mediation role by middle managers who attempt to work the system in the best interests of both staff and students. The concept of 'creative mediation' discussed by James and Biesta (2007) developed from the work Gleeson and Knight (2006) is helpful in considering how within the new order lecturers mediate dualism in the tensions and contradictions between structure and agency. They suggest that lecturers do this by drawing on biographical resources which enable them to reassert their identity in an attempt to reconstruct their professionalism.

Marshall and Ball (1999) found that secondary teachers acknowledge some benefits that have resulted from change but also held strong views about the negative consequences of reform. These views are grounded in reflection on their practice in the past. Teachers reported that they had adopted pedagogies and made decisions about their use of time that go their against professional judgement. The restructuring of education has resulted in feelings of loss, guilt and confusion in relation to the authenticity of teaching.

Similar findings emerge in studies of primary school teachers' work. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) have argued that primary school teachers have had to reconstruct their identities in response to the restructuring of the education system. They found that, especially for mid-career professionals, the degree of consistency between their social identity and personal identity has been undermined as the new values which have come to dominate educational practices which are in sharp

64

contrast to those of the previous era. In this context teachers face dilemmas which are equated to fateful moments where there are risks as well as possibilities. They may wish to retain old values but now operate in a context where there is pressure to adopt a new persona which incorporates managerial and marketable aspects of the teacher role. There is pressure to provide a commodified educational experience for children rather than the personalised approach to which they have a commitment to. The reduction in professional autonomy leads to feelings of powerless and a loss of trust. Teachers experience uncertainty about their work and role which impacts on their commitment. To cope with these circumstances, teachers employed a range of strategies such as identity talk, game playing and strategic compliance, to salvage their self-esteem.

The researchers mentioned above who have focused on primary and secondary school teachers' work and discussed the emotional impact of responding educational change reveal something of what happens when teachers' professional values are challenged by curricula change. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) discussed the significance of 'identity talk' which provides a channel for the narrative of self-identity to be worked out as teachers grapple with the National Curriculum. With regard to lecturers delivering GNVQ and AVCE courses there are questions to ask about whether the educational principles these are based on represent a departure from previous vocational educational courses that they delivered. Can a distinctive educational philosophy that lecturers teaching in Health and Social Care and Business Studies subscribe to, be discerned in a similar way to primary school teachers attachment to the Plowden, humanistic, child-centred philosophy, which was threaten by the requirements for the National

Curriculum? If respondents do hold a particular view teaching and learning to what extent is it possible to practice in preferred ways in the new order?

While there has been some research on FE concerned with adaptations to recent policy changes, as discussed here, this has not generally focused specifically on curricular reforms. This will be my focus in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction

The processes by which educational policies are developed and implemented are complex, involving contingent variation over time and across sites. Scott (2000) has argued that the policy-making process cannot be understood as a one-directional flow that travels along a chain from the centre to the periphery to be implemented. He notes that policy-makers' original intentions rarely match policy outcomes. He suggests that policy implementation is a complex process which rarely exhibits a linear form. At every stage in the policy process texts are reworked and undergo change (Bowe, *et al*, 1992). In relation to the curriculum, Woods *et al* (1997) argue:

> Teachers filter the policies of change through their existing
> professional ideologies, perspectives and identities (Broadfoot
> and Osborn 1988; Woods 1993, 1995). This produces a variety of
> adaptations in the teacher workforce ranging from compliance
> with the new policy through mediation and accommodation to
> resistance and rejection.
> (Woods *et al*, 1997, p.11)

The lecturers responsible for delivering GNVQs and the AVCE can be equated with Lipsky's (1980) 'street-level bureaucrats', who are at the critical interface of policy implementation. Lipsky argues that their commitment is very important but that so too are good communications, both within the organisation (in terms of professionals sharing a 'common definition of the situation') (Young and Mills, 1980) and as regards 'feed-back' from the 'street-level' to those at the centre

whose function it is to interpret policy decisions and to implement them (Williams, 1980). Hence, information relating to factors influencing implementation – the professional culture and commitment of the staff involved, the financial factors affecting the institution and student population, the extent of communications (as defined above), and the various forms of control exercised by NCVQ and the QCA; need to be explored in order to gain some purchase on responses and adaptations at the implementation level.

The need for research which focuses on patterns of responses to curricular changes has been identified by a number of commentators (Bates, 1998a; Goodson, 1998; Cornbleth, 1990). For example, Higham (2003b) has suggested that:

> A reading of the literature on curriculum implementation
> indicates the importance of situating curriculum study at the
> meso-level of the school or college (Ball, 1990, Goodson, 1998),
> in particular at the level of teachers (Humberman, 1998, A.
> Hargreaves, 1994; Bloomer, 1997; Yeomans, 1997) and course
> teams (Fullan, 1991, Hall 1995).
> (Higman, 2003, p.330)

> Further research is needed into the response of subject tutors and
> course teams to AVCE, focusing on curricular implementation
> and change at the subject level, and the concept of sub-curricular
> fields.
> (Higman, 2003, p.347)

The complexity of policy formation and implementation indicates the need to examine in detail how those on 'the front line' who are charged with implementing a policy interpret and respond to it. While part of this study has involved examining the processes involved in the development of GNVQs and AVCEs, the main focus is on how FE lecturers have viewed and adapted to these policy initiatives.

In order to carry out this inquiry I have made a number of choices about the methodological approach adopted and about the research methods and instruments needed to conduct my research. This chapter presents a discussion of research methodologies and a justification for adopting an interpretative stance and for the reliance on the particular kinds of data I have used.

Research Method

In seeking to understand the interpretations and adaptations of lecturers to the curricular reforms, I adopted a longitudinal case study approach. I investigated how these policy changes were implemented in particular FE colleges. The longitudinal nature of the research enabled me to explore the dynamics associated with implementation over a sustained period of time. In carrying out my research I used qualitative methods to explore in depth the experience of a small sample of lecturers.

The terms 'case study' and 'qualitative method' now cover a diverse range of approaches, both as regards the actual forms of data employed and how they are obtained, and in terms of ontological and epistemological assumptions involved (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000, Mitchell, 2000, Stake, 2000). In this sub-section I discuss factors that influenced my choice of a case study approach and the

adoption of an interpretive stance for my research, in relation to debates about the nature of case study research and epistemology.

A broad definition of a case study is that it involves seeking diverse kinds of evidence which are found within the case setting, to provide the best possible answer to the research question. Hammersley and Gomm (2000) point out that case study research denotes a particular form of inquiry that differs from other forms of social research such as experiments or social surveys. Unlike experimental researchers, who seek control of variables, case study researchers, build their cases from naturally occurring situations. Case study research may vary in terms of the number of cases studied and the amount of detailed provided about the case. Essentially, case study research generally refers to the investigation of a small number of cases, or in some instances just one, in considerable depth. Variation exists in the extent to which researchers document the context of the case in terms of the wider society and historical context. Variation also occurs according to whether the case study researcher is concerned solely with description and explanation or engages in evaluation and prescription.

Case study researchers' aims typically differ from researchers who use experimental methods and social surveys, in that their focus is on capturing the uniqueness of a case, rather than using their findings as a basis for wider generalization or theoretical inference. This difference relates to the epistemological assumptions that researchers working in the qualitative tradition hold. By contrast with those who assume a positivist stance, who approach social life externally, as a matter of objective knowledge, qualitative researches approach it internally, attempting to understand the meaning that social actors

give to phenomena under investigation. Researchers working in this tradition see the role of communication, symbols and language as fundamental to social life.

For this research, which is concerned with the meanings that lecturers give to curriculum change and how they adapt to new regimes, I have engaged in qualitative research and adopted an interpretative epistemology. Oliver (2004) argues that because qualitative research assumes an interpretative epistemology it can aid the exploration of diverse understandings. It also assumes that knowledge is created and negotiated between human beings (Strauss *et al*, 1963), but this is not to deny the effects of structural forces on human perceptions and behaviour. A social action perspective that also recognises structural determination must start from the way people interpret their experiences and how they actively seek to create order in their existence.

There are issues for qualitative researchers to consider in relation to the generalizability of their findings. Cronbach (1982) for example, notes the cultural dimension of human action and argues that it is constructed, not caused. He argues that given the complexity of the social purposes that may exist, it is not appropriate for social scientists to aspire to obtaining Newton-like generalizations, as Thorndike did, to describe human action. In his discussion of generalization and single case studies, Donmoyer (2000) argues that notions of generalizability may need to be reconsidered. He contends that the ideological nature of the paradigms and concepts researchers' employ in carrying out investigations can leads to speculative conceptualizations which are not determined by the data but, rather, determine what the data are. These conceptualizations are social constructions which may prevent researchers considering alternative conceptions of reality. He argues that what is important is what others make of the research

and suggests that case study can contribute to 'naturalistic generalization' which is rooted in a concept of experiential knowledge. Melrose (2010) explains:

> Naturalistic generalization is a process where readers gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented in case studies. As readers recognize similarities in case study details and find descriptions that resonate with their own experiences; they consider whether their situations are similar enough to warrant generalization. Naturalistic generalization invites readers to apply ideas from the natural and in-depth depictions presented in case studies to personal contexts.
>
> (Melrose, 2010, p.599)

Therefore readers need to consider how and in what ways the details and stories presented in the research report are applicable to their own understanding; and to what extent they can be transferred and generalized to similar contexts. In this way, Stake (2002) argues that case studies can facilitate learning which involves naturalistic generalization by providing opportunities for vicarious experience. Melrose comments:

> This can be achieved by providing a narrative account, a story, a chronological presentation, personalistic description, emphasis on time and place provide rich ingredients for vicarious experience. Stake emphasized that time, place and person are the first three steps.
>
> (Melrose, 2009, p.600)

Elaborating on this, Burke Johnson (1997) suggests that researchers should make clear the number of respondents in their study, how they were selected for the research, information about the informants, contextual information, the methods of data collection and data analysis techniques used. If this detail is provided the reader can arrive at naturalistic generalizations related to their own experience. Sample sizes do not have to be large for this to be possible, small samples and even single cases, have the potential to enlighten and inform. Commenting on the issue of generalization and case study research Donmoyer (2000) states:

> Thus, for practitioners concerned with individuals, not aggregates, research can never be generalizable in the sense suggested by Thorndike. Research can only function as a heuristic; it can suggest possibilities but never dictate action. It may well be the case that case study research can fulfil this function as well, or possibility even better, than more traditional approaches to research.
>
> (Donmoyer, 2000, p.51)

Lincoln and Guba (2000) also argue that scientific notions of generalization are an inappropriate aspiration for case study researchers. They contend that in social science generalizations that might be made can be seen as indeterminate, relative and time and context-bound. They suggest that case studies can offer 'working hypotheses' which may offer insight into other cases because of the degree of similarity between the case studied and another context. Lincoln and Guba talk about this in terms of the degree of transferability which is ascertained through empirical findings. They refer to this as 'fittingness' and explain:

73

Fittingness is defined as the degree of congruence between
sending and receiving contexts. If Context A and Context B are
'sufficiently' congruent, then working hypotheses from the
sending originating context may be applicable in the receiving
context.

(Lincoln and Guba, 2000, P.40)

Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that in order to make a judgement about fittingness the researcher needs to provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that other interested researchers have a basis to make a judgment. Therefore, historical, social, environment, and political contexts may need to be considered as they will help to explain incidents and issues of concern which form the background to the research. Following the usage by Geertz (1973), Lincoln and Guba (2000) define an appropriate base of information as a 'thick description' which informs the reader of all they need to know to in order to understand the findings.

The case study approach I adopted in my research was a relatively mainstream one, employing relatively unstructured interviews to collect data about FE lecturers, treating the latter as cases that illustrate variation in response to curricular reform. I have attempted to provide sufficient information about the context of my inquiry (a thick description) from a range of primary and secondary sources. These relate to the influence of the political, managerial and institutional context in which GNVQs and AVCEs were introduced. Inevitably, this has been a selective process and as such this has influenced the choices about data collection.

The research here can do no more than provide a few snapshots of the GNVQ and AVCE reforms and lecturers' responses and adaptations to them. It does not

allow us to draw very firm general conclusions that can be generalised. As
Hammersley *et al* (2000) note:

> […] cases falling under the terms of any correlation will rarely be
> similar to one another in all relevant aspects. And where these
> form part of a larger system, the correlation may arise from
> commonalities among cases. […] The second problem is that any
> case is descriptively inexhaustible, and any description involves
> cultural interpretations that are always potentially open to
> question. It is not simply a matter of the researcher looking to see
> what is going on in a case. All manner of processes will be
> occurring there, and the identification of any one of them will
> involve cultural interpretations about which there may be
> reasonable disagreement.
>
> (Hammersley *et al*, 2000, p.238)

However, this case study does provide some insight into what was happening on
the ground in the wake of these curricular reforms, and the factors that shaped
how they were implemented. I have attempted to describe in some detail the views
and experience of lecturers implementing the GNVQ and AVCE, in order to
provide an opportunity for naturalistic generalization.

Researcher Bias

Burke Johnson (1997) argues that a potential threat to validity that researchers
adopting a qualitative approach need to be aware of is researcher bias. He
suggests that this arises because qualitative research tends to be exploratory, more
open ended and less structured than quantitative research. Risk of bias can arise

from undertaking selective observations or the selective recording of information. In addition, there may be a danger of the researcher allowing their own views and perspectives to influence data collection and analysis.

Throughout the course of my research I was aware that of my own potential bias as a researcher. I was conscious of having particular views about pre-vocational curriculum development and the GNVQ. During the 1980s I acquired experience of curriculum and course development of health and social care courses at three colleges of further education as well as through work that I engaged in with an awarding body, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). In 1993 I returned to further education teaching as a part-time lecturer working on the Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ programmes in Health and Social Care implementing the first GNVQ curriculum model. It is reasonable to claim that on the basis of my experience in FE that I held an 'insider perspective' which could lead to bias in the collection and interpretation of data. During the course my research I had to ensure that I maintained a degree of objectivity in the selection of data and during the process of data analysis.

Reflexivity was one means of addressing this. I gave consideration my potential bias when developing the interview schedules and in my data analysis. During the course of the interviews I often re-phrased questions and asked them at another point during the interviews, to check the meaning given to an area being explored by the informants. There were occasions when informants contradicted themselves during the interviews and this was considered during the data analysis. In order to ensure that accounts provided by informants conveyed the meaning they intended verbatim interview transcripts were sent to the informants to comment or amend. None of the informants altered the transcripts. Burke-Johnson (1997) suggests that by using low

inference descriptors such as verbatim direct quotations can promote qualitative research validity. Verbatim quotations were used extensively in the data analysis chapters to describe informants' responses and adaptations. In this way I believe I accurately reported what I heard. However, another threat to the validity of my research came from the nature of the investigation in itself. I was asking informants to reflect on their previous modes of practice and describe these. There is always a danger that lecturers' accounts of the past may be inaccurate, they may describe what they feel the interviewer want to hear. I was also aware that where informants were critical of the current regime they might glamorise the past in their accounts of practice. Consideration was given to this during the data analysis. Analysis of these informants' interview transcripts revealed several consistent themes, and similar descriptions of pedagogical approaches in their accounts of past practice. If there were some inaccuracies in informants accounts these were still of interest as the interviews revealed something of how lectures positioned their professional selves in relation to pedagogical principles.

Sources of data

My research here in this study is based on data from three main sources. First, the considerable, publicly available documentary material associated with GNVQ and AVCE. This was collected and analysed in detail. Second, interviews were undertaken with some of those involved in promoting the reforms, in an attempt to delve behind the publicly available record to get a clear sense of both the motivations of key parties and the backstage negotiations that took place. Finally, and most importantly, there were interviews with lecturers who were involved in implementing each wave of reforms in several colleges. These interviews were

used primarily to explore and document how lecturers perceived the changes and how they adapted to them.

Documentary material

Relevant documents were easily available, and were collected and catalogued. An initial sense of the views and intentions of policy-makers was derived from analysis of the 1991 White Paper: *Education and Training for the 21ˢᵗ Century*, Labour Party, QCA and FEFC publications. A report by the Audit Commission/OFSTED (1993) outlined some concerns about performance of the further education sector which helped to provide contextual information about institutional reform. OFSTED reports relating to GNVQ, the *Capey Report* (1995) and *Dearing Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year-Olds (1996)* highlighted issues regarding the design of the qualifications, and implementation issues. A number of documents written by the awarding bodies for colleges and schools delivering the BTEC National, the Preliminary Certificate in Social Care (PCSC), GNVQ and the AVCE were also consulted. These included the GNVQ specifications and the AVCE Compulsory and Optional Units for the AVCE in Business Studies and Health and Social Care. This documentary analysis provided the springboard for interviews with some of those people behind the reforms.

Interviews with curriculum policymakers

To enhance understanding of the rationale for reform, and to gain an insight into the power relations and ideological frames of reference of policy-makers, in-depth interviews were undertaken with some of the key people involved. Informants were selected from the key organisations involved in the policy-making process. Letters were sent to informants requesting an interview providing an outline of research project. During the course of the interviews some informants suggested

other people involved in the development of GNVQ that might be useful to talk to. Therefore some informants were selected through a 'snowballing' sample. The interviews took place between 1998 and 1999. A semi-structured interview was conducted with Gilbert Jessup, then Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Research and Development at the National Council for Vocational Qualifications from 1986-1995. A Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) official, a development officer from the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), and an official from the City and Guilds London Institute, who were all members of the GNVQ Policy Steering Group, were also interviewed. An interview was also conducted with Jane Harrap, who undertook an evaluation of GNVQ for NCVQ, and went on to work at the Curriculum Qualifications Authority (QCA). In addition, an official at QCA with responsibility for the development of the AVCE was interviewed. The information derived from these interviews was compared with accounts of these curricular developments found in the literature, and this provided an enhanced understanding of the issues considered by policy-makers during the process, the forces driving them, and the tensions that arose.

Interviews with lecturers

In relation to GNVQ, there were interviews with ten lecturers, who were Programme Leaders responsible for courses at five further education colleges. Access to the particular sites selected for this study was made possible through contacts that my colleagues and I had with these institutions. These contacts had developed because some colleagues had worked at a particular college in the past, or as a result of meeting an informant when teaching on the Open University MA in Education Programme.

Colleges were selected so that they varied sharply in some of their key characteristics, in a way designed to maximise the representativeness of the information obtained. One College was located in inner London (Drayton College) and two others were located in outer London areas (Burley and Cannons College). One college was located in a city suburb in the Midlands (Emery College) and the fifth in a 'greenfield' site in the Home Counties (Appleton College). The four city colleges, those in London and the Midlands, had a large proportion of GNVQ Advanced students who were described by the lecturers as academically weak. Furthermore, some of their students experienced financial hardship, and relatively high proportions of their students were from ethnic minority backgrounds, for many of whom English was not their first language. A considerable proportion of the students worked part-time to support themselves while studying. It was also the case that lecturers at these colleges were conscious of operating within a competitive market context. In contrast, those working at Appleton College did not express concerns about the levels of academic ability and the social circumstances of their students, nor did they feel that the establishment of the 'quasi-market' impacted negatively on their work. These differences in context allowed consideration to be given to the influence of institutional factors on lecturers' work in the data analysis. It is important to note that because this research is primarily concerned with lecturers' responses and their adaptations only two lecturers at each college were interviewed for each phase of the research. The absence of data from other actors at each college limits the inferences that can be drawn about the impact of institutional factors. However, it has been possible to consider how these lecturers' perceive the impact of these factors on the ways they carry out their work.

Having a named contact at each college site enabled me to approach a suggested informant by letter, requesting an interview and providing an outline of the research project. All lecturers were approached in this way and agreed to an interview. At each of the five sites, two lecturers who were Programme Leaders for the GNVQ courses in Business Studies and Health and Social Care were interviewed. These interviews were conducted in 1997, after the lecturers had worked with the first cohort of students undertaking the revised 1995 assessment GNVQ model. The initial sample of lecturers was 'purposive', comprising course leaders who understood the complexities of GNVQ standards and assessment, and were able to contrast this with the requirements of BTEC and PCSC courses, which the colleges had replaced with GNVQ. Once contact had been made with one lecturer in each college who taught GNVQ and had previously taught the BTEC or PCSC, they were asked to identify a colleague, as a potential informant, who was curriculum leader for either the Business Studies or Health and Social Care GNVQ within their college. In this way further informants were obtained through 'snowball sampling'.

As stated above, my approach to this case study can be described as qualitative. I assumed an interpretive epistemology for my research because it would support the exploration of diverse perspectives that the informants may hold. Therefore, a decision was made to conduct semi-structured interviews with lecturers so that they had some latitude to talk about themselves and issues that connect with their own individual and unique experiences when discussing the GNVQ and AVCE. The aim was to try to get an in-depth understanding of their perspectives. A semi-structured interview was carried out with each informant at their college (for the interview schedule, see Appendix 3). At the start of each

81

interview I explained to the informants that pseudonyms would be used for themselves and their institutions in my research report to preserve their anonymity.

Where possible, informants were asked to compare the GNVQ with a predecessor course in the same vocational area. The majority of informants compared GNVQ with BTEC National programmes. These informants made comparisons in terms of the following topics: course content; student-selection criteria; resources as indicated by course hours and staff-student ratios; teaching and delivery; assessment practice; moderation and validation procedures; and the lecturer's perceptions of student recruitment, retention and progression. It was hoped that asking the lecturers to engage in comparisons with the characteristics of previous vocational educational courses would elicit reports of relevant changes in practices for individual lecturers and their perceptions of these. The two informants with no prior experience of delivering a vocational educational course in an FE college could not engage in such a comparison. One of these informants, Carol, compared her experience of GNVQ with GCSE.

During the interviews data was obtained on the professional background of informants and this considered during data analysis. Two of these informants (Alice, Appleton College, GNVQ Health and Social Care, and Carol, Cannons College, GNVQ Business Studies) had not had experience of delivering earlier vocational programmes but had backgrounds in teaching GCSE courses and nursing. These informants could not make comparisons with other vocational education courses but they could comment on their experience of the GNVQ against these different backgrounds. Eight of the informants had taught on predecessor vocational courses in the same vocational area which they were

involved in delivering in 1996. Seven of these informants had taught on BTEC National programmes and one respondent, Doris, had taught on the CCETSW Preliminary Certificate in Social Care (PCSC) course. All of these informants had taught in their specialist field over a number of years (Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the professional backgrounds of informants). Two of the informants worked with Intermediate GNVQ students, one of these, Cora, had taught on the NNEB Nursery Nursing course and Carol had taught GCSEs. Two of the informants did not have experience of teaching a similar level programme of study. Alice had a nursing background and she had worked in a nursery prior to teaching the GNVQ. Carol is the other informant who had not taught on a vocational education programme before, but she had taught GCSE courses before she started working with GNVQ students.

The second phase of the research took place two years after the AVCE had been introduced in 2002. The interviews were conducted at this time because the first cohort of AVCE students had completed the qualification. This ensured that all the lecturers were able to reflect on their experience in delivering all the curriculum content; and on their experience of the assessment and moderation model. To explore lecturers' responses and adaptations to the AVCE I returned to four of the colleges selected as sites for research in the GNVQ study. It was not possible to re-gain access to Emery College, located in a city suburb in the Midlands, because staff had moved on. By returning to the four institutions where data was collected for the GNVQ research, an attempt was made to maximise the comparability of the data across the two curriculum innovations. Lecturers reported that the AVCE students that they worked with were fairly similar in their social characteristics to the GNVQ students. Once again, with the exception of

Appleton College on the 'greenfield site', the lecturers interviewed described a substantial proportion of their intake as academically weak, and some of their students experienced financial hardship. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, for whom English was not their first language, was higher at Burley, Cannons and Drayton College, than it was at Appleton College. At all the colleges, the respondents reported that their students worked part-time, which had implications for the time that students could devote to their studies.

Two curriculum Leaders for AVCE courses in Business Studies and Health and Social Care were interviewed at the each of the four sites (Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of the professional backgrounds of informants). All of these informants had had experience of delivering GNVQ prior to the AVCE. It was not possible in every instance to interview the same informants for this phase of the research. Five of the Curriculum Leaders interviewed for the GNVQ research had moved on. The three that remained in post were Alice from Appleton College, Cora from Cannons College, and Doris from Drayton College.

Informants were asked to compare the AVCE with the GNVQ in relation to the same topics used earlier: course content; selection criteria; resources; teaching and delivery; assessment practice; moderation procedures; and perceptions of student recruitment, retention and progression (see Appendix 4 for the interview schedule). It was hoped that the comparison with GNVQ would bring to attention significant changes in practice and individual lecturers' views about these.

The GNVQ and AVCE interviews were taped and transcribed. The text of the interviews was sent to respondents to obtain respondent validation for the content, and they were asked to comment. No amendments were made by the

informants to the transcripts. While interview data does not provide access to direct information about what the lecturers did in the classroom, it does provide indirect information about this. Every effort was made to build up trust with informants and to encourage them to discuss the details of their practice. In this way, it was hoped to capture not only their 'espoused theories' about their work but also their 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schon, 1974). While carrying out direct observations of their work in classrooms would have provided a check on the interview data, doing this would have meant that a smaller number of lecturers in a narrower range of college settings could have been studied, and this was judged to be too great a cost to pay, given that reasonably reliable information about practice can be obtained via interviews.

Data Analysis

The lecturers' interview transcripts were scrutinized for themes that might help with the data analysis such as views on pedagogic practices, forms of freedom and control, concepts of quality, the impact of the 'quasi-market', resource issues, and so on. Views about preferred pedagogical approaches and current practice could be discerned in lecturers' accounts. These views were compare with key features of particular approaches to pre-vocational education, 'new vocationalism' (Pring, 1995) and 'controlled vocationalism' (Bates *et al* 1998). This data also revealed the degree of professional autonomy lecturers believed they had in terms of control over their work, and whether they felt they were constrained by factors beyond their control, which prevented them working in their preferred ways. It was also possible to identity instances where lecturers were experiencing intensification of work. The transcripts revealed something of the lecturers' values. Informants commented on what they believed the purpose of pre-

vocational education should be and what they felt the role of the lecturer should be in the delivery of this. Data related to the respondents' professional background was also considered and related to perceptions and practices they described during their interviews.

The data produced is used to develop a typology of adaptation which provides some indication of the range of variation in the attitudes of lecturers towards the reforms, and how they set about implementing them. These analytical categories were constructed by drawing on previous studies of FE lecturers' adaptations to organizational changes (Esland *et al*, 1999, Shain and Gleeson, 1999, Gleeson and Knight, 2006, James and Biesta, 2007) and on studies of school teachers' responses to curricular and pedagogical reform (Marshall and Ball, 1999 and Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). These various categories were modified on the basis of intensive analysis of the data.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested that by adopting a qualitative approach for my research I have been able to obtain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and adaptations of FE lecturers. The narrative accounts provided by informants have formed part of a longitudinal case study which explores the complex dynamics associated with implementing curriculum policy over a sustained period of time in the context of institutional reform. The perspectives represented here may not be representative of all pre-vocational education lecturers' experience. Tentative claims about lecturers' responses and adaptations in the delivery of GNVQs and AVCEs are restricted to lecturers working within the Business Studies and Health and Social Care curriculum areas; and these lecturers' experiences need to be understood within a given managerial and

institutional context, and must be related to their professional pedagogic values. However, this research does offer insights into the ways in which lecturers' carry out their work and the factors that influence choices made about pedagogical approaches.

Chapter 4 Curricular Change in FE colleges and the role of the lecturer: the rise of GNVQ

Around the middle of the twentieth century, the main form of further education had been the provision of 'day-release' vocational part-time courses, to accompany experience gained in the workplace by apprentice practitioners of trades and professions. However, the economic crisis of the mid-1970s made this dominant mode of provision increasingly inappropriate. The decline of heavy industries had resulted in the collapse of the apprenticeship system and led to rising unemployment. This, combined with a demographic bulge in the number of school leavers, resulted in an increasing number of young of people unable to enter the labour market on leaving school.

This situation stimulated renewed interest in vocational education; and in 1976 James Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, made his infamous Ruskin College speech that launched the 'Great Education Debate'. Callaghan suggested that the reasons for youth unemployment were that young people were being inadequately prepared for the world of work. Schools, teachers and young people themselves were presented as responsible for the situation. The solution, Callaghan argued, was for education to align itself closer to the needs of industry:

> Parents, teachers, learned and professional bodies, representatives
> of higher education and both sides of industry, together with the
> government, all have an important part to play in formulating and
> expressing the purpose of education and the standards that we
> need. … I am concerned on my journeys to find complaints from
> industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have

the basic tools to do the job that is required. … To the teachers I

would say that you must satisfy the parents and industry that what

you are doing meets their requirements and the needs of our

children. … There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted

members of society who are unemployed because they do not

have the skills.

(Callaghan, Rt Hon J, 1976)

Ainley and Bailey (1997) note that even though education and training

cannot in themselves create employment opportunities, this view nevertheless

gained credibility at the time. They comment:

Perhaps through its repetition, this unsubstantiated argument

came to be widely accepted and vocational relevance to the needs

of industry came to replace the principle of equal opportunities

for all as the purpose of state schooling.

(Ainley and Bailey, 1997 p.5)

What emerged out of this change in ideas about the function and nature of

education, in the context of FE, was the development of pre-vocational education

and the new vocationalism (Gleeson 1992:63):

In the wake of Callaghan's speech, the subsequent 'Great Debate'

and the election of a Conservative government a plethora of

White Papers were produced containing a wide variety of

proposals for the reform of vocational education. Acronyms

multiplied as general policy statements were translated into

89

specific programmes and courses – YOPs, YTS, TVEI, CPVE,

DVE, NVQs, GNVQs – the list is itself evidence of both

continuity and flux - the 'problem' remained constant, the means

of tackling it ever-changing. This group of programmes and

initiatives are widely known collectively as constituting the 'new

vocationalism' and while this disguises important difference

between programmes they contain sufficient common elements to

justify the use of an umbrella term.

(Yeomans, 1998, p.128)

Pring (1995) describes these new forms of FE provision as occupying an

imprecise middle ground between conventional academic and traditional training

courses. But, as Yeomans indicates, they also varied amongst themselves. For

example, the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was initiated as work-based

provision in response to youth unemployment, whereas the Certificate in Pre-

Vocational Education (CPVE) was developed as a broad based vocational

programme for those wanting full-time education. Thus, new vocationalism

stimulated a variety of types of course.

During the 1980s, changing patterns of participation had resulted in what

Spours (1997) describes as piecemeal reform of the FE qualifications system. In

1983 the Business Technical Education Council (BTEC) was formed from a

merger of the Business Education Council (BEC) and the Technical Education

Council (TEC). BEC and TEC had different curriculum traditions. TEC had been

based on an industrial training model, providing its candidates with a series of

objectives to be met and subjecting them to individual assessment. BEC placed

emphasis on holistic understanding of workplace organisation, skills development

90

and personal development. According to Cantor *et al* (1995), the courses developed by the new BTEC represented a partial victory of BEC over TEC, which was reflected in the policy of common skills and integrated course design, designed to provide a foundation for the subsequent development of specific job skills. BTEC validated broad-based vocational educational courses such as the BTEC National, which provided young people with an alternative entry route into work or vocationally relevant employment, or into higher education. Where previously one of the tensions within FE had been between vocational training and the provision of a liberal education, with the expansion of the university sector colleges took on a new role: preparing some students for higher education. Colleges offered A-level courses as a route to HE, but for students who wanted a full-time course with a vocational focus the BTEC offered an attractive alternative entry route.

However, the 1990s witnessed further major development. In 1993 many colleges replaced their BTEC National courses with the new Advanced level GNVQs which were being promoted by the Government. In the 1991 White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century*:

> …colleges, schools and particularly awarding bodies were
> reminded rather pointedly that the Secretary of State had powers
> under section 24 of the 1988 Education Reform Act to regulate
> the provision for full-time students over the age of 16. It was
> announced that he would use these powers to require colleges and
> schools to offer only qualifications within the NCVQ framework
> to students pursing vocational options.
> (Sharp, 1998, p. 303)

In this chapter I will explore the character of the BTEC National, and then examine the emergence of the GNVQ and the differences in ideological and pedagogic principles that it introduced.

BTEC and the new vocationalism

The design of BTEC courses was influenced by the values associated with the new vocationalism, which began to emerge towards the end of the 1970s (Pring, 1995). As already noted, new vocationalism aimed at preparing young people for work in general terms, rather than offering training for specific jobs. The approach was outlined in the seminal document produced by the Further Education Unit '*A Basis for Choice*' (ABC) (1979). This proposed a framework of general education which included a vocational orientation relevant to broad occupational groups, and work experience. It was argued that such provision could help young people make informed choices about their routes into adulthood and employment. A number of courses, leading to recognised qualifications, were developed within this framework. These included City and Guilds London Institute (CGLI) course 365, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Vocational Preparation course, and the Certificate in Pre-vocational Education (CPVE), jointly offered by the CGLI and BTEC.

Gleeson (1989) suggests that the new vocationalism drew upon several features of what can be described as a progressive educational ideology, for example in placing emphasis on the value of experiential learning. Other distinctive features included:

- Cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary enquiry, linking technology, business, design and environmental issues

92

- A broadening of teaching methods and types of assessment

- Modular and unit approaches to curriculum development, associated with active learning strategies;

- An emphasis on group and project work associated with problem solving and enterprise skills;

- Coherent progression and links between school, college and work;

- Developing equal opportunities in relation to gender and race

(Gleeson 1989, p. 60)

The curriculum was generated from an analysis of both the personal needs of students and the perceived economic needs of society; rather than being based on distinctions among traditional subjects. Great emphasis was placed on encouraging students to reflect on their experiences within and outside of formal learning, in the context of cooperative and practical modes of classroom teaching. The aim of this curriculum model, incorporating these modes of learning, was that it would enable students to be guided towards grasping the deeper significance of the subject matter with which they were required to practically engage, and thereby to gain theoretical understanding. Pring (1995) explains:

The emphasis was more upon the process of learning (the development of study skills, the readiness to work co-operatively, the capacity to explore and to test out ideas, the ability to engage in discussions about work or values, the acquisition of basic skills of communication and numeracy and information technology) than upon the product of other people's learning; more upon

personal and social qualities (those of self-confidence, enterprise

and cooperation) than upon the disinterested pursuit of

knowledge; and more upon general capability than upon specific

work-related skills. … A key element would be 'the group'

through which ideas are developed and to whom assignments are

presented for critical appraisal.

(Pring, 1995 p. 93)

The framework provided a broader notion of curriculum than those associated

with traditional vocational and academic courses. Within this, the teacher was

expected to play a central role in creating an appropriate environment for learning

to take place. In this context the role of the lecturer was taken to be facilitative and

involved exposing students to situations in which they could construct their

knowledge of the world:

'Curriculum' is a richer concept than that of 'syllabus' or

'course'. The curriculum incorporated the aims, philosophy,

resources and (in the light of all these things) the planning of the

teacher. It refers to the carefully nurtured 'social processes in

which learning takes place, discoveries are made and pupils come

to terms with culture, we hope, learning to think independently

within culture' (Stenhouse,1967). The same syllabus can be

taught in different courses, the same course taught by different

teachers, in each case producing different curricula. … The

contribution of the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum.

(Pring, 1995, p, 81)

So, BTEC Nationals focused on general preparation for working life and for broad areas of work. They consisted of a range of relevant study units taught by subject or vocational specialists. Students were also required to undertake a practical workplace placement during the course. There was an emphasis on continuous assessment through interdisciplinary, integrative assignments that also assessed 'common skills', including information technology, communications, number skills, problem solving and working with others. Colleges prepared their own interdisciplinary, integrative assignments and end of year examinations, and these formed the assessment structure for the courses.

BTEC course teams were required to submit course submission proposals to BTEC as the validating body for their course. The submission proposal had to cover the rationale for the course design, aims of the course, its structure, arrangements for its implementation, teaching and learning strategies, assessment, course management, course evaluation, resources and staff development. The courses had to be designed in consultation with employers, so that they met industrial requirements by enabling students to develop knowledge and competences relevant for the vocational area that interested them. Although the skills developed were taught within a vocational context, they were intended to be transferable skills. Very similar arrangements were made for submissions for colleges to run the Preliminary Certificate in Social Care (PCSC) courses validated by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). These validating bodies approved a package of arrangements in a given centre for design, teaching, resources and assessment of courses.

In a discussion of BTEC's role, Cantor *et al* (1995) note that it concerned itself with the process of running courses, and not just their outcomes tested in the form of examinations:

> BTEC has invested considerable energy and funds in training the
> staff in its centres and in schools and colleges in the various
> aspects of its work, and its requirements have led to a growth in
> confidence among these staff about course design and assessment
> issues, with some imaginative teamwork being applied to the
> design of student assignments, particularly those which combine
> work from the various course disciplines. These interdisciplinary,
> 'cross-modular' arrangements and their integrative assignments
> have been an important feature of BTEC's philosophy, producing,
> it is believed, a broad understanding among students of the field
> of study and a greater capacity to transfer learning from one
> context to another.
>
> (Cantor *et al*, 1995, p.58)

At this time BTEC's perception of the contribution that lecturers could make to course design fits well with notions of 'lecturers as funds of expertise' identified by Randle and Brady (1977) within the professional paradigm. During this period, lecturers in further education colleges involved in teaching vocational education were encouraged by the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED), the Further Education Unit (FEU) and the Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) to favour experiential approaches to teaching and the active participation of learners.

Support materials produced by awarding bodies and the Further Education Unit (FEU) during this period advocated exploratory and interactive approaches to classroom teaching. The FEU suggested that one way of making lessons more 'student-centred' was to place learners' meanings at the centre of the curriculum. An underlying assumption of this approach was that in order for students to make sense of the experience of others, opportunities must exist for them to relate knowledge to their own framework of meanings derived from their own experience. The lecturer was encouraged to draw upon the experience of students as the starting point for generating their theoretical understanding.

In 1981 FEU published a project report 'How Do I Learn' which discussed an experiential programme to introduce young people and their teachers to the many ways of learning; and in 1988 another publication 'Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods' (1988) focused on implementing experiential learning. This drew upon the work of Kolb (1984), which emphasizes the importance of a dialectical interaction between action and reflection. Farrington's (1991) survey of publications produced by these organizations during this period lends support to the claim that 'student-centred' perspectives were actively encouraged. He provides several illustrations of the way the guidance provided to lecturers encouraged exploratory and interactive approaches to learning. He quotes the following extract from BTEC documentation:

> It is recognized that this emphasis on active learning constricts the
> opportunity to employ more formal and traditional methods…
> [but] …the Council regards such a shift in approach as
> necessary…
> (BTEC, 1985 cited in Farrington, 1991, p. 18)

Farrington's observations of several classes in FE colleges led him to conclude that there was a wide divergence in view amongst lecturers about the features of 'student-centred' approaches to learning. He frequently observed students being exposed to 'liberal teaching styles' where students were given some responsibility and initiative to control the learning process. However, it was generally the lecturer who made most of the decisions about pace, style and general conduct of the lessons.

In summary, then, the role of lecturers on BTEC/PCSC course entailed:

- Involvement in curriculum design (responsibility as a member of a course team for preparing the submission documentation to the relevant awarding body for approval to be a centre offering the qualification).

- Deployment of subject specialist knowledge (working as a member of a course team contributing to the development of integrated assignments and internal examinations).

- Responsibility for decisions about pace, style and general conduct of the lessons

- Engagement in dialogue with the vocational specialist moderators.

The Agenda for GNVQ

Towards the end of the 1980s, there was increasing concern in some quarters about whether the developments in FE were serving the necessary purpose. This was influenced by global pressures. A growing number of countries had developed national qualifications frameworks (Young, 2003). Ryan (1992) notes

that comparisons with other European competitors revealed that the English system was producing far fewer qualified young people, particularly in the area of vocational education.

In the late 1980s, an attempt was made to develop a more coherent approach to educational reform by building a national qualifications framework, through the setting-up of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in 1986. NCVQ held the power to kitemark qualifications which conformed to specific learning outcomes based on specifications drawn up on behalf of employers. It formed part of a new state apparatus for controlling all curricular developments within the broader context of the marketisation of education and training. These developments were supported by the new systems for funding further education that involved payment by recruitment, retention and outcomes.

The government charged the NCVQ with the task of rationalizing vocational qualifications by creating a framework of vocational areas and levels of achievement within which existing qualifications would fit. This brief included the bringing together of awarding bodies to monitor and assess the quality of their qualifications. It had to ensure that all occupational groups were represented within the new qualifications structure. Occupational groups were represented by industry lead bodies and comprised representatives from all of the relevant sectors of industry.

The work of NCVQ started a process of converting all vocational qualifications to an outcomes or competence-based model. The intention was to widen access to vocational qualifications to people in the workplace who were outside the mainstream qualifications system; and to meet the immediate job-

related training needs identified by employers, represented through the lead bodies. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) consist of statements of competence which are derived from an analysis of functions within the area of competence to which they relate. Statements of competence are accompanied by 'performance criteria' (PCs) which specify essential aspects of performance which equate to 'competence', and 'range statements' which describe the contexts in which the competence must be applied.

However, by the early 1990s the limitations of the NVQ as a means of raising levels of achievement and increasing access to vocational qualifications became apparent. The 1989 CBI report had pointed out that a serious shortcoming of current provision was a failure to provide a solid general foundation on which to build vocational and educational training (VET). It was argued that performance or competence-based education and training (CBET) schemes and approaches are too narrowly focused to capture all that is required in quality VET provision. Another difficulty was that NVQs had not taken root in full-time 16-19 education (Watson and Wolf, 1991).

Raggatt's (1994) survey of NVQ provision in the FE sector drew attention to two serious difficulties. First, there was the problem of finding suitable work placements in which students' competence could be assessed. Second, lecturers reported a lack of employer interest in the qualification. Hodgson and Spours (1997) note that several studies expressed concern that competence-based education and training undervalues knowledge and theory. Hyland (1994) comments:

The NCVQ model of CBET is based on a behaviourist learning foundation which, though possibly adequate for lower-level tasks

and skills, cannot meet the current requirements for the upgrading
of VET and the enhancement of the status of vocational studies
currently being made by most people concerned with post-16
education (Whiteside *et al*, 1992; NCE, 1993). Notwithstanding
the confused and equivocal position of NVQs as to whether they
are independent of learning programmes or conducive to
particular kinds of learning, the upshot of implementing NVQs in
practice seems to be a reduced curriculum, a narrowing of focus
which marginalizes knowledge and theory, and, because of an
administratively cumbersome assessment system, and a serious
delimitation of student-teacher interaction. The NCVQ rhetoric
about active and autonomous learning is not matched by the
reality of lecturers and trainers in the post-school sector striving
to maintain a commitment to and emphasis on process in the face
of strategies which seem to be exclusively concerned with
products. Moreover, the segmented and compartmentalized
assessment framework of NVQs seems to be inimical to growth,
development and progression in learning.

Hyland suggested that the behaviourist approach is at odds with the pedagogical
principles adopted by many further education and adult educators:

> The behaviourist-inspired learning foundation of NVQs seems to
> be utterly inappropriate in the light of the current needs of the
> post-16 system, for which experiential approaches informed by
> the cognitive/humanist tradition are far more suitable. There is a

mismatch and potential conflict between NVQ procedures and

preferred models of learning and teaching in mainstream further

and adult education which assumes active reflection on the part of

learners and a dynamic interrelationship between learning,

teaching and assessment along the lines of the 'learning by doing'

model. (Hyland, 1994, P. 62)

The shortcoming of NVQs were a significant factor influencing the Government's announcement of a full-time middle route, broad-based vocational educational qualification, which then became a part of a national triple-track qualifications framework. The 1991 White Paper 'Education and Training for the 21st Century' announced the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The White Paper called for the creation of a range of general qualifications within the NCVQ framework that would:

- offer broad preparation for employment

- provide an acceptable route to higher education

- be of equal standing with academic qualifications at the same level

- be clearly related to occupationally specific NVQs

- be suitable for full-time students in colleges and, if appropriate, schools.

(Wolf, 1997, p.12)

GNVQs were to be offered at three levels: Foundation (equivalent to four GCSEs at grades D-G); Intermediate (equivalent to four or five GCSEs at grades A-C); and Advanced (equivalent to two GCE A-Levels). The government hoped that this initiative would increase participation in post-compulsory education and raise the status of vocational education. It set a target for take-up of the new qualification by stating that by 1993 it anticipated 25% of all 16-year-olds would take Advanced GNVQs.

Yeomans (1998) notes the complex interplay of political, industrial and professional forces surrounding the emergence of the new qualification, and the consensus amongst these groups about the need to improve the quality of vocational education and training. He explains that:

> Sir Bryan Nicolson who was at the CBI, and later became chairman of NCVQ, appears to have been a key figure in promoting broader-based vocational qualifications together with Tim Eggar, then Minster of State at the DFE. The NCVQ was an obvious conduit for these concerns, although the invitation to become involved in developing broader qualifications would likely mean some compromise of the competence approach developed for NVQs; on the other hand given the difficulties and slow take-up of NVQs with the attendant economic and legitimising difficulties this would not have been unattractive. (Yeomans, D, 1998, p.136)

Oates (2008) notes that NCVQ had already started to engage in design process for the government sponsored qualification prior to being invited by the political administration to oversee the development of GNVQ in 1991. Ministers

had considered whether BTEC should be given the brief to develop the advanced vocational qualification but concerns about quality assurance deterred them from doing so. As already explained, within the BTEC model lecturers experienced relative autonomy in how they organised teaching and learning, and this resulted in variations in provision. According to Raggatt and Williams (1999), another significant factor which influenced the decision to give NCVQ the remit for the new development was that government ministers and officials in the Department of Education and Science (DES) and Department of Employment (DE) were committed to extending the NVQ framework.

The GNVQ assessment model was overhauled three times during the eight years of its supremacy, which took place between 1992 and 2000. Within each of the three phases of development it is possible to identify the ways in which the qualification was reshaped as a result of the influence of different ideological perspectives held by those involved in the policy-making process. In her analysis of the development of GNVQ policy, Eccelstone (2002) identifies three ideological positions that influenced each model. The categories she draws upon are derived from those used by Raymond Williams (1962) in the *The Long Revolution* and employed by Ball (1990) in his analysis of the development of the National Curriculum. She describes these as:

1. 'cultural restorationism', which is implicit in traditional notions of standards, commitment to hierarchical achievement within discernible subjects, and policy processes associated with ' the way we do things'

2. 'liberal humanism' associated with progressive, student-centred approaches, and emphasising access for disadvantaged learners;

3. 'vocational modernism', associated with a meritocratic rather than norm-referenced view of standards, and generated by frustration with established 'ways of doing things', whether in college (and school) procedures and cultures or policy processes.

(Adapted from Ecclestone, 2002, p.76)

Ecclestone (2002) suggests that these positions are related to the perspectives that policy-makers held about notions of 'standards' and their views about autonomy and motivation in learning. In her analysis of the policy-making process she identifies the ways in which views on these issues influenced the three phases of development (two of these phases are discussed in this chapter and the third considered in chapter 6). She claims that in the development of GNVQ, and the subsequent development of vocational A levels, a major shift can be seen in the principles underpinning ideas about autonomy and motivation.

The 1993–1995 model

Prior to the advent of NVQs and GNVQs, the expectations of the providers' coursers leading to the Preliminary Certificate in Social Care and the BTEC National was that there was a syllabus which detailed the areas and specific content of the course to be covered. As mentioned earlier, college course teams were actively involved in developing the curriculum, within the guidelines provided by the awarding body. The assessment procedures consisted of continuous assessment through integrated assignments and end of year examinations. Within the classroom lecturers experienced a degree of autonomy in relation to choice of teaching strategies and the assignments and tasks set for students.

In contrast, the courses leading to a GNVQ did not have a syllabus *per se* but instead were very prescriptive about the outcomes to be assessed and the structuring of relevant information as 'evidence indicators' for that purpose. All GNVQs - Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced - had a unit structure comprising mandatory units, optional units and three Core Skills units. To get a GNVQ certificate, at whatever level, students had to pass all units. Each unit was made up of 2-5 elements, or statements of ability, and students had to demonstrate that they were competent in all the elements that made up the unit to obtain a pass. Each element was broken down further into a number of performance-criteria (PCs) which indicated what sort of things students had to understand to show mastery of the elements and units (for an example of a Advanced GNVQ unit see appendix 5). All performance criteria had to be covered before a GNVQ certificate was obtained. For a Foundation/Intermediate GNVQ there were about 100 performance criteria and for an Advanced GNVQ there were around 200 performance criteria. Lecturers were free to plan courses and organise student learning flexibly but the content of learning was very much determined by the requirements laid down in the GNVQ specifications.

Gilbert Jessup chaired the GNVQ Policy Steering Committee which sanctioned the initial design of the qualification. He had been the architect of NVQs and had played a leading role in the development of YTS. In the course of my interview with him, he suggested that his professional background and experience fitted well with the task of developing GNVQs within the competence-based framework:

> I graduated in psychology and I had some expertise in assessment
> processes, quite a strong background in psychometrics. Initially

working for the Ministry of Defence, and I also got involved in

assessment training. … I was Director of what was called the

Work Research Unit in the seventies and that was trying to

improve the quality of the work environment. … Some of the

principles which we were trying improve such as participation,

have come back. … So it really brought together those themes. So

I have a somewhat technical background in assessment, also

knowing something about the organisation of work itself, the

analysis of work through occupational psychology.

(Jessup, Interview, March 1999)

GNVQ development was influenced by the competence-based model of NVQs which incorporated many of the principles that underpinned earlier initiatives such as standards development which characterised the New Training Initiative, YTS, and features associated with TVEI and CPVE. For example, the GNVQ model incorporated units of assessment and negotiated assignments that enabled students to provide evidence of meeting learning outcomes which were subject to internal assessment. The initial design incorporated a number of innovative features such as:

- A modular/unit based structure that mirrored the NVQ design that was designed explicitly to articulate with A levels. The Advanced GNVQ was to be equivalent to two A levels. The number of units for Advanced GNVQ (12) matched the structure of A levels to allow for a mix of qualifications to be undertaken by students (a single six-module A level could be taken with the GNVQ).

- Teacher-based assessment of student portfolios

- Assessment was mastery-based and ungraded, concerned simply with pass or fail.

- Students were required to attain six key skills (Communication; Problem Solving; Improving Own Learning and Performance; Working with Others; and Application of Number, Information Technology).

The majority of principles outlined for GNVQs by Jessup were incorporated into proposals for the qualification. However, the Department for Education (DfE) were opposed to the idea that candidates taking the qualification should not be subjected to external assessment. They were concerned about establishing the credibility of the GNVQ in relation to other qualifications of a similar level. Oates explains:

> The original model was anathema to key members of the first
> formal governance groups – particularly the DES, Her Majesty's
> inspectorate for Schools (HMI), and the Schools Examination and
> Assessment Council (SEAC). They demanded immediate changes
> in the assessment model. This was implemented extremely
> rapidly, since pilot schemes loomed. NCVQ stated that a two-year
> pilot phase was necessary. This was immediately rejected by
> ministers and senior DES officials. They stated that 'the most
> senior levels of Government' – assumed to be the Prime Minister
> – had instructed that a one year pilot would be entirely adequate.
> NCVQ developers were appalled at the decision, aware of the
> implications.
> (Oates, 2008, P. 113)

Therefore, during the spring and summer of 1992 the DfE effectively exerted pressure to ensure that external assessment was included, along with a system of grading which was absent from the NVQ design. An awarding body employee commented on the implications of this:

> GNVQs started off as a concept which rested mainly with Gilbert Jessup at NCVQ. But very quickly there was strong influence from the Government to what they wanted regarding external assessment and testing. During the development there were discussions about external assessment and we were told to grade so we graded; therefore very quickly moving away from a true competence-based model.
>
> (Awarding Body Official, Interview, November 1998)

The response of the policy-development team to this demand was to introduce a system of grading which comprised Merit and Distinctions rather than simply a Pass. Obtaining these higher grades was dependent upon students meeting additional and different criteria that were not related to the content of Units but rather to a student's ability to plan, organise and evaluate her or his work. They did not relate to the quality of work assessed in relation to the performance criteria outcomes, which could only be judged to be a Pass or Fail. In addition, multiple-choice tests were devised for nearly all mandatory units, but not for optional or core skills units, to ensure that students had covered the range of knowledge content of the unit. Students were required to achieve a pass mark for 70 per cent in these tests. As a result of the adoption of this assessment strategy, GNVQs added to the competence-based model features associated with more traditional awards.

Eccelstone (2002) notes that there were official claims that the outcome-based assessment model for GNVQ provided autonomy and motivation, for both learners and teachers:

- teachers and students can design assignments that generate evidence to meet the required outcomes;

- assignments and learning activities respond to individual interests and needs;

- students can determine their pace of work and receive interim feedback on progress;

- students can assess their own effectiveness in planning, executing and evaluating their work; processes of reviewing and recording achievement and setting targets encourage students to take more control over their learning;

- teachers have to share the basis of their assessment decisions with students and negotiate appropriate evidence of achievement;

- knowledge of outcomes enables students to plan progression both within a programme and to the next stage of education or employment;

- an upbeat public focus on achievement and opportunities to succeed erodes traditional associations of assessment with selection and norm referencing.

(Ecclestone, 2002, p.48)

Advocates of the competence-based approach argued that the introduction of standards made for transparency that would enable students to clearly understand what they needed to do to obtain the qualification. This understanding would enable students to plan their progression towards the GNVQ and the next stage of education or employment. Essentially, it was argued that students' involvement in planning their work, reviewing and recording achievements and setting targets would encourage high motivation and the exercise of autonomy, because they would be taking more control over their learning. As Jessup explains:

> I put forward a thesis that's applicable to all forms of [...]
> education and learning, an outcomes approach, specifying more
> clearly what it is, or what people themselves want to learn. I
> mean, they can choose what they want to learn but the outcomes
> are specified. It makes learning more efficient. … If you are really
> trying to maximise learning, they do this in the army and training,
> I mean the driving test, you actually get an idea of what the
> driving test involves. What does it cover? What sort of standards?
> You get a feel for that and then try to address it. So this is the
> idea.
> (Jessup, Interview, March 1999)

Competence-based assessment represented a departure from the dominant course model which is related to a particular duration of study, and the tradition of norm-referenced, examination-based assessment. Supporters of competence-based assessment advocate aspects of vocational modernism which favour the meritocratic principles of criterion-referenced assessment rather than the 'elitism' they see as being associated with norm-referenced assessment:

The idea of criteria of assessment in NVQs and GNVQs is that it

is open to everyone to look at and challenge. It's not the Head

Examiner in a university who is the only person who knows what

the standards are and who makes this judgement. It's actually

making that explicit. It makes the system more open and

democratic. It allows people to participate and to take

responsibility for things and issues which we recognised when

designing the model.

If you go down this road not only do you make education more

relevant and focused in terms of what you might want to achieve,

it also frees up education to a whole different way of learning.

You don't have to be on a course. You can learn by reading

books. Given that there is a movement now towards a learning

society and recognising that a lot of people are learning through

information technology mechanisms. It is the ideal world. You

have to break away from the course model. … You get away from

the idea that people have to learn things in a certain time scale. It

actually helps people who learn slowly and people who learn

rapidly.

(Jessup, Interview, March 1999)

Alongside elements of vocational modernism, there were aspirations for

the GNVQ that incorporated aspects of liberal humanism: providing access for

disadvantaged learners; and student-centred approaches to learning that enabled

students to select learning opportunities that met their needs and preferences. This

perspective holds that autonomy and motivation are promoted by increasing student choice. GNVQ specifications were not related to a particular mode of study. The rationale for the design of GNVQ was, in part, related to a sense of frustration with traditional course models of education and training, which were perceived to have failed many young people who had not been motivated by learning in traditional face-to-face settings in schools and colleges. Jessup appears to assume that learning in such settings is characterised by transmission models, with learners playing a passive role in the classroom. He questions the central role that teachers have played in providing limited choices over opportunities for learning and the dependency on teachers this fosters for learners on ways of learning. He explains:

> It was seen as liberating at the beginning by having some
> alternative means of learning, particularly for people who were
> not successful or not happy with the academic styles of learning.
> … I think you have to address individual learning and the
> different methods and styles of learning if you are serious about
> maximising achievement, which we never have done before in
> our education system.
> (Jessup, Interview, March 1999)

Ecclestone (2002) notes that two contradictory psychological traditions underpin the assessment model of the GNVQ. There is emphasis placed on constructivist notions about negotiation, between lecturers and students, in relation to course content and assessment. However, the notion of outcomes is rooted in behaviourist approaches which reduce lecturer and student autonomy in

relation to what is learnt because choice is constrained by externally devised standards. Jessup acknowledged this tension:

> There are debates whether NVQs/GNVQs are essentially liberating or whether they are controlling. And you can see both aspects of it. … The concept is certainly undoubtedly liberating, but it can actually control what goes on in a school or a college. … You have some standards but in a sense it should free up people as to how they teach and you also give more flexibility to students. How they are engaging. So the idea was that it was liberating for students and teachers. But for teachers it's more controlling to some extent, there's no doubt. It certainly has a more controlling effect on institutions, and why not? Why shouldn't institutions be accountable for what goes on in them? (Jessup, Interview, March 1999)

According to Ecclestone (2002), the 1993-1995 GNVQ model incorporated a notion of procedural autonomy in relation to students acquiring confidence in understanding the technical language used for assessment and in their development of strategies to find relevant information to complete assignments. At merit and distinction level there was also a form of personal autonomy that was related to student self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to planning, managing and evaluating their work. In terms of cognitive depth, she suggests that in this version of the GNVQ the lower end of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy predominates: the requirement to describe, identify and explain.

Pressures for reform

A wide range of stakeholders, from different professional cultures, were involved in preparing the content of GNVQ units. Accommodating diverse demands was a task with which the NCVQ struggled and, as a result, the qualification became overloaded Awarding bodies were given responsibility for developing the assessment specifications in particular subject areas. Individual subject development was overseen by an NCVQ official and undertaken by small subject committees who were charged with the task of determining the content of units which were then turned into assessment specifications to fit within the NCVQ design team's template. The composition of the subject committees was broad and included a range of representatives from schools, colleges and universities, awarding body staff, representatives from professional associations, officers from the FEU, and school and college inspectors. This was the source of the problem:

> the subject committees were saying 'we ought to have this' but
> they always overloaded the qualification so the job comes down
> to the subject adviser, the problem being that they were at the
> mercy of the various constituencies and often were not subject
> specialists, which I suspect was an NCVQ weakness, that you
> hadn't got people with the knowledge to say 'I'm cutting a third
> of this unit' … the SCAA officers … haven't got enough kind of
> clout to say 'this has just got too much or this hasn't got enough
> in and you've missed out something that is important'. [In
> NCVQ] there wasn't that culture sufficiently, you've got people
> doing subjects … but doing it as kind of administrators almost.
> (NCVQ official, quoted in Ecclestone, 2002, p. 62-63)

115

During 1994 other difficulties were highlighted and a number of critical reports resulted in changes being made to the GNVQ assessment model. Alan Smithers, in his Dispatches television programme and accompanying report, criticised the quality of GNVQs. Raggatt and Williams (1999) summarise Smithers' criticisms as follows:

> The popularity of GNVQs was recognised, but a number of problems in their delivery were highlighted, including: the lack of specified knowledge and understanding of content; the absence of syllabi, so that teachers had difficulty identifying what subjects needed to be covered; the uncertainties generated by the assessment and grading criteria; the lack of evaluation of the new qualifications that had been undertaken and the speed with which they had been introduced; and the 'ambiguity' over their purpose. (Raggatt and Williams, 1999, p. 142-143)

Smithers' report gained widespread publicity and put the issues of 'standards' and 'rigour' high on the Government's agenda. Other reports also highlighted problems with the assessment model. In the first Further Education Council (FEFC) inspection report, which provided feedback to NCVQ, the burden of assessment was identified as an issue, along with perceived confusion surrounding the standard of work expected. In terms of core skill units, both the FEFC (1994) and OFSTED (1994) expressed the criticism that core skills were not being developed and assessed in a vocational context. In the same year Alison Wolf's report, commissioned by the Employment Department, also drew attention to the complexity of the assessment model and the bureaucratic demands it placed on teachers and students, as well as raising concerns about the quality of grading.

116

These reports resulted in the preparation of revisions to the assessment specifications in September 1995. Within the DfE, the public criticisms of GNVQs served to reinforce the view, adopted by supporters of traditional academic forms of education such as A levels, that GNVQs were inferior and threatened to dilute educational standards. Tim Boswell, the then junior minister responsible for policy in this area, publically responded to criticism of GNVQ by announcing a 'six-point' plan to remedy the situation. In a speech at the CBI conference in May he outlined measures to improve the quality of the assessment model. Boswell called for:

- clarification of the knowledge and understanding required in GNVQ units
- improvements in the assessment regime
- a review and clarification of the basis for grading
- extended training for external verifiers
- clearer guidance for teachers
- more rigorous criteria for accrediting schools and colleges.

In response to Boswell's agenda for improvement, NCVQ established the Capey Committee. This reported in late 1995, and recommended that schools and colleges should reduce the amount of unnecessary assessment; such that the assessment regime would be based on whole units rather than on the elements that comprised them; that the complexity of the language and terminology in the GNVQ system should be reduced; and that the grading criteria should be simplified, so that assessors would make their judgements in just two broad areas: 'quality of outcomes' and 'process' themes. The emphasis in Boswell's 'six-point' plan speech was on the burden and manageability of assessment rather than on

'reliability' and 'standards', and this is essentially what Capey addressed. However, Boswell and Capey failed to engage with concerns raised by DfE officials, whose views appear to be associated with cultural restorationism, favouring traditional notions of 'standards', with hierarchical levels of achievement within discernible subjects. In terms of addressing these issues Smithers contends that the Capey review was disappointing:

> The review group seem to have got bogged down in NCVQ-speak rather than going to the heart of the matter … Capey recognises (p.23) 'the GNVQ differs significantly from the NVQ in its broader purpose and range … this in itself is sufficient to justify a different approach to the assessment of outcomes'. But this is not followed through by asking what good applied education should consist of, and how it should be assessed. NCVQ-speak tends to cause people, including Capey, to take their eyes off the ball. Essentially, with applied education it matters what is being learned and not how it is being learned. Curiously, this was one of the early tenets of NCVQ which seems to have got lost in the keenness to prescribe styles of learning.
> (Smithers, 1997, p.52)

These criticisms were not addressed at the time, and they continued to dominate debates amongst policy-makers and OfSTED about quality and standards in relation to the 1995 assessment model.

The 1995 GNVQ model

The 1995 assessment model for GNVQ reduced the number of grading criteria and the proportion of the portfolio required for summative assessment. However,

the actual specifications included greater detail in terms of 'amplification' and 'evidence indicators'. The specifications were more complex than the initial version because of the inclusion of this extra detail, and there was an increase in technical language - which resulted in less clarity in assessment criteria. In this version, GNVQ candidates were required to achieve 100 percent of the outcomes. The new guidance also stressed the importance of providing opportunities for 'active learning'. According to Ecclestone (2002), this version also fits with the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive skills, with an emphasis on the ability to describe, identify and explain; although she notes that in Unit 2 of the Health and Social Care Advanced GNVQ specifications there was some scope for the utilisation of higher order skills. This model also incorporated a notion of procedural autonomy and a form of personal autonomy at merit and distinction level, with limited opportunities for the development of critical autonomy.

Ecclestone (2002) argues that, during the course of GNVQ development, conflicting views about 'standards' in assessment became apparent and led to generic views of autonomy being questioned by OFSTED, who held to subject-based notions of autonomy:

OFSTED saw standards as differentiated levels of knowledge and
skills, drawing from clear foundations and hierarchies of subject
knowledge. For them, parity of esteem would only arise if
GNVQs showed the public that they had this foundation;
otherwise, the quality of students' work would always be seen as
inferior to A-levels. These critics saw procedural and personal
autonomy as poor substitutes for autonomy derived from
command of subject knowledge. The idea that a foundation of

119

knowledge and skills is needed as the basis for generic research

skills therefore became influential.

(Ecclestone, 2002, P.69-70)

OFSTED's perspective was influential because their statutory role gave them direct access to Ministers. The view that GNVQs required a sound subject knowledge base was to inform the next phase of policy development which is explored in Chapter 6.

The Pedagogic Principles of GNVQs

The GNVQ competence-based model of education and training has been described by Bates *et al* (1998) as being located within a paradigm of 'controlled vocationalism', which is characterised by both features of progressivism and vocationalism, with the latter being dominant. According to Bates (1998b), GNVQ represents a version of vocational progressivism because of the emphasis placed upon learner 'empowerment' through the installation of pedagogic principles which transfer responsibility for learning to students themselves. The architect of competence-based education and training, Gilbert Jessup, argues that:

> The new education and training model places the learner at the
>
> centre of the system. The learner is regarded as the client and the
>
> model is designed to provide him or her with more control over
>
> the process of learning and assessment.
>
> (Jessup, 1991, p 115)

As already noted, Bates (1998b, Bates *et al*, 1998) argues that the GNVQ pedagogy of 'empowerment' draws legitimacy from a fusion of liberal progressive values and vocationalism, and she links the vocational strand of this

rationale with Human Resource Management (HRM), noting that empowerment lies at the heart of this approach employee management. Central to HRM is the notion of giving more responsibility to employees to determine how tasks can be best done and reduces the extent of supervision through hierarchically and bureaucratically structured tiers of management. The benefits of this approach are increasing employee satisfaction and commitment to management goals, which are expected to result in reduced costs and enhanced profitability. The empowered worker is more flexible, capable of greater initiative and enterprise. Such approaches may lead to greater individualisation, with workers having more control over their work. However, this is usually within the context of frameworks for accountability and performance appraisal. It is the higher levels of management who normally determine the quality norms which are applied to assess performance. So, like HRM, GNVQ pedagogy revolved around a project of individualisation and self-responsibility. Responsibility for learning was built into the assessment criteria which focused on planning, self-monitoring of planning; information handling; and evaluation. A form of empowerment was held to arise as a result of the transparency of the curriculum and standards, which may reduce a student's dependence on the lecturer as the arbiter and controller of knowledge. Thus, implicit in the GNVQ notion of empowerment is an attempt to re-structure the distribution of power between lecturers and students. Although the possibility exists for students to choose the way they will achieve the standards, what needs to be covered is rigidly defined. So although the student acquires a higher degree of responsibility for their learning than with traditional forms of learning, they are placed in a situation of 'imposed autonomy' which is ambiguous and contradictory. In this connection, Bates notes the economic agenda that has influenced the development of GNVQs:

The policy objective (of GNVQ) is one of radical intervention in social processes shaping not only the development of skills but orientations towards work in preparation for what are assumed to be the changing conditions of employment. In representing the world of work the policy discourse intermingles post-Fordist visions of the modern workplace with the New Right promotion of the enterprise culture in a manner which is characteristic of the rhetoric of post-16 reforms (see, for example, Avis, 1996). The common strand is an emphasis on the values of flexibility, enterprise, responsibility, self-reliance and empowerment or, more generally, the development of a self-steering subject. … it may be argued that the GNVQ is explicitly vocational not only in its curriculum content but through the 'empowering' pedagogy it seeks to install. It is through these same pedagogic principles, however, that the appeal to liberal progressive educational values is made. In common with earlier versions of vocational progressivism (see e.g. Bates, 1984), there is an intertwining of economic instrumentalism and quasi-liberal values and a de-problematising of possible tensions. In the context of the GNVQ, however, vocational progressivism takes on a particular case. The ideals of developing individual autonomy and empowerment are deployed not so much in order to counterbalance the subordination of learning to economic ends, but – at least in part – to complement and reinforce the economic function.

(Bates, 1998, p.9)

Bloomer (1998) also notes that many of the practices associated with progressive education such as activity-based learning, individualised learning and pedagogies justified primarily in terms of learner needs, and perceived relevance are prescribed for GNVQ (p.167). Emphasis is placed on notions of 'empowerment', 'active participative learning', choice and learner control and autonomy in prescriptions for GNVQ practice. However, he notes that progressivism is only one of the strands of thought around which GNVQ has been modelled. A second ideological strand is that of technical rationalism:

> The antithesis of progressivism is technical rationalism. While the former stresses the essential unit of all knowledge, the value of discovery in learning, and so on, the latter promotes the fragmentation of knowledge for the efficiency of instruction and assessment. Thus, it is intriguing that technical rationalism in the form of competence-based education and training (CBET) should figure so prominently alongside progressivism in the new vocationalism, as Avis has observed, and that it should also appear in GNVQs, most noticeably in specifications of performance criteria, evidence indicators and unit tests.
> (Bloomer, 1998 p.167)

There are potential contradictions between the emphasis on developing individual autonomy and empowerment and the underpinning grids of accountability and control. The GNVQ performance criteria are so precisely laid out that it can be argued that the student's autonomy tends to be confined to what was termed in the Leeds studies of TVEI 'procedural autonomy' (Barnes *et al*, 1987), in other words to matters of how the various criteria are to be covered.

123

The third ideological strand that Bloomer identifies is free-marketism, a key strand of the New Right Conservative policy which he suggests is visible in the creation and operation of GNVQs. Consumer choice is seen as positive and in this context applied in terms of students' choices between GNVQ and other educational programmes. Within the GNVQ framework there are a number of optional modules that in theory students should be able to select. The notion here is that:

> It allows young people to express themselves, to create their own curriculum and, in short, to impose themselves upon their worlds in a manner entirely in keeping with progressive interests. However, this same free-marketism is also dependent upon technical rationalism. First, educational 'goods' have to be made available to a consuming public in a form in which they can be easily recognised and this, invariably, means that their technical qualities, are given prominence. Second, despite a free-market rhetoric of consumer choice and control, governments maintain strong checks upon what is made available to consumers and how and it is no accident that assessment and accountability mechanism across every sector of public education now stress the technical and measurable over other educational qualities.
> (Bloomer, 1998, p.168).

Bloomer suggests these three strands of thought combine to form a rhetoric which has strong public appeal. It resonates with values that are seen as inherently and morally good - such as notions of consumer rights, freedom and individuality. The other aspect of this rhetoric stresses the 'relevance criteria' framework which:

124

when summoned, not only steers attention away from

emancipatory and practical interests towards the technical

(Habermas,1972), but requires young people to exercise a right to

make judgements on the very issues about which they lack

requisite knowledge…Despite apparent contradictions within

GNVQ philosophy, the project has been held together and

rendered coherent by this rhetoric which draws great strength

from its capacity to please a variety of audiences, including

students, teachers and others directly concerned with the course in

practice.

(Bloomer, 1998, p.168).

Implementation studies

With the second version of GNVQ there was, according to Jessup, scope for

lecturers and teachers to design courses that related to local contexts and the needs

and interests of students:

Teachers are thus encouraged to design courses (and given the

freedom to do so) which make best use of the resources available

to them, taking into account the needs and interests of the students

they recruit.

(Jessup, 1995, p.9)

Higman (2003) explored course team's responses to the implementation of the

GNVQ. His data analysis revealed three broad responses:

1. Implementation – the course team adheres closely to the implied

    curriculum framework indicated in the GNVQ specifications. They

organize the course around the GNVQ units, with the majority drawing on the evidence indicators for the focus of course activity within these units.

2. Adaptation – the course team met the requirements of the GNVQ but had a wider purpose of their own and a clearer set of curricular or vocational area principles which informed the format and nature of the course.

3. Assimilation – is a more self-conscious version of adaptation, the course team sought to meet the requirements of the GNVQ and attempted to assimilate the course into existing curricular traditions.

Higman's (2003) explanation for the different responses is related to course team's prior teaching or vocational experience and orientation. With regard to the implementation approach it was found that course teams that adopted this had limited vocational experience or teaching experience in the course area. As a result, they were likely to hold shared principles derived from the vocational or curriculum area; and did not have a shared understanding of the purpose and nature of the course. Material circumstances and administrative structures were also found to contribute to the adoption this approach in some circumstances.

In instances where the course teams that adopted an adaptation approach, the curriculum was influenced by member's prior teaching or vocational experience and orientation. These teams were more confident in the approach they adopted as a result of this, than those in the implementation category.

Course teams that fell into the assimilation category were able to draw on their curriculum or vocational experience that related to the GNVQ course. They intentionally sought to preserve and assimilate existing curricular traditions into the new course, while meeting the specifications demanded by the GNVQ. These

126

course teams were able to exploit the flexibility in the course design to assimilate GNVQ into their existing ways of working.

Higman's (2003) research suggests that adaptations are strongly related to professional biographical resources which teachers draw upon when implementing a new curriculum. There appears to be scope for agency in the way that teachers and lecturers can interpret and develop the GNVQ curriculum. However, other implementation studies (Bird *et al*, 1996) have suggested that lecturers found GNVQ specifications very prescriptive and felt constrained by them. For lecturers who had previously been involved in BTEC and PCSC courses, the GNVQ brought with it reduced opportunities to be creative and actively involved in the selection of curriculum content and assessment methods. According to Randle and Brady (1997), this loss of control over the conception and design of academic work reflected a process of deskilling (Braverman, 1974). Technical rationalism is a feature of scientific management which Braverman draws attention to in his analysis; it is also an ideological strand of the GNVQ applied to design of units of assessment structure that form the basis of the qualification. Randle and Brady (1997) argue that one consequence of the shift to competence-based assessment of vocational courses is that it began to:

> Reposition the lecturer as an assessor, concerned with measuring
> student performance; rather than a teacher, facilitating student
> learning. The content and assessment of these courses are so
> highly prescribed that lecturers feel a loss of control over the
> teaching process. … The degree of assessment required by
> GNVQ forced lecturers to divert their efforts away from the
> teaching process. Assessment has thus become an onerous and

time consuming process.

(Randle and Brady, 1997, p.131)

Randle and Brady's research explored the relationship between 'new managerialism' and conceptions of lecturers' 'professionalism'. They found that some lecturers were concerned about loss of control over course content and modes of delivery, and this was reflected in the concerns they expressed about the implications of the new introduction of 'flexible-learning'. A consequence of this development was that the emphasis in the learning process shifted from classroom interaction to the teaching materials themselves, which were frequently pre-packaged. Randle and Brady (1997) comment on this trend, which they observed in their research, and argue that this in itself further reduces lecturer control over the content and use of teaching materials (p.131).

In summary, then, the role of lecturers on GNVQ courses entailed:

- Responsibility for preparing students to meet standards set by the awarding body.

- Inter-disciplinary teaching. Emphasis on subject specialism was dissolved in favour of inter-disciplinary unit teaching (lecturers designed assignments to meet the assessment criteria for their units and prepared students for multiple-choice unit examinations set by the awarding body).

- responsibility for decisions about pace, style and general conduct of the face-to-face lessons and for facilitating learning through learning resource centres where students determined their own pace (within the context of set deadlines) and approach to completing assignments (despite the

rhetoric in the GNVQ guidance about learning being under the control of students).

- Preparing detailed records of the systems used to record students' achievement of units, elements and performance criteria; and the systems of internal verification to show to an external verifier, appointed by the awarding body, who may not be vocational specialist in the discipline of the course.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the rationale for the introduction of pre-vocational educational courses in further education colleges. In the context of mass youth unemployment, arguments about the need to prepare young people for the labour market, by equipping them with appropriate skills and qualities, supported this development. Educationalists promoting new vocationalism had wider ambitions than economic relevance: for a new kind of curriculum that incorporated the personal needs of students and a commitment to several features of progressive educational ideology, such as the emphasis placed on experiential learning and inter-disciplinary enquiry. I have suggested that BTEC courses were developed within this tradition, and that course teams and lecturers experienced a substantial degree of professional autonomy in designing and delivering courses that could be tailored to student needs, as well as meeting curriculum objectives set out by the awarding body.

Towards the end of the 1980s, attempts were made by policy-makers to develop a more coherent approach to FE provision, with the establishment of the NCVQ. The work of NCVQ determined the design of competence-based GNVQs.

The GNVQ was designed in the context of a vision of a post-Fordist economy and the requirements for a flexible and adaptable work force. Within this context, many organisations adopted HRM approaches to workforce management which emphasised empowerment. These principles also informed the GNVQ design, students being charged with greater responsibility for their learning than on traditional educational courses. While certain features of the GNVQ may be empowering in some respects, control is exerted through rigid specifications. HRM practices in industry operate in similar way, where workers are encouraged to take control over how they carry out their assigned tasks, while senior managers determine objectives and indicators of performance. Empowerment and control have been packaged together, which gives rise to tensions. However, it was the shortcomings of the GNVQ assessment model and the 'burden of assessment' that led to the 1995 changes, rather than a review of the competence-based design and pedagogic principles advocated for implementation.

Thus, there are ambiguities and contradictions in the pedagogic principles and GNVQ design that lecturers 'must mediate during implementation. The "good" lecturer for the GNVQ is a facilitator of learning who is flexible and able to help students access a range of learning resources (Avis, 2003). According to the new ideology, lecturers are no longer the arbiters and controllers of knowledge. The extent to which transparency of the curriculum and standards, together with the emphasis placed on students' assuming greater responsibility for their own learning, re-structured relations between lecturers and their students is explored in Chapter 5; along with other factors which influenced lecturers' responses and adaptations to GNVQ.

Chapter 5 Lecturers' Responses and Adaptations to GNVQ

This chapter presents the data analysis from the GNVQ phase of the research. It begins by outlining how themes in the data were identified and were then related to relevant previous research findings, allowing for a typology of responses and adaptations to be developed.

The aim of the interviews with lecturers was to gain an insight into their perceptions' of GNVQ and to identify factors that influenced their approach to the implementation of the new qualification. Initial analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that at the five sites visited for this research there was some variation in how lecturers delivered the GNVQ which could be related to:

- their perceptions of the content of GNVQ specifications;

- views about delivering the GNVQ within a 'new managerialist' culture;

- the degree of emphasis they placed on empowering students to take responsibility for their learning;

- the degree of autonomy they felt they could exercise in relation to planning teaching and learning and their feelings about this;

- the extent to which they saw GNVQ as changing their role as a professional lecturer;

- the number of years they had been teaching and the nature of their professional experience.

Drawing on concepts and typologies found in the literature relating to responses and adaptations to educational reform I identified some resonance between

131

patterns found in my data and those of other researchers'. Shain and Gleeson (1999) identified three broad responses to institutional change and the new managerialist culture, within further education colleges. Their first category was, 'compliant' lecturers, who were generally positive about change and happy to be flexible. These lecturers were appointed on new contracts and had not worked in FE for any great length of time. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that there were some respondents' whose perspectives about the GNVQ and institutional reform could be classified as positive. These informants were relatively recent entrants to the FE sector. Second, Shain and Gleeson (1999) identified the 'old timers', who found it difficult to see any positive aspect of the reforms. Their responses were filtered through their commitment to old public sector professionalism which rewarded expertise, granted a degree of professional autonomy and saw the role of further education as providing a public service. Several informants' responses to the GNVQ research fitted with this description. Lastly, Shain and Gleeson identify 'strategic compliers', these lecturers held mixed feelings about the reforms and were critical of some aspects while being accepting of others. They expressed concern about the process of learning and not just about the outcomes. One informant, in my sample approximated to these characteristics. Shain and Gleeson's research was concerned with making sense of lecturers' adaptations to institutional changes whereas my focus is on responses to curricular change. Therefore, I also considered findings generated by researchers who explored school teachers' responses and adaptations to educational reform and the imposition of the National Curriculum.

Marshall and Ball's (1999) and Woods and Jeffrey's (2002) analysis of school teachers adaptations to educational reform reveal something of the emotional

dimensions associated with adaptations of practice involved. Woods and Jeffrey talk about the tensions which arise for teachers when their social identities were threatened, by the redefinition of the 'good teacher' role within the new regime, where the latter was inconsistent with their self-concept. Their findings suggest, that in such circumstances, educational reform can evoke in teachers' negative and traumatic emotions in teachers. This is because they are unable to integrate their pedagogical principles and educational values into their practice. This research makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of factors influencing the ongoing development of teachers' professional identities. It also suggests that such exploration is relevant for gaining an understanding of FE lecturers' responses and adaptations.

During the interviews with informants these issues were explored through questions which asked whether they felt that the pedagogical principles underpinning GNVQ courses differ from those which characterised previous vocational educational courses that informants had taught? And if so, in what ways? If respondents indicated that they held a particular view of teaching and learning, they were asked, to what extent was is it possible for them to practice in their preferred ways in the new order? What did they believe the role of the professional lecturer should be? As the lecturers compared their current practice with previous practice, before the advent of GNVQ, some of the informants expressed similar emotions to those that the school teachers had such as anger, frustration and a sense of loss, in relation to changes in their role as professional lecturer which they described. With regard to perceptions of GNVQ, some lecturers expressed concern about a commodification of pre-vocational education and about the emphasis on outcomes within the assessment model. This also had

some resonance with these authors' researchers' findings about schoolteachers. It suggested that it may be possible to identify the significance of lecturers' commitment to particular philosophies of education such as that promoted by new vocationalism or that associated with the controlled vocationalism within the data.

Analysis of interview transcripts revealed a number of themes which could be related to values promoted by new vocationalism and the public service ethos more generally, as well as those associated with the controlled vocationalism (Bates *et al*, 1998) that is characteristic of managerialist culture. The contrast between these two sets of values is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Forms of Vocationalism

New vocationalism (public service ethic)	Controlled vocationalism (managerialism)
Relative autonomy in relation to curriculum design	Restricted autonomy in relation to curriculum design
Lecturers as sources of expertise	Lecturers as flexible facilitators of learning and as assessors.
Value placed on experiential learning	Value placed on 'semi-independent' project research
Quality defined by process	Quality assessed on the basis of outcomes

(adapted from Pring, 1995 and Bates *et al* 1998)

In addition, to considering the influence of these factors on lecturers' responses and adaptations, attention is also given to the context in which lecturers work, such as the impact of the market on recruitment practices and the intensification of work. Analysis of the data suggested that there were three main modes of responses or adaptation to the introduction of the GNVQ. I have labelled

these 'constrained professionals', 'committed newcomers', and 'strategic compliers'.

A. Constrained professionals

Six informants had several of the characteristics of Shain and Gleeson's (1999) 'old timers', in that they held negative views of GNVQ and of new managerialism, regretting the loss of 'old' public sector values. They felt alienated from the new definition of the 'good lecturer' prescribed for the GNVQ, and felt that their professional status had been debased. For them, the degree of professional autonomy in relation to curriculum content and teaching had been eroded. The constrained professionals felt they had less control over their work than they had had previously: conception and execution had become separated with the arrival of GNVQ specifications. Their workloads had not only increased because of a change in contracts of employment but also as a result of the demands of GNVQ assessment. These were the sources of intensification in their work. In many respects they expressed feelings of anger, loss and frustration during their interviews. They felt de-skilled: they complained about loss of control over the conception of work, and talked about how their work had become more routine, amounting to supporting students' acquisition of competence and assessing it. They felt that the skills that the lecturer role now required appeared to be based less on pedagogic expertise than in the past. There were feelings of loss associated with operating in a system where there was a lack of respect for their pedagogic expertise, and the erosion of trust in their ability to act in a professional way in the best interests of students. These lecturers noted that a low trust view of the professional lecturer now prevailed. In order to comply with the requirements of the new quality assurance system they now had to closely monitor their own

work and that of their colleagues in terms of externally fixed criteria, and this was seen as a retrograde development by most of these respondents. Opportunities for creative teaching were reported to be constrained by the GNVQ assessment regime; and the intensification of work associated with it. Opportunities for creative teaching were reported to be constrained by the GNVQ assessment regime; and the intensification of work associated with it. Their views about pre-vocational education map onto aspects of 'new vocationalism'.

B. Committed newcomers

Three of the lecturers fell into this category which is broadly congruent with Esland *et al's* (1999) 'embracers' and Shain and Gleeson's (1999) 'compliant lecturers'. However, the latter term seemed misleading since all the lecturers in the sample could be described as compliant, in the sense that they all delivered the GNVQ in accordance with the requirements laid down in the specifications. As the new label indicates, all three lecturers had only recently become full-time FE lecturers. These lecturers were not critical of the new curriculum and pedagogy, and adopted a flexible facilitator role in the delivery of GNVQ. They did not feel constrained by a lack of autonomy over choices about teaching methods. They also felt that their work provided opportunities for creativity. In addition, they aligned themselves with managerialist values in relation to the measurement of quality in education. They did not appear to be experiencing feelings of intensification, nor did they believe that exposure to the market had impacted negatively on their work. They judged the new forms of accountability to be appropriate. The data derived from these informants seems to indicate that they held a view of the role of the FE lecturer that was more or less in keeping with the new 'good lecturer' role described by Avis (2003) and Shain and Gleeson (1999).

C. Strategic complier

This label comes directly from Shain and Gleeson's (1999) research, and one lecturer, fell into this category. She was positive about some aspects of change and negative about others. She appeared to incorporate a mixture of managerial and old public sector values within her professional identity. Hence, she adopted the new 'good lecturer' role but with feelings of ambivalence. She noted a reduction in her professional autonomy but still felt that she had a degree of freedom in relation to planning learning. This informant expressed contradictory views about GNVQ teaching which seems to suggest that her perspective is straddled between some progressive elements of new vocationalism and aspects of controlled vocationalism.

A. Constrained professionals.

The six of the lecturers that seemed to fall into this category were: Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College; Betty, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College; Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Drayton College; Doris, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College; Ellen, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College; and Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College. This group of informants had been involved in curriculum design under the previous curricular regime. They had also all taught in FE prior to incorporation. Moreover, they had, with the exception of Dawn, undertaken some form of teacher training (See Appendix 1 for further information on the professional backgrounds of these informants). Alan was the only lecturer in this group who did not have a new contract of employment, which provided him with more favourable conditions of service than the other informants in this category (see Chapter 1).

Approaches to Teaching

These lecturers identified the ways in which they had altered their practices with students to accommodate the demands of GNVQ assessment, in a situation where the time allocated for face-to-face teaching on vocational educational programmes had been reduced from that allocated to BTEC and PCSC courses. A key problem here was the timing of external multiple-choice unit tests. Lecturers tried to teach students the content of some units in the first term, rather than over the academic year, so that they were prepared to sit tests in January. The pressure to cover course content quickly was noted by Eric:

> It's more rushed on the GNVQ. …On the BTEC National you'd
> have a unit to deliver across the year as opposed to delivering it
> (the GNVQ) in a ten week, eleven week block. … You have
> always got to be testing the information because they have
> multiple choice tests at the end of it. So, it changes the way you
> have to deliver. It's much faster.
> (Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

The pressure to get results against external performance indicators appeared to not only skew provision (teaching to the test) but also to heighten the existential tension between what professionals believe in and what they do to get by. Dawn outlined the strategy that she and her colleagues had adopted to deal with this pressure:

> Our teaching in the first three or four months of a unit is to
> concentrate on covering all the syllabus, because at least they can
> attempt the tests with some chance of success. … We tend to
> teach by rote, or in the easiest possible way. For instance, there is

supply and demand and elasticity, these are quite deep concepts,

they need a lot of background but we haven't got the time. And

we introduce them in a very simple way. Really I don't see the

point.

(Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Drayton College)

For Dawn there are doubts about whether genuine learning takes places
with this kind of teaching strategy, where students play such a passive role.
Bloomer (1998) distinguishes between receptive and interactive learning
activities. The strategy Dawn and her colleagues feel compelled to adopt to help
students memorise information for tests falls into the former category, along with
note taking and reading, whereby students simply internalise, or receive, course
content without playing any active part in the construction of knowledge. In
contrast to this approach, interactive learning activities – such as class discussions,
experimentation and 'problem solving' - entail some discernible cerebral
interaction of the learner with the knowledge source.

This group of informants felt that the pressure to cover the breadth of
content specified in the GNVQ specifications limited their teaching and
assessment options. All of the constrained professionals mentioned that they now
frequently adopted didactic methods for whole-class teaching. Doris noted this,
recognising that it constituted a departure from the interactive experiential
approaches to teaching and learning that were employed on the PCSC course.
Furthermore, she was aware that the approach to teaching she had adopted was
not in keeping with the practices associated with progressive education, such as
activity-based learning, which are also prescribed for the GNVQ:

I think the style of delivery is more didactic, to start with anyway,

to get the basics in for any unit. The sheer volume means that

there's far more handouts given now, less discussion. ... Just to get

through the amount there's an awful lot of up-front teaching goes

on to get started. It's not what it's supposed to be.

(Doris, GVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

According to the accounts of the constrained professionals, teaching with the BTEC and PCSC students had been characterised by dialogical engagement and an emphasis on creating opportunities for interactive exploratory learning, with group involvement in discussion and debates, the undertaking of peripheral enquires, risk taking and arguments. Dialogic engagement is an essential aspect of student-centred experiential learning theories. These respondents implied that what was better on the BTEC programme was the depth of exploration that students could engage in within the classroom. Ellen described her approach to teaching on the BTEC Programme and contrasted this with the way she had adapted this for the GNVQ:

On the BTEC National there was more opportunity for the

exploration of issues. There would be group discussion, videos

and a variety of teaching strategies…There was more opportunity

for analysis, that's an understatement! There are so very few

opportunities for analysis for the GNVQ, partly because of its

time span. It's very teacher-led and actually it's really quite

didactic in order to get through the amount of information. You

can't do what the GNVQ is meant to be about which is all the

group activity and exploring, we simply don't have time to do

that.

(Ellen, GVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

Ellen felt that it was not feasible to engage in exploratory learning activities, which she noted are advocated for GNVQ teaching, that enable students to develop analytical skills, because of the time allocated to classroom teaching and the breadth of material she had to cover.

Doris reported a similar approach to her work with PCSC students and was concerned that the approach she now adopted with GNVQ students did not facilitate the acquisition of study skills needed for increasing learner autonomy:

> I find myself not dictating but writing notes on the board and
> using handouts in a way I never used to. What it doesn't develop
> is their ability to learn from the experience of having done
> something but also it's about note-taking and all the rest of it.
> Their note-taking skills, I really stop occasionally and think God
> they've got to note-take, um, they've got to learn how to do this. I
> must stop writing on the board, but how am I going to get through
> the syllabus.
> (Doris, GVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

The operational constraints of the course reduced opportunities for creating an experiential learning environment that promotes personally and socially-constructed knowledge, in keeping with the ideals of progressivism. Ellen and Doris are conscious of the contradiction between the rhetoric of GNVQ and what they judged to be necessary in order to help students get through. The

141

pressure to 'get through' resulted in students engaging in receptive learning which mitigated against the acquisition of effective study skills that they needed if they were to take greater responsibility for their own learning. A concern shared by these respondents was that the approach to teaching they adopted in order to cope with covering the breadth of material was not helping their students to relate theory to practice or to develop analytical skills through active engagement with problems and issues:

> The range of material on GNVQ units is broader but you don't go into it in the same detail. I think that one of the problems I find with it as opposed to the BTEC National is that the BTEC National was more applied. The GNVQ advanced is more to do with students performing tasks. They're gathering evidence for their portfolio and they're getting that information in their portfolio or they're preparing for a test, as opposed to analysing a set of information and finding different routes through it. … On the BTEC National you would have assignments that were based on students performing tasks, thinking through problems, you know, it'd be a scenario, case studies. … I don't think it (GNVQ) prepares them as well for degree work or HND because, again, this is my cynical view, I don't think it teaches them to analyse or think as well as the old BTEC did.
> (Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

Ellen was concerned that the emphasis placed on the ability to record information correctly in order to meet performance criteria outcomes was being achieved at the expense of the development of other cognitive skills.

> The emphasis on GNVQ seems 'do they know it or don't they' and I have found that problematic. When I ask students to do an essay on GNVQ they struggled…It's not the students' fault, it just doesn't give them the opportunity to be able to analyse. It's too factually based…. It doesn't give them scope to really provide discussion, to present arguments in the way that I felt the National did and to explore concepts rather than just being knowledge based. They're expected to know huge amounts of information but I don't know that is necessarily beneficial to them.
> (Ellen, GVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

What Eric and Ellen seem to be alluding to is that the BTEC National provided opportunities for students to develop different kinds of skills and forms of autonomy from those acquired on GNVQ programmes. Knight *et al* (1998) suggest that what is fostered in GNVQ students is a form of constricted independence. Their research revealed that:

> GNVQ students learn to perform certain types of work independently, to undertake project-type work, rather than to produce critiques and conceptual analyses. They learn to produce, independently, evidence of achievement against a set of criteria, criteria that may be perceived as atomised, embodying strong classification. In Habermasian terms, students are gaining skill with instrumental knowledge, but they are not being guided

143

towards his highest form, emancipatory knowledge (derived from

critical and reflective processes) and it is arguable they are not

engaging with the intermediate form, namely critical knowledge.

In other words, GNVQ students undoubtedly gain command of

ways of working independently within prescribed frameworks,

but they are not learning to apply their own or others' critiques to

those frameworks, let alone to choose from a multiplicity of

frameworks.

(Knight *et al*, 1998, p.63-64)

Learner autonomy can be conceived in different ways. For example,

Eccelstone (2002) draws on the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) who identified

different goals for reflective practice in teachers' professional development

programmes. They suggested that autonomy can be procedural (technical),

personal (practical), critical or, ultimately, emancipatory. The contrast that Eric

makes about skills that students develop suggests that students on the GNVQ

acquire a degree of procedural autonomy. This form of autonomy 'relates to

transmission of pre-defined outcomes, knowledge, processes and content by

teachers, or through open-learning and computer-based materials' (Eccelstone,

2002, p.36). This might involve the GNVQ students gaining confidence in

understanding the technical language used for assessment and in developing

strategies to enable them to find relevant information to complete their

assignments. Ecclestone (2002) suggests that:

If procedural autonomy in an outcome-based model is the only

goal and is underpinned solely by instrumental motivation, it

becomes an imposed 'technical empowerment' where student are

little more than 'hunters and gatherers' of information without

deep engagement with either content or process (see Bates,

1999a; Helsby *et al*, 1998; Bloomer 1998)

(Ecclestone, 2002, p.36)

The constrained professionals all expressed concerns about the GNVQ students' superficial engagement with course content. While the ideology of GNVQ stressed a more active role for students, the constraints introduced, particularly as regards assessment, along with the adaptations adopted by many lecturers to deal with these constraints, meant that in practice students played a relatively passive role. Law (1992: 152) suggests that critical thinking skills are integral to the ability to act autonomously. What appears to be important to this group of lecturers is the particular role that their teaching, at this level, should have in facilitating a degree of personal autonomy and critical thinking that enables learners to choose between conflicting ideas, and to think independently.

Responding to diverse needs and interests

Although lecturers delivered a set curriculum on BTEC and PCSC courses, there was an opportunity to work with the interests and needs of their student groups. A form of interdependency was constituted by both lecturer and student having opportunities to influence the direction and pace of the curriculum. By contrast, because the GNVQ students need to demonstrate evidence of meeting the Unit's elements and the performance criteria, there was a reduction in the amount of classroom time that could be used to respond to student preferences. In addition, there was an increase in students being timetabled to work semi-independently in the colleges' learning resource centres. Moreover, face-to-face classroom contact hours were limited and in many cases reduced from those available to teach the

PCSC and BTEC courses. Hence lecturers had moved away from fostering collaborative ways of working in the classroom to placing greater emphasis on promoting semi-independent individual assignment research. The assignments were designed to enable students to provide evidence that met the assessment criteria for particular units. Betty's approach to this task is representative of the other lecturers in this group:

> We write our own assignments. … It is quite prescriptive what
> they actually want them to do and you have got the performance
> criteria and then you have actually got the range statements for
> which they expect you to show evidence. So you devise what you
> teach according to what is going to be assessed.
>
> (Betty, GVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Ellen expressed feelings of loss about her reduced opportunities to work creatively with the curriculum. She felt there were fewer opportunities to relate learning to student interests with the GNVQ:

> I feel that the GNVQ doesn't give the students flexibility. So I
> like to say to students 'well let's have a look at which field you're
> interested in', especially with the National Certificate but even for
> the Diploma and say 'do you want to concentrate on the NHS or
> do you want to concentrate on community care?' And you give
> them an essay on a topic which actually interests them. 'You're
> still using the same skills, you're analysing it, you're telling me
> about the implementation of that' and that gives me flexibility. I
> don't get the same flexibility within the GNVQ.
>
> (Ellen, GVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

Eric shared Ellen's perspective about the lack of scope to relate learning to student interests and suggested that this had implications in terms of being able to meet the diverse needs of individual students:

> There was more flexibility previously than there is on the GNVQ
> because you could interpret the specifications and you could think
> of different projects. I mean you could see where a student was …
> and you could shape assignments and shape what you did around
> them.
> (Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

Dawn felt that detailed GNVQ specifications prevented her from relating her planning of teaching and learning in relation to student interests. One consequence of this which she saw as detrimental was that there were now reduced opportunities for student creativity and originality:

> In the old BTEC we would have outcomes, so we had to cover
> certain areas but they could be covered from different angles and
> the students were encouraged to be original. For instance, if we
> were looking for example at a leisure centre, obviously they had
> to look in general at the whole unit, but one group or one student
> may centre on finance whereas another might centre on personal
> or innovation or marketing and it was acceptable. Now this
> situation is quite different.
> (Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Drayton College)

Bloomer (1998) found that the rigid GNVQ specifications prevented lecturers from constructing assessment assignments flexibly, so that they provided

opportunities for recognition to be given to a range of students' abilities and achievements. He argues that GNVQ assignments tend to assess technical competence rather than a range of cognitive skills. He found that:

> It is quite apparent from the insights reported here that the 'tick-
> box, evidence indicator and PC-driven' assessment methods
> adopted for GNVQs focused on a predetermined and finite
> knowledge base and offered little space for the unpredictable, for
> the novel or the creative.
> (Bloomer, 1998, P. 182)

Doris felt that the opportunity to respond to individual students' learning needs, by students and lecturers having a degree of flexibility about the pace of learning, was constrained within the GNVQ. This she attributed to the breadth of coverage required, and the time available:

> If something didn't work and um, you wanted to go back over it,
> you'd got the luxury of time; you could go back the next week and
> say we didn't quite get that right last week, so we're going to
> spend a bit more time on it this week. If you did that now you'd be
> in difficulties.
> (Doris, GVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

For the constrained professionals the lack of opportunity to exercise a degree of discretion over the pace and focus of the curriculum was seen as disadvantaging students. These lecturers were interested in developing and assessing a range of cognitive skills by drawing on students' interests and understandings, at a pace that was appropriate to meet their needs. This view of

learning is in keeping with those associated with experiential approaches where learners' interests and meanings are placed at the centre of curriculum and drawn upon to advance understanding of the subject matter.

Relations between lecturers and students

Under GNVQ, what has come to be called the performativity discourse structured relations between lecturers and students. Like the lecturers, students had adapted to meet the demands of the assessment regime. They spent much of their time completing assignments that would provide evidence of meeting the GNVQ assessment criteria. They had, it seems, developed a degree of procedural autonomy underpinned in part by instrumental motivation. Alan noted this:

> Today the students only seem to be interested in doing the
> assignments. It's like there's forty assignments to do an Advanced
> GNVQ, forty plus. If they feel they've done the assignments, they
> feel it doesn't matter whether they particularly attended all the
> classes, and particularly listened to everything that we've said.
> The main achievement is on the assignment and that's it, done.
> That's their main focus.
> (Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College)

Alan expressed feelings of loss when he reported that opportunities to utilise pedagogical expertise had been reduced, with the emphasis in the learning process shifting from classroom interaction to the assignments themselves. These feelings of loss associated with the teaching role are similar to those expressed by respondents in Marshall and Ball's (1999) interviews with secondary school teachers where teaching had almost become an epiphenomenon:

It is almost a by-product if I stand there and do a beautiful lesson,

which I must do at least once a year. It's almost a by-product to

do good teaching because the emphasis is on good learning.

(Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College)

Dawn's perception of her role with GNVQ students is typical of other lecturers in this category when she describes herself as a facilitator and administrator. There was a shared consensus amongst the constrained professionals that opportunities for 'teaching' have declined. Dawn reflects on this:

I hardly ever teach now, I mean I'm the lecturer in the class but I

don't teach. I will either be giving specific instructions for a test,

or specific instructions for an assignment, or helping individual

students in their work, and I'm in and out of classes. … It

(professional role) has changed a lot and there is serious

questioning by my colleagues whether they are teaching.

(Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Drayton College)

Lecturers now spent a great deal of their time recording achievement in terms of the detailed assessment criteria with their students. The amount of time they now devoted to this administrative responsibility had increased. Ellen and Betty expressed resentment about this:

You feel the time you are spending ticking all those silly little

boxes should be time you are actually spending with the student.

… You just feel as if you're not teaching.

(Betty, GVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

So Betty, like Alan, felt that the GNVQ provides more limited opportunities for her to utilise her pedagogic expertise, and Ellen saw the increased demands for detailed recording of achievement as an assault on her professional autonomy:

> It's the amount of paperwork that is the GNVQ ethos; you have to
> prove everything. So you've got more paperwork but also it
> comes back to autonomy. I don't think the profession of lecturer is
> respected within GNVQ. The nature of the qualification takes
> something away from the lecturer, it's prescribed, it is there, that
> doesn't allow you the flexibility that I think you need and that's
> what gives me my job satisfaction.
>
> (Ellen, GVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

This emphasis on audit accountability is a key feature of the performativity culture that has come to prevail not just in FE but beyond. Implicit in the nature of the audit is a low trust view of professionals who are no longer trusted to act in the interests of their students. Interestingly, Avis (2003) suggests that such practices are at odds with a knowledge economy where there is an emphasis on high trust relations and collaboration. Despite expressing feelings of resentment about the bureaucratic recording systems for GNVQ, the lecturers complied with the demands. They suggested that the GNVQ required that they needed to engage in greater surveillance of their students' progress to ensure they were on track to meet the outcomes:

> You need to be constantly knowing your students, following them
> up. Checking up, have you done that assignment for Mr White?
> Have you fallen behind? You need to be constantly checking

where they are because if they get too far behind it will become so difficult.

(Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College)

This kind of practice was not perceived negatively by all the respondents in this group. Doris explained that the new arrangements for quality assurance had led to adaptations in her own record keeping practices. What she describes is the way she now engages in 'policing herself' as a form of self-surveillance. This perhaps illustrates one of the ways that the performativity discourse and audit accountability can ensure compliance from professionals:

> Now I keep much better records…I thought it was awful having this thing imposed on us, having to keep stricter records of tutorials. In fact, I like it. When it comes down to it because I used to keep things in the back of my notebook and then I'd remember I hadn't noted something. Whereas this way it is stricter but I think it is more fruitful in many ways. Which, I hate to admit. .. You've got more precise records. You're less likely to be caught in a situation where you haven't got a leg to stand on. But it almost then becomes a 'them and us' situation. I appreciate that.

> (Doris, GVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

However, working relations between students and lecturers did appear to have changed. Now greater emphasis was placed checking the achievement of outcomes during tutorial sessions at the expense of focusing on broader aspects of students' development. Reduced time for classroom interaction with students did appear to result in the formation a less personal relationship with students than

had existed in the past. There was less time available than in the past to get to know students as individuals. Eric suggested that building relationships with students, and understanding their social circumstances and relating his teaching to their interests, enabled him to respond to students' needs more effectively in the past than now:

> I had much more time in 1990 with students than I have now,
> despite teaching more in 1990. I knew a lot more about them and
> I had more time to spend with them. … Now I don't know the
> same detail about them. And if you know them it's easier, it's
> better to teach if you know them, you understand them, you know
> where they're from and a bit about them. You can relate to them
> and it's a different way of working. If what you're doing is you're
> going in and you're filling in bits of paper you're processing
> them. It's like this idea of 'individualised learning' there's a
> process, the product is this bit of paper at the end and they feed
> through it. It's much less satisfying and it's much less effective,
> particularly with our student base. I mean it may work with other
> types of students, like say the OU but it doesn't work if you're
> dealing with people whom the education system has failed once.
> (Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

The approach he adopted for GNVQ teaching did not seem to result in building relations based on humanisitic connections between students and lecturers, which Eric implies were established with BTEC students. He explains that he now feels driven to respond in a 'standardised' way to 'process' his students. He expressed strong views about this:

I think there is a false perception that for there to be quality

education it has to be screwed down to the floor and have

everything monitored and assessed. I don't think that does give

you good quality education, what it gives you is a standard that is

uniform, but having uniformity doesn't necessarily mean good

education because people are different and have different needs

and different backgrounds and perceptions. And a quality

education system would take account of that, whereas if it's about

producing a record and a portfolio of evidence and common

standards, it doesn't meet needs.

(Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

The demands of assessment and new ways of working, combined with increased

workloads, all contributed to the intensification of work for the constrained

professionals. They found it much harder with the GNVQ than they did with the

BTEC to meet the needs of individual learners. These factors influenced a change

in relationships between students and lecturers. Betty suggested that 'getting

done' has become the overriding imperative (Apple, 1986) and that this in itself

changes the nature of the interaction she now has with students:

I have a much more rushed time with students which, therefore

affects my relationships with them. I don't relate to students as I

might have done before because of the time factor. It's like a

factory, rush, rush, rush.

(Betty, GVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

154

Relationships with moderators and external verifiers

Relationships between the GNVQ external verifiers and lecturers were different from those that existed under the moderation arrangements for the BTEC National and the PCSC, because of the distinctive character of GNVQ quality assurance procedures. Prior to the introduction of a performativity discourse, this process focused on the content of assignments and assessment opportunities created by course teams, as well as students' experience of learning on courses. The external moderator had relevant curricular expertise, which meant that there was a dialogue between lecturers and moderators about these issues, and this provided a professional development opportunity for course teams involved in the process. Dawn explained how this worked for her and her colleagues:

> In the past the moderation was a simpler set-up, in so far as there
>
> was some cross marking. The manager would ensure that the
>
> various assignments were covering the required outcomes. Then
>
> there was the external moderator coming two or three times a year
>
> and he or she would look at work of the students, you know, talk
>
> to the staff, talk to the students and that was that. Now it's
>
> become much more prescriptive.
>
> (Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

The quality assurance mechanisms for the GNVQ incorporate systems for both internal and external verification. Course team members check the judgements about the assessment of students' work that their colleagues have made through a process of internal verification. External verifiers appointed by

the awarding body check that there are systems in place to track and record student achievement against the detailed performance criteria of the GNVQ. Doris described this role:

> Basically he's checking that the systems are in place, the processes are in place and that the internal verifiers have done their job…Doing a spot check, a random check on a few things.
>
> (Doris, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

> Alan described how he perceived the GNVQ external verification process:

> Now it seems to be an examination of the administrative mechanisms we use to track these students…All of which is away from teaching, all of which is away from knowledge, all which is towards bureaucracy.
>
> (Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College)

The arrangements created for the GNVQ external moderation, can be seen as constituting what Power (1994) refers to as audit accountability:

> Audits generally act indirectly upon systems of control rather than directly upon first order activities. […] Audit has thereby become the 'control of control', where what is being assured is the quality of control systems rather than quality of first order operations. In such a context, accountability is discharged by demonstrating the existence of systems of control rather than by demonstrating good teaching, caring, manufacturing, banking etc.
>
> (Power, 1994, p.19)

Jeffrey (2002) suggests that audit accountability has come to replace professional accountability, a key feature of which was the idea that professional teachers engage in self-monitoring and review the effectiveness of their expertise. This kind of reflection was not a feature of the new arrangements. Eric noted a trend in education which undermines the role of professional expertise in the assessment of quality. He contrasted this with the role that he and his course team would have played in moderation processes in the past:

> It's not just related to the BTEC National to the GNVQ switch. It's switching in how the system of monitoring of what teachers do has changed as well. I think on the BTEC National the course team was left to act in a 'professional way' and the moderator came in and was involved in discussions, would discuss assignments and would check a sample of marking. … With the GNVQ it's assessed by someone who has to have the TDLB awards which I think the D32 and D33 equate to a twelfth of an A level and people who have got two degrees and qualifications feel a little bit aggrieved about it understandably. So it's assessed by the assessor, it's then got to be internally verified. So there's an internal verification process.
>
> (Eric, GNVQ Business Studies, Emery College)

Doris felt that with the arrangements for GNVQ external verification, the opportunity to engage in a professional dialogue focusing on pedagogy had been reduced. She identified factors which she felt contributed to this. There was now no requirement that external verifiers were subject specialists in the vocational area of the courses that they scrutinised. The absence of shared vocational

157

knowledge/understanding resulted in a process which did not incorporate a discussion of course content and approaches to teaching. Furthermore, the primary focus of external verification is on outcomes, which also serves to preclude exploration of processes. For Doris this change in the arrangements represented a loss:

> I think the losses are in the contacts you make with other people who are in contact with other places basically… So the sharing of practice, they get a national overview, and they feedback to you. The external verifier I've got, he's a business studies man. Um, he doesn't know anything about health and social care. He's just looking at systems. Whereas you felt that the moderator from CCETSW had some knowledge of health and social care, some experience. Although they call it a vocational qualification, they are not really looking at vocational skills very much on GNVQ.
> (Doris, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

This group of respondents identified a number of losses they experienced as a consequence of this shift in the nature of accountability. Opportunities to engage in professional dialogue about learning and teaching no longer existed, and curricular expertise was not drawn upon during the verification process. There were feelings of loss associated with operating in a system where there was a lack of respect for their pedagogic expertise, and the erosion of trust in their ability to act in a professional way in the best interests of students. These lecturers noted that a low trust view of the professional lecturer now prevailed. In order to comply with the requirements of the new quality assurance system they now had to closely monitor their own work and that of their

colleagues in terms of externally fixed criteria, and this was seen as a retrograde development by most of these respondents.

The influence of the institutional context on lecturers' work

With the exception of Dawn at Drayton College, the constrained lecturers all had new contracts of employment, which had increased their teaching hours and cut their allocation of annual leave. There was a clear indication in the data that the demands of administration had increased in order to comply with the detailed record keeping that GNVQ required. Their workloads had increased and this contributed to feelings of intensification:

> I'm having to teach more hours so the quality inevitably can't be
> good. For instance, you get to the end of the week and you know
> that the lecture at the end was not the same as the one at the one at
> the beginning. I have much less time for preparation.
> (Ellen, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

> The increased pressures of work had an impact on job satisfaction and

created a sense of frustration for Betty:

> I feel as if I'm not doing as well as before. It never ends and you
> can never do it to the standard that you are happy with. You can't
> put it away and say that's it, good.
> (Betty, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

> `The establishment of a 'quasi-market' also had an impact on

student recruitment practices, by placing colleges in competition with schools

offering GNVQ courses. Selection criteria for places on GNVQ Advanced

programmes remained the same as those used to select BTEC students in the past,

applicants were expected to achieve 4 GCSE's at grades A to C or an

Intermediate GNVQ with a Merit or Distinction. However, in four of the five

colleges - Burley, Cannons, Drayton and Emery - lecturers felt under pressure to

exceed their recruitment targets**,** despite staff-student ratios remaining similar to

those that existed on the predecessor vocational course. They now needed to allow

for 'drop-out' from the courses and this resulted in recruitment criteria being

relaxed, in order to sustain the viability of the programmes. One consequence of

this was the presence of students on programmes who struggled with the level of

work required. The pressure to recruit a viable group, therefore, compromised

matching provision to student need:

> [We] are under pressure all the way through - pressure to recruit
>
> students…so you may well take students on to GNVQ even if you
>
> are not sure that you think they will complete the course.
>
> (Betty, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Burley College)

> Drop-out is very bad it's thirty or forty per cent. It's very high.
>
> We have tried to establish the reason and we can account for
>
> reasons but not for all, it's a very high drop-out. One of the
>
> reasons is that some students shouldn't be on the course but on
>
> the other hand if we didn't have them we wouldn't have a course.
>
> For the last couple of years the emphasis has been on 'bums on
>
> seats'. Now they are becoming a little bit more discriminating.
>
> That's one of the reasons for the drop-out because they just can't

cope, especially with the very prescriptive and very complicated method of assessment.

(Dawn, GNVQ Business Studies, Drayton College)

Operating within a market context also impinged on collaborative professional development opportunities with colleagues from neighbouring colleges. Two respondents, Doris and Ellen noted the reduction in these opportunities. Reasons for this were noted in the Kennedy Report (1997), where the point is made that other colleges are perceived as rivals for students rather than as potential collaborators with whom good practice and a strategic overview can be shared and developed. Ellen notes the way increased workloads and competition within market have contributed to this:

> We have no contact in terms of liaison since incorporation, it's all gone. There was slightly more sharing with the National and more of a pooling of ideas. Because the National was more flexible and people shared much more of what they were doing and good practices. Now I think there's a whole range of reasons why this has gone: because workloads have gone up and because we're in competition, that sharing has gone. It really doesn't happen. I don't think it's just about the course I think there's a variety of factors.
>
> (Ellen, GVQ Health and Social Care, Emery College)

Opportunities for professional development

The degree of lecturers' success in implementing any new initiative is likely to be dependent, in part, on the availability of relevant professional development opportunities to equip them with knowledge and skills to carry out their work. A staff development priority for all the Colleges in this sample had been to provide lecturers with opportunities to gain qualifications in assessment. All the staff assessing GNVQ students were required to obtain Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) qualifications in assessment. These were the D32, D33 and D34 competence-based awards for assessing and verifying which were achieved by producing a portfolio of evidence related to TDLB standards:

> TDLB awards is part of our staff training, D32, D33, D34, those have been an internal priority in the college.
>
> (Alan, GNVQ Business Studies, Appleton College)

The constrained professionals did not feel that this had provided them with opportunities to enhance their professional skills. They expressed cynicism and some anger about the process. Ellen felt that to be asked to undertake these qualifications, which were at an academic level equivalent to A level, negated the professional training and experience that lecturers already had in relation to assessment. She expressed strong views about this, describing this requirement as an insult which reflected, in her view, an aspect of the low trust culture that had come to prevail.

Summary

The constrained professionals had adapted to the GNVQ by changing the way in which they worked with students. The table below highlights the differences in course requirements discussed by these respondents which had led to this.

Table 2: Constrained professionals' perceptions of curriculum change

	BTEC National	GNVQ
Underlying principle	Dialogical ideal.	'Delivery model'.
Coverage of curriculum	Coverage in depth.	Coverage in breath.
Focus	People as individuals, emphasis on learning through group work.	People processing, individualised learning.
Modus operandi	Teacher input	Accessing resources
Learning outcomes	Continuous assessment and examinations.	Assessment of competences.
Knowledge	As understanding	As facts

Institutional factors also had a bearing on how the constrained professionals worked with students. The availability of new forms of technology which have created opportunities for increased use of resource based learning and new contracts of employment for lecturers, have contributed to the corporate goal of greater efficiency. Five of the six constrained professionals had experienced a change of contractual conditions that had increased their teaching hours and reduced their annual leave. Face-to-face classroom hours for students had been reduced from those assigned to BTEC and PCSC courses. In addition, some face-

to-face teaching sessions were being replaced by students being timetabled to work semi-independently in their colleges' learning resource centres, researching and writing their unit assignments. There was less time for whole-class teaching and a greater emphasis on individualised learning through assignments, and this was seen as further stifling opportunities for creative teaching. In addition, the increased workload was felt to undermine the quality of teaching.

Exposure to the market place in FE had in many instances made lecturers' work more difficult, especially where GNVQ students were recruited but not adequately academically equipped to cope with the demands of the courses. Competition between colleges also hindered the sharing of 'good practice' with former colleagues, now perceived as rivals and therefore meetings between staff from different institutions had declined. Other opportunities for professional development, such as the training for the TDLB awards, were not regarded as particularly useful or valued highly, indeed often they were resented. This group of respondents felt that their professional training had already equipped them with the skills to use different methods to assess student achievement.

They believed that the role of the lecturer with students was to facilitate learning and the development of analytical skills which would enable to students to be effective learners. They expressed feelings of loss about their inability to perform this aspect of their role with the GNVQ. It appears that they had a commitment to encouraging not only a form of procedural learner autonomy but also a commitment to what Eccelstone (2002) describes as personal (practical) autonomy. This form of autonomy relates to humanist ideas about becoming self-directing, becoming aware of one's strengths and weaknesses:

personal (practical) autonomy is situated precisely within a

particular learning context, underpinned by Prenzel el al.'s

categories of identified, intrinsic and, ideally, interested

motivation. Its development also requires learners and teachers to

attribute achievement to effort and engagement, developed

through good relationships and transactions between teachers and

peers. Learning becomes more student-centred, based on

negotiation of intended outcomes and how to achieve them. There

is an emphasis on positive interdependence amongst learners, co-

operative approaches to problem solving, and negotiated

processes of evaluation, review and recording of achievement.

(Eccelstone, 2002, p. 37)

Informants' descriptions of the way that they taught on the PCSC and

BTEC courses indicate that they believed an experiential pedagogical approach

and assessment structure facilitated the development of critical thinking skills.

They felt that there were greater opportunities with these courses to relate learning

to student interests and to tailor their teaching to students' needs. By contrast, the

scope for this was much more restricted in their delivery of the GNVQ.

Furthermore, opportunities to develop good relationships and transactions with

students were now reduced and instrumental relationships had been established,

whereby lecturers created the conditions in which students could become 'hunters

and gathers' of information, in pursuit of the achievement of outcomes.

The constrained professionals expressed views about the quality of

education in a number of ways. They emphasised the importance of the processes

of learning and felt that creating a participatory atmosphere for learning to take

place added to student experience. They were not convinced that the focus on the achievement outcomes, within the constraints of time available to deliver the GNVQ, constituted a real improvement in educational standards. These informants also felt that the quality assurance processes for GNVQ were impoverished by the absence of discussions about teaching and learning during the external verification process.

The constrained professionals had adapted their practices to meet the demands of GNVQ by adopting strategies with which they were not very comfortable. They felt that their professional autonomy was constrained by audit accountability and the intensification of their work. Although they were aware of the new 'good lecturer' role, it did not fit them comfortably. Their professional commitment to experiential approaches to teaching and learning were compromised by the breadth of subject matter they had to cover and the time available for this. What is particularly interesting is that this group of informants, with experience of curriculum development, had the most difficulty in finding opportunities to be creative in teaching the GNVQ.

B. Committed newcomers

The three lecturers who fell into this category were: Alice, Brenda and Carol. As the new label indicates, all three lecturers had only recently become full-time FE lecturers. Alice (GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College) had recently entered teaching from a nursing background. Another respondent, Brenda (GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College), had come into teaching from industry where she had worked as a trainer. As a part-time lecturer in FE for 12 years she had worked on BTEC courses, but she only began her full-time appointment when GNVQ was first introduced. Neither Alice nor Brenda had undertaken a teacher

training course. The third person, Carol (GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College), trained as a teacher and had initially taught in schools for twelve years before becoming a further education lecturer seven years ago. She had experience of working with GCSE students and now taught on the Intermediate GNVQ.

While the constrained professionals compared GNVQ with the old BTEC regime, the committed newcomers drew on a wider and very different range of comparisons in assessing GNVQ. Alice (Health and Social Care Lecturer, Appleton College) made comparisons with nurse training and Carol (Business Studies Lecturer, Cannons College) compared the GNVQ Intermediate with her former GCSE teaching. The exception was Brenda (Business Studies Lecturer, Burley College), who had entered FE with a training background, and had worked as part-time lecturer on the BTEC National in the past. As a result, she could compare this with the GNVQ. However, because she worked part-time under the old regime, she had not been involved in the full range of activities associated with it.

Approaches to teaching

The committed lecturers, like the constrained professionals, planned their teaching in relation to the outcomes students needed to achieve for the GNVQ:

> Teaching is very structured. And what has led to the structuring
> has been the need for assessment opportunity. … So now we are
> very structured in our delivery and every unit has a scheme of
> work attached to it and an assessment opportunity is listed. This
> information is given to the student at the start of each semester. …
> Everybody has to stick religiously to delivery and assessment

otherwise everything falls to pieces.

(Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

Brenda was not expressing criticism here of the rigidities of the GNVQ standards. In fact, she favoured the order that GNVQ had brought to vocational education, with 'transparent' forms of assessment. For Alice, these standards helped to provide her with a clear expectation of the teaching focus:

> The nice thing is you know what information that you've got to
> get across and what PCs (*performance criteria*) you have got to
> cover, and what subjects and things, but how you do that is very
> much up to the individual. The more interesting you can make it
> the easier it is for students to actually grasp.
>
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Alice did not suggest that the time allocated for face-face teaching constrained the way that she delivered the GNVQ. She implies that she exercises a substantial degree of autonomy over the selection of teaching methods.

When engaged in whole-class teaching these respondents employed a range of teaching methods. In contrast to the constrained professionals, both Alice and Carol felt that the GNVQ provided opportunities for creativity in relation to teaching. In Carol's case, these opportunities had increased with her move from academic GCSE teaching to GNVQ Intermediate:

> We have role-plays, peer assessments, group assessment, whereas
> in the GCSE there wasn't quite that much opportunity to have that
> kind of interaction.
>
> (Carol, GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies Cannons College)

168

During the course of their interviews for this research, the committed lecturers did not indicate that they were uncomfortable with the course content or constrained by prescribed GNVQ standards, nor did they raise issues relating to depth or the breath of coverage of knowledge required. This represents a significant difference from the constrained professionals. The committed lecturers largely saw their task as helping students to acquire the skills, and to find the information needed to demonstrate competence:

> There will be tasks to find out certain information for themselves
> either in the library or using CD ROMs or reading.
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Although both Alice and Carol believed that teaching should be highly structured they did not believe that didactic approaches were effective. They favoured individualised learning and welcomed the emphasis now placed on students' responsibility for their own learning. Their perspectives on what teaching should be about are contrasted with their own experiences of learning:

> The style of teaching, when I was at school it was very much
> chalk and talk. Whereas, with GNVQ, there is more
> responsibility for the individual.
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

> I think education you know tries to get away from the kind of
> chalk and talk. I mean we are supposed to be enabling students to
> take responsibility for their own learning. We have got a learning

resources centre and I think that is one way. The institution will

pare the number of staff that they have because we are expected

to write these assignments and then the students go and dip into

them … so it is very different.

(Carol, GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies, Cannons College)

Carol and Alice did not talk about experiential learning as providing an alternative to didactic approaches. What they emphasised was the importance of being able to successfully engage in 'receptive learning', which they saw as empowering for their students. In contrast to the constrained professionals, they expressed no concerns about the way students engaged in these 'receptive' learning activities, for example as regards the depth of exploration of a subject. Enabling students to be able to retrieve information from different sources was an important aspect of their role as a facilitator of learning; they had no problem with what a number of commentators have referred to in the literature as the 'treasure hunt' approach to learning (Bates *et al*, 1998). The committed newcomers did not talk about the role of the lecturer in developing students' analytical skills as being all important. The role of the GNVQ lecturer was described as a 'facilitator', who would assist students in generating evidence to meet GNVQ standards:

It's nice to be able to give constructive advice and direct help to

students. … We are not lecturers, we are assessors.

(Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

Although these informants often described their role as 'facilitators', it is clear that they saw this in terms of preparation for assessment. Brenda's comment

suggests that she sees her role primarily as an assessor concerned with measuring student performance. Avis (2003) suggests that within conceptions of the 'good lecturer', technical skills in assessment are prioritised. This shift in the focus of the lecturer role is also identified by Randle and Bradey (1997) in their discussion of how competence-based education repositions the lecturer as an assessor, rather than as a lecturer encouraging student learning in a broader sense. Being a facilitators, who is able to support students' hunt for evidence, was for these informants, a role with which they felt comfortable. Alice describes her role with GNVQ students:

> Advising people where to find out information, how it fits into the course they are doing. Listening, I think, more to what students are saying rather than, you know, what I can remember of my teachers, you know, do as I say. Now I think it is working in partnership.
>
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Alice suggested GNVQ teaching requires lecturers to take on a role as 'listeners and advisors'. It appears that, within their descriptions of their professional role, the committed lecturers are describing elements of a commercial relationship that operates between the student and the lecturer, in that the lecturer is a supplier of pre-packaged information to the student consumer.

Carol, who is working with Intermediate GNVQ students who arrive at college with few academic skills, also describes an 'individualistic' approach to supporting student learning, but she formulates her role as a 'caring', nurturing one which enables her to respond to individual student needs. This is rather different from the role she adopted with GCSE students:

171

The GCSE students were totally different. They were more
academic. They had GCSE qualifications or were hoping to get
GCSE qualifications. Whereas, these students probably failed in
secondary school and have actually come here for a second bite of
the apple. So they might even have a learning disability or
behavioural problem. So you have to take it from a totally
different angle. It's more a case of motivating them whereas the
GCSE students were more motivated and inclined to work. … A
lot of the time we nurture them and get them up to a certain level.
(Carol, GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies, Cannons College)

Carol's expectations of students' learning on the GNVQ did not include
the development of analytical skills. This is likely to be due to the fact that these
students are expected to operate at a fairly low academic level and to meet only
the criteria for a GNVQ Intermediate qualification. This would be a significant
achievement in itself for many of these students, who had previously failed at
school. The performance criteria for the Intermediate GNVQ do not demand
demonstrating analytical skills, they are more closely related to being able to
recall knowledge as 'facts'; and this nurturing role of the lecturer was adopted to
facilitate their success.

It appeared that the committed newcomers held a different view about the
role of knowledge within vocational education from that expressed by the
constrained professionals. Although both these groups of informants employed
experiential learning methods in their work with GNVQ students, the favoured
outcomes for students resulting from these experiences differed. The constrained

172

lecturers' views about this have much in keeping with the lecturer operating within the progressive ideology of new vocationalism. Bates *et al* (1998) describe the lecturer role in that context as facilitative, and as valuing discovery learning because it enables students to construct their own knowledge of the world. Knowledge is complex and problematic, and analytical skills are needed to make judgements about different perspectives in relation to the area of study. For the committed newcomers, by contrast, knowledge appeared to be non-complex, non-problematic and a finite commodity. There was an emphasis on discussing knowledge in a way that stressed its externality and objectivity. For Brenda, who had some experience of BTEC National assessment, this was how things should be. When she was a tutor on the BTEC course she did not feel assessment was always carried out in an objective way. In her view competence-based assessment was a good thing because there was no room for subjectivity:

> When I was doing the National I was always a little worried about
> the standards because unless the team got together and established
> the criteria beforehand it could be a little erratic. .. I was worried
> that perhaps I was marking too harshly…You would often get
> people saying you must get them through. You think goodness,
> what shall I do? … I like to know that I am being objective. …
> Whereas, now there is no subjectivity, there is no argument with
> GNVQ like that. … So I think it has put a lot of order into the
> standards.
>
> (Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

The committed newcomers seemed to adopt a technical approach to teaching which seems to imply knowledge is perceived non-problematically as 'facts'. The

'relevance criteria' are stressed here, with the emphasis on what is necessary to achieve competence in the vocational area. They expressed no desire to go beyond this with their students.

Relationships with moderators and external verifiers

None of the committed newcomers had participated in course moderation arrangements in the past. They implied that it was appropriate for an external verifier to focus heavily on the accountability systems that they had in place to support claims of student achievement. Alice and Carol had found the process of external verification helpful:

> You can ask them if you have queries or whether or not if
> someone has actually achieved a grade or whatever and how you
> can actually improve systems.
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Carol described the external verification process as:

> Quite useful in a sense, we can talk through any difficulties we
> have had and we also have the students present so that they can
> air their views as well.
> (Carol, GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies, Cannons College)

The committed newcomers reported that they had coped well with the demands of the new audit accountability. Brenda indicated that it had led to enhancing the assessment skills of her course team:

> Assessment is very rigorous, which is a good thing. It is very time
> consuming and it was actually quite difficult to get to grips with

in the early stage, because one was overwhelmed by the number

of assignments. …Now we're much more aware of the quality.

(Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

These informants were not critical of the forms of audit accountability associated with GNVQ assessment:

As a professional I think you have to account for what you have

done. What you have done and what you have assessed. You have

to be organised or else the students will not get through the course

because they won't be able to generate sufficient evidence.

(Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

The impact of the institutional context on lecturers' work

Alice and Brenda had undergone a change in their contractual conditions of service (for further details about the new contract see Chapter 1). The committed newcomers expressed no concerns about the time available to carry out their work. They did not appear to be experiencing feelings of intensification, nor did they believe that exposure to the market had impacted negatively on their work. They judged the new forms of accountability to be appropriate, although Alice accepted she was under pressure to recruit students and improve retention:

Obviously, you know, it is a business at the end of the day and

you have to justify your wages basically.

(Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

However, this was simply accepted, rather than being a focus for criticism.

Opportunities for professional development

Like the constrained professionals, the committed newcomers did not feel undertaking TDLB Assessor qualifications led to enhanced professionalism. However, the reasons they offered for this differed - in the sense that they believed that quality can be measured by focusing on outcomes. Furthermore, their prior professional socialisation had introduced them to this form of assessment for workplace learning. Alice explained why she felt comfortable with competence-based assessment and did not feel assessor qualification was necessary to enhance her understanding but it was a college requirement which she went along with:

> A couple of my staff, including myself, do think the doing the
> D32 and D33 is just a paper exercise. I think it's because we
> come from nursing and are into doing assessment. I know it is
> slightly different on wards but we have been doing it for years.
> (Alice, GNVQ Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Carol had complied with the requirement to gain assessor qualifications but did not appear to gain anything in terms enhancing of her professional skills in assessment:

> It was a bit of a paper exercise. It wasn't intellectually taxing, it
> was just time consuming. … It was expected that we did it so the
> way we overcame it was we did it as a team.
> (Carol, GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies, Cannons College)

Summary

The data derived from these informants seems to indicate that they held a view of the role of the FE lecturer that was more or less in keeping with the new 'good lecturer' role described by Avis (2003) and Shain and Gleeson (1999). Like the constrained professionals, they planned their teaching in relation to the learning outcomes students' needed to achieve. In this sense, both groups were compliant with the new curricular regime. However, the committed newcomers reported that with the GNVQ they experienced choice over teaching methods with their students. They saw their professional role primarily as facilitators of learning, and welcomed the emphasis with GNVQ on students' responsibility for their own learning through assignment research, which they thought was a good thing. Unlike the constrained professionals, they did not express concerns about the limited depth of exploration that students engaged in. Assessment was not reported to be a burden, and these lecturers did not express feelings of intensification. They were happy with the new quality assurance arrangements and felt that these had made assessment more rigorous.

Their occupational biographies appeared to be an influential factor in predisposing them towards acceptance of the GNVQ pedagogy, and the managerialist practices that had come to prevail in further education colleges. Brenda felt it had not been difficult to adjust because of this:

> It (*the GNVQ*) was a challenge. It suited me, because coming
>
> from industry and working and being a trainer in industry, I could
>
> see how it fitted in. How performance criteria fitted into
>
> vocational qualifications, while previously those links weren't
>
> quite so strong … Having always worked in personnel and

seeking people with the skills. To me it is very much part of

education. … I have adapted to it more readily because I came

from industry. I have been a trainer.

(Brenda, GNVQ Business Studies, Burley College)

The professional development opportunities they had been given to equip them to

assess and verify students work were not regard as being particularly useful. Both

Brenda and Alice were already familiar with competence-based assessment

because it was utilised in the professional roles they had held prior to teaching in

further education. Therefore, TDLB awards did not provide opportunities to

enhance their professionalism.

C. The strategic complier

The informant in this category is Cora, GNVQ Intermediate Health and

Social Care, Cannons College. She is a trained nurse and health visitor with an

MA in Education and a Cert. Ed. She has been teaching in FE for eight years and

has a new negotiated contract of employment. She had had experience of teaching

NNEB nursery nursing students in the past and now taught on the Intermediate

GNVQ. Cora had not had much involvement with curriculum development in the

past and was unfamiliar with moderation and external verification procedures.

Approach to teaching

Cora was teaching the Intermediate GNVQ in Health and Social Care and had not

taught on the BTEC National. She compared her experience of the Intermediate

GNVQ with the NNEB Nursery Nursing course on which she had previously

taught.

Like the constrained professionals and the committed newcomers, Cora planned her teaching closely in relation to the assessment requirements of the GNVQ. She describes this as unproblematic and finds it all quite straightforward:

> We have a scheme of work that we have to follow and then we have specifications which the Board issues to us and we attempt to actually follow them. I mean it is quite straight forward. At present, we write our own assignments. I mean, it's very easy to see exactly what they have got to do and they do recommend. It is quite prescriptive what they actually want them to do and you have got the performance criteria and then you have actually got the range statements which they expect you to show evidence. So you devise what you teach according to what is going to be assessed. … It is so spelled out here what I have to teach. I know how many weeks I have got to teach it. I simply have to devise the work scheme – deliver this in that number of weeks.
>
> (Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora explained that she did not have the opportunity to devise assignments for her NNEB students because these were prepared by the awarding body. Devising assignments for GNVQ students provided opportunities for creativity in her teaching and enabled her to respond to the needs of her students:

> Although the evidence is prescribed, allowing tutors to write their own assignments allows for flexibility, creativity, you know, making it relevant to the needs of your particular student group. … You have got a certain amount of freedom – you have got more work but then once you have got the assignment devised

you can repeat it.

(Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

In terms of teaching methods employed to prepare students for their individual assignment work, Cora suggests that she experiences a relative degree of autonomy:

We do quite a lot of group work, occasionally we role play. It's not set it's just left to you, if you thought it was a good way of teaching. … We are encouraged to use different teaching methods but the students have to complete different assignments in their own time.

(Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora notes that she has had to adapt to GNVQ teaching:

I have found that I have to be more adaptable and flexible, and not perhaps deliver more, but a greater range of material than I had to before. … It calls on more subject matter than people were delivering before. It was a new type of course. It brought bits from the other courses. Yes, there is a greater need to be adaptable, flexible and ready to deliver new material.

(Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora describes her adaptation and notes the development of skills found within the construct of the 'good lecturer' identified by Avis (2003) and Shain and Gleeson (1999), which stresses flexibility in relation to teaching. However, later in the interview, Cora seems to question the almost unproblematic view of her

role in GNVQ teaching that she had outlined. She identifies the underlying grids of control over her work that are created by detailed performance criteria that students have to achieve, suggesting that these stifle her creativity as a teacher:

> Some say there are opportunities for creativity but it is extremely clearly defined what you have to teach and you don't deviate from that really. So it is really very, very specific and that is something I have never been used to. I have had the subjects laid down in the syllabus, obviously what you have to cover but this (GNVQ) is very prescriptive. It is very rigid.
>
> (Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

She has adapted to this change by adopting a compliant response to her teaching and ensuring that her lesson focuses on the coverage of the breadth of knowledge for successful GNVQ assessment. However, she wonders whether the range of cognitive skills acquired by competence-based qualifications really prepares students for higher education:

> GNVQ students are supposed to be better able to go off and do research, there is an action plan and a grade for planning etc. But they don't develop the skills in writing essays. There is some difficulty in seeing GNVQ Advanced as equivalent to A level. GNVQ has greater breadth but A level has greater depth.
>
> (Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora also expressed concern about the fragmentation of knowledge on GNVQ courses and wondered whether teaching towards units of assessment prevents students making connections between their learning of different disciplines:

> With the old course and end of course assessment they did have to revise it all and saw the connections. But with units when they've finished they don't need to think about that knowledge again. Students are not bringing knowledge together in any holistic way … they do not leave at the end with a coherent block of knowledge.
>
> (Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

One of the reasons she gives for this is the absence of the assessment of vocational skills acquired through engaging in work experience. This was seen by many informants as a shortcoming of the GNVQ and all the colleges cited in this study had introduced some form of work experience provision to complement students' academic studies. However, in Cora's view, the quality of this experience for students had declined for the GNVQ students compared to that of students on prior vocational educational courses. The absence of 'good quality' work experience that related to students' academic learning was seen by Cora as reinforcing the fragmentation of knowledge, which constrained the achievement of holistic understanding:

> There is no practical, although they have work experience it won't count towards their qualification and I think one difficulty for the students is that because it (knowledge) comes from units and modules, it does fragment learning and they do lose the overall picture. They know they have this tutor for this subject and this

tutor for another, but they don't see the overall connection.

(Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora, like the constrained professionals, seems to believe that vocational education should enable students to develop a range of cognitive skills and help them learn how to relate theory to practice. She is not convinced that this is being achieved by the students she works with. She appears committed to forms of experiential learning but unlike the constrained professionals she does not suggest time allocated for face-to-face teaching prevents her adopting this approach. Nor does she raise concerns about the depth of exploration to which her Intermediate GNVQ students engage in.

The institutional context on lecturers' work

Cora's work is affected by the increased demands of assessment and record keeping within GNVQ. She makes clear that she is not allocated enough time for these tasks and, as a result of this, she experiences feelings of intensification:

> I'm feeling very pressurised at the moment because of the amount
> of marking we have to do and the setting of assignments. …
> There is a great deal of record-keeping. GNVQs have created a
> whole paper industry because for each student you have to record
> results. As a unit subject teacher you have to record that but you
> also have the tracking of students so you have this summary
> sheet. So you have got all these units and elements. We have to
> have a system of paperwork for the internal verification process to
> show our external verifier. Then there are the tests and including

the results of that. So, yes, altogether there is a great deal more
paperwork and recording. Then the portfolios that students
produce with all the evidence and making sure that the students
have all that and that it is indexed. That has definitely increased.
We always used to complain about the paperwork, but looking
back (Laughs).

(Cora, Intermediate Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Summary

Cora expresses contradictory views about GNVQ teaching which seems to
suggest that her perspective is straddled between some progressive elements of
new vocationalism and aspects of controlled vocationalism. She plans her
teaching closely in relation to the learning outcomes that students need to achieve.
She feels that she has greater opportunities for creativity with the GNVQ than the
NNEB because she can design assignments that relate to students' interests.
However, she appears to struggle with the tensions built into the GNVQ between
freedom to plan learning in preferred ways and the prescriptive nature of the
assessment criteria. With regard to this she is concerned that the approach she
now adopts, of relating her teaching to units of assessment, prevents her students
gaining a holistic understanding of the subject matter which enables them to
develop critical and analytical skills. She reports feelings of intensification
brought about by the assessment demands of GNVQs. Despite this, she has
successfully adapted to accommodate the demands of GNVQ; she has become
more flexible in terms of the teaching methods she now employs and is happy to
adopt those advocated under the new regime and thereby take on the role of the
'good lecturer' prescribed by GNVQ.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of any new curriculum development must depend, in part, on the availability of professional development which familiarises lecturers with the new requirements and enables them to develop appropriate strategies for their work with students. However, none of the respondents interviewed felt that the TDLB assessor or verifier qualifications had enhanced their professionalism. This would be no surprise to Hyland who argues:

> In the last analysis, a system concerned only with the accreditation of outcomes cannot provide the necessary foundation for the ongoing improvement and enhancement of educational and professional practice. The satisfaction of competence outcomes using programmes based on NVQs or TDLB standards is often nothing more than the recording of current skills. This is not the same as learning and professional development, which is necessarily concerned with improving practice with an eye to future situations. As Argyris and Schon (1974) observe 'Whatever competence means today, we can be sure its meaning will have changed by tomorrow'. The foundation for future professional competence seems to be the capacity to learn how to learn. The NCVQ model of CBET and the TDLB standards have nothing at all to do with this activity of 'learning how to learn'.
>
> (Hyland, 1994, P.99)

Factors other than staff training and development need to be considered in attempting to identify factors which influenced the responses and adaptations that

185

lecturers adopted in their work with GNVQ students. The availability of new forms of technology which enable students to engage in resource based learning and new contracts of employment for lecturers may have contributed to the corporate goal of greater efficiency, but had other consequences too. The introduction of these measures, combined with the increased paperwork that GNVQ assessment brought, resulted in feelings of intensification on the part of some lecturers but not among others. Even where similar institutional issues were identified, there were differences in the responses and adaptations of these three groups of lecturers.

The constrained professionals felt they had less control over their work than they had had previously: conception and execution had become separated with the arrival of GNVQ specifications. They noted the erosion of their professional autonomy in curriculum design and approach to teaching. Their workloads had not only increased because of a change in contracts of employment but also as a result of the demands of GNVQ assessment. These were the sources of intensification in their work. In many respects they expressed feelings of being de-skilled: they complained about loss of control over the conception of work, and about how their work had become more routine, amounting to supporting students' acquisition of competence and assessing it. The skills that the lecturer role now required appeared to be based less on pedagogic expertise than in the past.

The constrained professionals had adapted by becoming more flexible, but in so doing they had experienced some discomfort because the adaptation was at odds with their original conception of their role. In practice, they had adapted by adopting very similar approaches to the teaching that the committed newcomers

186

had taken on. But they operated in this way because they claimed to be constrained by institutional and managerial factors, in terms of the time allocated for face-to-face teaching, and by the audit approaches to assessment and quality assurance that had been introduced. They did not welcome this aspect of new managerialism because they did not believe that these measures, in themselves, had the potential to raise the quality of vocational education, because they reduced opportunities to focus on the process of learning and the broader educational outcomes that vocational education might have to offer. Some of these respondents also commented on the way that the imposition of detailed specifications and the emphasis on audit reflected the presence of a 'low trust' culture in which they now operated. Such developments were seen to constitute an assault on their professional identities.

Although the committed newcomers employed a range of experiential learning techniques within their teaching, the aspirations they had for the achievement of educational outcomes appeared to be narrower than those desired by the constrained professionals. This may be because they perceived student empowerment primarily in terms of the development of procedural autonomy, and they saw the place of knowledge within vocational educational programmes as equipping students with relevant 'facts'. They indicated that new quality assurance mechanisms had brought improvements in the quality of education, and that they were comfortable with the prominence given to outcomes. This seems to suggest that their frame of reference was also influenced by ideological strands within new managerialism. They did not perceive the GNVQ and new managerialism negatively and this, in itself, made the implementation less problematic than it was for the constrained professionals.

The response of the strategic complier to the GNVQ shared much in common with Shain and Gleeson's (1999) strategic compliers. She does not express feelings of loss over the control of her work and does not express criticisms of the new managerialist culture in which she now operates. She has adapted her practices by managing to increase flexibility in relation to teaching methods prescribed for the GNVQ, and by increasing the range of subject matter she now delivers. This shift enables her to assume the 'good lecturer' role and helps her to respond to the needs of her Intermediate GNVQ students

Cora does not comment critically on the depth of engagement with the subject matter of her students. Her expectations here may be related to the fact that she is teaching Intermediate students who are assumed to be operating at GCSE level rather than Advanced level. However, despite this, she is not totally comfortable with her role as a GNVQ lecturer because of the views she holds about the purpose of vocational education. She expresses some concern about the tendency for competence-based education to fragment knowledge for the convenience of assessment, which hampers students' acquisition of holistic understanding. In relation to Advanced GNVQ students, she feels the lecturer's role should involve helping students relate theory to practice, and facilitate their development of a range of cognitive skills that will enable them cope with the demands of higher education

A key factor in shaping lecturers' responses to the GNVQ seems to be the frames of reference, from which they started. Strauss *et al* (1963) suggest that these are likely to be derived from their professional training, ideology and career stage. The closer the fit between the attitudes generated by these and the role prescribed for the GNVQ lecturer, the less problematic adaptation becomes.

188

Along with this, there may be generational factors which influence perceptions of the lecturer role. According to Mannheim (1952), the unity of a generation is based on the perceived common location which its members occupy in the historical dimension of the social process. This limits them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them to adopt a characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action.

The 'frame of reference' associated with constrained professionals is implicit in the views expressed about professional identity, teaching and learning. What, for them, constitutes 'good quality' in vocational education, map on to strands of the new vocationalism paradigm. They were all qualified teachers, with the exception of Dawn, with a vocational specialism, who had undertaken some form of teacher training at a time when the value of 'experiential learning' in relation to increasing learner autonomy and critical thinking skills was promoted. They felt that the opportunity to use their expertise in the development of course content had come to be restricted because of the prescriptive nature of the GNVQ. These lecturers had also worked within the BTEC culture, where the unity of knowledge was emphasised, and the development of critical skills was viewed as prerequisite for developing learner autonomy. This experience is likely to have influenced their perceptions of the role of lecturer, and they frequently referred back to it. Their views about their role map on to those associated with the new vocationalism, to which they implicitly aligned themselves, and from which they derived their standards and perspectives. The negative views the constrained professionals developed about GNVQ teaching made their work more problematic than it was for the committed newcomers. Implementing GNVQ resulted in the constrained professionals experiencing conflict within their role (intra-role

conflict) because their former definition of their role, based on the values which they had internalised through the process of socialisation (early training and experience with BTEC), was at odds with the new programme. Hence, whilst they were 'compliant' they were also critical of the new regime.

The data derived from the committed lecturers seems to indicate that they held a view of the role of the FE lecturer that was more or less in keeping with the new 'good lecturer' role described by Avis (2003) and Shain and Gleeson (1999). The committed lecturers had limited experience of teaching in FE. Ainley and Bailey's (1997) research focusing on responses to change in further education following incorporation led them to conclude that new and recent entrants to the sector were more accepting of policy change than those who had been working in colleges before this time. The personal occupational biographies of the committed newcomers seem to be the most influential factor in predisposing them towards accepting the managerialist discourse that had come to prevail in vocational education. None of the committed newcomers had been involved in curriculum development in the past, and therefore they did not experience feelings of loss in relation to control over this aspect of their work. Their perceptions of teaching seemed to be derived from their own educational and professional socialisation in the fields of nursing and training. In relation to approaches to teaching, they liked the way GNVQ pedagogy empowered students to take more responsibility for their learning. Alice was familiar with competence-based assessment because this was used in nurse training, and Barbara's professional socialisation as a trainer had also familiarised her with this approach. There is an emphasis in training on vocationalism and relevance, both of which are present in the GNVQ, with a similar technical rationalism associated with the detailed specifications. This

focus is narrower than that which had been associated with new vocationalism. The committed newcomers did not appear to experience role conflict; because they were new in post and/or because they had a different training/professional background.

Cora's view, as a strategic complier, may have been derived, in part, from her socialisation as a professional through teacher education, and her experience of having undertaken an MA in education as a mature student. It may be this which led her to question the suitability of the GNVQ as preparation for higher education. She appeared to align herself with the progressive elements of new vocationalism but managed to operate by adopting the role prescribed for the lecturer within the new managerialist paradigm and therefore is perhaps a 'deviant' case. She is in the process of re-negotiating her role, engaging in 'creative mediation' (Gleeson & Knight, 2006).

We have seen, then, how even within this small sample of lecturers there were a range of adaptations to the GNVQ regime, shaped by their different backgrounds and generational positions. In the next chapter I examine the shift to the new regime of Advanced Vocational Certificates in Education, so as to set the scene for an examination of how lecturers responded to another major curricular change in FE.

Chapter 6 The Shift to Advanced Vocational Certificates

This chapter provides a brief overview of the third phase of GNVQ curriculum development which culminated in the Advanced Vocational Certificates in Education (AVCE). The chapter begins by looking at the agenda for the emergence of the AVCE which was subsequently introduced by the New Labour Government that took office in 1997; and the impact of changes in responsibility for policy development. The groundwork for the new regime was carried out in the last year or so of Conservative Government and much of this was inherited by New Labour. The key characteristics of AVCE are then described, before consideration is given to the role prescribed for lecturers in delivering the qualification.

The agenda for curriculum reform

As explained in Chapter 4, during the early 1990s the reform of vocational education and training in England, Wales and Northern Ireland resulted in the formalization of a triple-track system consisting of academic, general vocational and work-based qualifications. However, in the mid 1990s concerns about raising levels of achievement and increasing participation in full-time post-16 education and training remained.

The Conservative Government recognised that an extensive review of the qualifications systems was needed. Therefore, the Dearing Review was established to explore ways of strengthening, consolidating and improving the framework of 16-19-year-old qualifications. The Review Group's terms of reference were limited because it was explicitly instructed to look at ways of maintaining the rigour of A levels and to build on recent developments of GNVQ.

The Dearing *Review of Qualifications for 16-19-Year-Olds* was published in 1996, and according to Smithers (1999) the key recommendations emerging from the Report were that:

- A-levels and GCSE should be for 'where the primary purpose is to develop knowledge, understanding and skills associated with a subject or discipline'.

- GNVQs should be for Applied Education 'where the primary purpose is to develop and apply knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to broad areas of employment'.

- NVQs should be for Vocational Training 'where the primary purpose is to develop and recognise mastery of a trade or profession at the relevant level'.

To underline the importance of the applied pathway [Dearing] recommended renaming advanced GNVQs 'Applied A-levels'. (Smithers, A, 1999, p. 152-153)

In 1997 a Labour Government was elected. When in opposition, New Labour had outlined a different agenda for qualifications reform from that of the Conservative Government. They had published *'Aiming Higher'* (1996), which signalled its support for a more unified qualifications framework and expressed a commitment to the development of greater flexibility within the curriculum structure, with opportunities to combine different areas of study. This unified approach was advocated as a means of breaking down the historical (and what

New Labour described as the 'artificial') divide between academic and vocational learning. A vision was outlined for 16-19 qualifications to have a modular design within a single credit framework, with an Advanced Diploma at level 3. 'Core Studies' would form an integral part of all 14-19-year-old programmes of study. In addition, there would be one single qualifications and a regulatory body to co-ordinate this reform.

However, this agenda was toned down in New Labour's 1997 election manifesto, which expressed its intention to broaden A levels and to ensure that vocational qualifications had rigorous standards. No reference was made to a single qualifications framework or to an Advanced Diploma. According to Hodgson and Spours (1999), this change in objectives can be accounted for by two significant factors. First, the reform agenda, inherited from the Conservative Government, was already underway, with recommendations emanating from the Beaumont Review of 100 leading NVQs/SVQs (1995), the Capey Review of GNVQ Assessment (1996) and the Dearing Review. Second, there were political motives that influenced the new government's approach to qualifications reform. Hodgson and Spours suggest that:

> despite the gradualist and staged approach towards the
> development of a unified system outlined in *Aiming Higher*, this
> was still seen as too explicit for New Labour's policy agenda in
> the first parliament, because it might be interpreted as a long-term
> threat to A levels. However, the narrower manifesto commitments
> could be seen as taking the first tentative steps outlined in Aiming
> Higher, while being linked more overtly to maintaining
> educational standards rather than to overcoming the

academic/vocational divide.

(Hodgson and Spours, 1999, p114)

The Dearing Report had recommended the establishment a single qualifications regulatory body, and this came to be implemented by the Labour Government. One factor influencing this decision was assessment of the limited progress that NCVQ had made in establishing a national framework of vocational qualifications. Between 1995 and 1996 the NCVQ was subject to a Quinquennial Review, this was part of a monitoring exercise but in addition a 'prior options review' was added to explore whether the functions delegated to the NVCQ remained appropriate for Government and DfEE objectives. The review noted that the NCVQ had not managed to establish a national framework for awards. Tension was highlighted between the role of the NCVQ as a regulatory body and its promotional role. A recommendation of the 1996 Dearing review was that the Government replace the SCAA and the NCVQ with one single body to oversee qualifications, the curriculum, and statutory assessment. A consultation exercise indicated that there was widespread support for the creation of a single, merged body with such responsibility. In October 1997 the Labour government, through the 1997 Education Act, established the Qualifications Curriculum Council (QCA), which was an amalgamation of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and the NCVQ. One of QCA's tasks was to oversee a coherent framework of major academic and vocational awards. The framework was intended to incorporate a number of vocational awards offered by the awarding bodies, including both BTEC qualifications and GNVQs. Qualifications within this framework would have to meet QCA approval, in terms of their assessment criteria and quality assurance arrangements.

The merger of the two bodies appears to have involved a shift in the influence of key actors in the policy-making process. When QCA was established, its Chief Executive was Nick Tate, who came from SCAA; and many other leading figures involved in the subsequent development of GNVQ policy were also ex-SCAA staff. Raggatt and Williams (1999) argue that the predictions that employer interests would be marginalized in a merged body were borne out in two respects. First, employers' representatives were in a minority; and, second, at the point of inception, the majority of QCA's senior staff came from SCAA, with only one former NCVQ official, Alan Bellamy, being appointed at director level. This development, in the context of institutional reform that had also taken place with the merger of the DfE and DE, signalled a weakening of the influence of vocational modernism in the next developmental phase of the qualifications.

In 1997 Tessa Blackstone, the then minister for education, outlined the Government's approach to qualifications reform. This included establishing more rigorous standards of quality assurance and more reliable assessment. She announced that implementation of some of the recommendations made in Dearing's Review would be deferred, pending a more detailed consultation on the main advanced level qualifications. The QCA interpreted responses to the consultation exercise and advised ministers that there was a strong consensus favouring a coordinated system of qualifications which allowed students to gain equal credit for vocational and academic studies. They also found support for the combining of pursuit of GNVQs with work for other examinations. Hodgson and Spours (1999) describe Baroness Blackstone's own response to QCA's report as cautious and not entirely in keeping with the reform agenda outlined in *Aiming Higher*. They note:

Her letter to Sir William Stubbs, Chair of QCA, was a mix of

radical analysis of the limits of A levels, together with modest

proposals for their reform through the proposed new AS/A2

blocks. She described current advanced level study as

overspecialized and inflexible and observed that young people are

taught for less time and have narrower programmes than in other

European countries. Accompanying the proposals for smaller A

levels and GNVQ blocks was a series of tough measures – limits

on the number of module resits, the limit on coursework

assessment was raised from only 20 to 30 per cent and there was a

suggestion that advanced level study should normally be

restricted to two years. This was clearly an effort to balance the

reform of A level structure with measures which could be seen to

be preserving standards, so as to be able to fend off accusations

from the right-wing press of diluting A levels.

(Hodgson and Spours, 1999, p.116)

The result of the Government's response to QCA's report was that A levels
and GNVQ Advanced awards were brought closer together. QCA suggested that
A levels should be broken down into six separate chunks to help sixth-form
students 'mix and match' their A level units with GNVQs. Adopting this
approach, in 1998 GNVQs were reformed into six and three unit awards, in
parallel with developments in A level reform. A common, five-point grading scale
was recommended for both qualifications. QCA also proposed that an overarching
certificate for Key Skills be offered.

In an interview, Jessup reflected on the significance of the change of key players in the policy process and the direction that policy development then took:

> The development of GNVQs and the things it was trying to do got swamped by the traditional educational practice. The whole thing has moved and the centre of gravity has moved towards the whole of education. … A lot of the basic stuff has been glossed over or watered down. I'm not saying a lot of problems didn't have to be addressed but the trouble was in the awareness which they tried to resolve those problems was that there was no commitment to the basic principles of new specifications. … The idea that people could work at speed and break away from the course structure, it has all gone back to a more conventional model of education which is exemplified by GCSE. … They have gone back to a more traditional model of education, a more traditional concept of assessment and some things have been lost in the process.
>
> (Jessup, Interview, March 1998)

The characteristics of the AVCE

Following a pilot of new specifications which was launched in 1996, Vocational A levels were introduced in 2000. The Capey Review and the subsequent pilot of a new GNVQ model, in ninety centres between 1996 and 2000, had responded to widespread criticisms of an overburdened and confusing assessment model, and criticisms from OFSTED about Advanced level GNVQ students' lack of 'cognitive depth' within a subject. In the 2000 assessment, specifications based on outcomes were replaced by a syllabus for the new AVCEs. The key features of this were:

- Generic grading themes (criteria of planning, review and evaluation were embedded within subject [unit] specifications).

- 100 per cent mastery of outcomes was no longer a requirement.

- Five levels of grading were introduced which corresponded to general A-levels.

- External testing and assignments were designed and moderated by QCA and awarding bodies.

Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) were therefore introduced as part of level 3 provision, corresponding to Advanced GNVQs, in the National Framework of Qualifications. They were designed to provide a broad education as a basis for further training, for further and higher education, or for moving into employment. Therefore, emphasis was placed on fostering the development of general skills, knowledge and understanding that underpin a range of occupations or professions. AVCEs have a vocational focus which is intended to allow students to explore the sector and the possible career options that may be open to them, without losing the flexibility of transfer to other occupational areas. AVCEs were developed in consultation with employers to ensure that students are able to progress into relevant employment.

The awarding body documentation states that it strongly recommends that centres form strong links with relevant employers when delivering the qualification (Edexcel, 2000, p.15). Although there is no formal requirement that students engage in work placements, the awarding body stresses that such opportunities will enhance candidates' experience by facilitating their application of knowledge.

199

Unlike the GNVQ, Key Skills specifications are not part of the assessment requirements for achieving the AVCE. However, the awarding body guidance states that Key Skills are integral to students' vocational study and experience within all AVCE units. Within the guidance from the awarding body it is suggested that Key Skills should be delivered as an integral part of the qualification but that they should be separately recorded and that they will be separately certificated. Guidance to centres includes signposting, which indicates where there are opportunities for the development of Key Skills during teaching, learning and assessment. However, it is unclear how far Key Skills were widely integrated into delivery of the AVCE, this is an issue that we will return to in the next chapter.

The AVCE (Double Award) is of a standard equivalent to two Advanced GCEs. The AVCE is of a standard to one Advanced GCE. At all the sites selected for this phase of research students were registered initially on a Single Award. Those who successfully achieved this were registered of another Single Award in the second year of their studies. The framework for the AVCE is very similar to that of the A level in that a Double Award consists of six compulsory units and six optional units. However, unlike A levels, which comprise of AS/A2, there is no distinction between levels of study. The compulsory AVCE units have a general focus providing the student with an overview of the sector. The optional units introduce a more specialised vocational focus and the opportunity to broaden the skills and knowledge gained from the compulsory units. For each unit there is only one method of assessment, either a portfolio of evidence or external assessment. At the sites visited, students completed one assignment for each unit or an external test. One third of the compulsory and optional units were externally

assessed through short-answer examination papers. Other units were assessed through the portfolio method; lecturers devised assignments for students based on the assessment criteria for a particular unit. Grading themes were replaced with a grading system related directly to content of each unit. Unlike earlier versions of the GNVQ, there were no multiple-choice unit tests to check the range, and there is no longer a requirement to pass all units to obtain the qualification. For AVCE assessment, it was the average level of achievement across the qualification which related to the grade achieved.

Ecclestone (2002) suggests a major change in the 1996 model and Vocational A levels was to locate implicit notions of procedural, personal and critical autonomy within specific subject criteria, instead of presenting them as generic 'transferable' skills across the course, as earlier models had done. In terms of cognitive depth, she suggests at pass level the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy predominates, the requirement to 'explain' and 'describe'. At merit level 'compare' and 'detailed explanation' are required and at distinction level there is a requirement to 'analyse' and 'appraise critically'. Therefore, the AVCE assessment appears to offer students' greater opportunities to develop forms of personal and critical autonomy at Merit and Distinction levels. The inclusion of these assessment criteria also goes some way to bridge the gap between student outcomes for Level 3 vocational education programmes and A levels.

The study units for the AVCE are provided by the awarding body. The curriculum and detailed advice about teaching strategies and assessment are spelt out in far greater detail than in the GNVQ Standards (for an example of AVCE unit guidance see appendix 6). Within AVCE documentation, prepared by the awarding body, there are sections containing information about what students

need to learn and the assessment of evidence in relation to different grades. There is also a section included for each unit entitled 'Essential information for teachers' which provides detailed guidance about teaching strategies and resources (Edexcel, 2000, p.67-71). Resources included information located on the internet, suggestions for visits and speakers, and video material. In both the documentation for the AVCE Health and Social Care and the AVCE in Business Studies a range of teaching strategies are recommended for different units. Where students are required to have a through grounding in particular theories, teachers' exposition and the use of texts is suggested as a part of the teaching strategy, prior to engaging in group and individual exercises. For most units emphasis is placed on experiential learning activities such as practical exercises, role-play, group work exercises, team building activities and analysis of case study material provided by the centre. In other units research skills are emphasised: students pursing the AVCE are expected to acquire a reasonable understanding of social research methods and be able to apply this understanding to the construction of their own assignments.

Higham (2003a) suggests that, as the third phase of development of GNVQ, AVCEs resulted in increased central control over the curriculum but also reduced the influence of the competence movement on qualification design:

This represents a significant prescription of the curriculum. Beyond this, a full range of detailed suggestions for curriculum content and delivery are given for tutors' guidance. GNVQ has thus increased the degree of central control in its assessment model which now serves to reinforce curriculum implementation not only at the level of the coverage of the specifications and the

standard achieved but in terms of curriculum organisation and delivery. The concept of Gilbert Jessup from NCVQ of 'comprehensive assessment'(Jessup, 1995a and 1995b) has also been significantly weakened given the possibility of including a failed unit in an average of marks to pass the qualification, though a model of assessment sampling has not been adopted.

(Higham, 2003, p.12)

The development of the AVCE has been strongly influenced by developments in the re-structuring of A levels. This can be seen as a move to increase parity of esteem between qualifications. Liberal humanist ideas can be seen as informing the recommended teaching strategies for the AVCE. Cultural restorationist views, concerned about standards and favouring hierarchical assessment within discernible subjects, also seem to have been influential.

The role of AVCE lecturer

The role of lecturers on AVCE courses was specified as entailing responsibility for:

- Preparing students to meet the assessment criteria set by the awarding body.

- Developing assignments that will enable students to provide evidence of meeting unit assessment criteria and preparing them for external unit examinations.

- Decisions about pace, style and general conduct of lessons

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the agenda for the reform of the GNVQ, a process that was set in motion by the Conservative Government following the Capey Report and the Dearing Review. Despite the commitment expressed by New Labour to the establishment of a more unified qualifications framework, they adopted a more incremental approach to reform once elected. The Labour Government's cautious approach was influenced by ongoing developments and perceptions of how reforms might be portrayed in the media if they interfered radically with A levels. Accusations of dumbing-down standards needed to be avoided. Furthermore, with the establishment of the QCA there was a shift in dominant perspectives, with the influence of the vocationalists, who had a commitment of competence-based design, being weakened. Concerns about parity of esteem with A level and standards increased, and these influenced the design of the AVCEs.

With the AVCE it appears that the role of the lecturer has been clearly defined as a subject specialist, who is able to create an interactive experiential learning environment for students. The lecturers' role is to facilitate students' command of subject matter and their ability to relate this understanding to a vocational context. Many of the teaching strategies recommended are similar to those identified in FEU documentation for vocational education teachers in the 1980s, which emphasised collaborative learning and the importance of some kind of dialectical interaction between action and reflection. However, unlike lecturers working on BTEC and PCSC courses during the earlier period, there were reduced opportunities to be involved in the selection of curriculum content and the development of assessment methods. Lecturers' control over these areas had been

reduced with the introduction of the GNVQ and had been reduced further with the

AVCE.

Chapter 7 Lecturers' Responses and Adaptations to the Introduction of AVCE

Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis from the AVCE phase of the research. It begins by outlining how themes in the data were identified and how these were then related to adaptations and responses found in the GNVQ study and to relevant research findings in the literature.

Where appropriate, informants were asked to compare the AVCE with the GNVQ. Semi-structured interview questions focused on: perceptions of course content; selection criteria; resources; teaching and delivery; assessment practice; moderation procedures; and perceptions of student recruitment, retention and progression. It was hoped that the comparison with GNVQ would bring to attention significant changes in practice and in individual lecturers' views about these. The transcripts were scrutinized for themes that might help with the data analysis such as views on pedagogic practices, forms of freedom and control, concepts of quality, the impact of the 'quasi-market', resource issues, and so on.

At the four sites visited for this phase of the research some variation amongst informants' responses to the AVCE could be detected in the data. However, there was greater consistency amongst these informants' approaches to delivery of the AVCE than had been the case for the GNVQ. Data analysis revealed that there were four broad responses to the AVCE. Two of these categories, the 'committed lecturers' and the 'strategic compliers', corresponded closely to some lecturers' responses and adaptations to the GNVQ, though it should be remembered that what was committed to or being complied with here

was different from the GNVQ regime. None of the respondents' responses and adaptations fitted within the 'constrained professionals' category identified in the GNVQ data. Therefore additional categories had to be developed, namely, 'critical compliers' and 'creative complier'.

A. Committed lecturers

Two informants fitted this category; they shared many of the characteristics of the committed newcomers identified in the GNVQ research study in that they were not critical of the AVCE. They were comfortable with the AVCE curriculum model and found the assessment criteria easier to work with than it had been for the GNVQ. They believed that academic standards had been raised through the introduction of the AVCE and supported this development. These informants suggested that they experienced more autonomy in relation to teaching methods under the AVCE than they had for the GNVQ. Institutional resources, in terms of the time allocated to whole class teaching, were described as adequate. Although the committed lecturers indicated that some of their student intake was academically weak, they did exert a substantial degree of control over the selection process. They did not appear to experience intensification of work.

B. Critical compliers

Three lecturers approximated to this category. They expressed negative views about changes in the curriculum and assessment model. However, their criticisms were also related to the institutional context in which they carried out their work and the government's policy agenda for further education. These lecturers expressed feelings of intensification of their work which they attributed to awarding bodies' deadlines for the receipt of externally assessed assignments and

207

to the reduction in whole-class teaching time. In common with the 'committed lecturers', they adopted diverse approaches to the delivery of the AVCE and felt that they exercised a significant degree of autonomy over their choice of teaching methods.

C. Strategic compliers

Two informants fitted this category, which appropriates to Shain and Gleeson's (1999) strategic compliers. These lecturers held mixed views about AVCE, they noted some positive aspects of the reform but were critical of others. They were critical of the limited vocational focus of the AVCE but had found ways of addressing this perceived deficit by creating work experience opportunities for their students. One of these informants criticised the increased academic emphasis of the AVCE, the other informant found the AVCE assessment model preferable to that of the GNVQ. One informant felt that institution constraints influenced the way she carried out her work more substantially than the new assessment model. Both of these respondents felt that they experienced a degree of autonomy in terms how they delivered the AVCE.

D. Creative complier

Like the strategic compliers, the lecturer who fell into this category was positive about some aspects of the curriculum change and negative about others. He identified several shortcomings of the AVCE, but he was creative in the way he adapted his practice by adopting strategies to resolve the problems he identified. In this sense it could be said that he engaged in 'creative mediation' (Gleeson and Knight, 2006, James and Biesta, 2007). This informant did not indicate that institutional constraints impacted on his work or the choices he made about how

to deliver the AVCE. This informant used a range of teaching methods to deliver the AVCE. He did not express any sense of experiencing intensification of work.

A. Committed lecturers

Two lecturers fell into this category, Bradley and Bob who both worked at Burley College. Bob was the Curriculum Manager for the AVCE in Business Studies. He had a school teaching background and had been teaching on vocational education courses in further education for ten years. He had taught students on the Business Studies BTEC National Diploma and the Advanced GNVQ and A levels. He was an A level examiner. He had a PGCE in English and History and an MA in Education and Sociology. Bradley was the Curriculum Manager for the AVCE in Health and Social Care. He was a qualified nurse tutor and had taught nurses for eleven years in a hospital setting prior to working in further education. He was a qualified teacher with a Certificate in Adult Education and a BA in Education. He had taught GNVQ students from 1993.

Perceptions of the AVCE

Bob and Bradley did not express any criticisms of the AVCE. They noted that it demanded higher academic standards than GNVQ and that the assessment model was very rigorous. Bob welcomed this development and saw the qualification as having genuine parity of esteem with A-levels:

> Whatever else it (the AVCE) may or may not have done, I now
> feel confident that the students have been required to produce
> work comparable to A-level standard. There is no question of
> that.
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

He compared the assessment requirements of the AVCE with vocational education courses taught previously:

> I would say the AVCE, if you compare it to the GNVQ and the
> National Certificate, *(he is referring to BTEC's National*
> *Certificate which is equivalent to a level 2 qualification)* it's
> much tighter. I've seen students pass the National Certificate and
> National Diploma, and I've been quite uneasy about how they
> could have. … There were always elements of flexibility and
> interpretation. … But I think the AVCE certainly put a stop to
> that, unless you deliver work to that standard you don't get the
> award. So to that extent, I feel it has drawn the line.
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Bradley also welcomed changes to the curriculum and assessment model. He suggested that the GNVQ assessment model, with all its detailed performance criteria had provided the main focus for planning teaching and learning in the past. He felt the AVCE assessment model created space for students to engage in greater depth with subject matter. In this way he indicated, like Bob, that he favoured the way in which this facilitated the raising of academic standards:

> I think the unit structure and the requirements are much easier
> now than before. … I'm happy because they do one assignment
> per unit, whereas before they had to do three because the unit was
> broken down into different elements. … If you compare it (the
> AVCE) to the old GNVQ, that was quite anxious, over anxious
> because students had to complete three assignments per unit. …
> They had to do loads of work, it was very time consuming. It was

more down to the assignments so once you'd done the

assignments you could attain your GNVQ, whereas with AVCEs

it's less anxious. They have got the time to do it. They're going to

do it properly. They have got the knowledge, much more

knowledge, to complete the work. …I think now that they've got

one assignment per unit, they can concentrate on their assignment,

they can learn the unit properly, they will get the knowledge, the

skills they need, and then they can complete the work.

(Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Bradley also believed that students had a clearer understanding of the assessment

requirements for the AVCE than they had had for the GNVQ:

The students know where they are. If they want a pass they have

to answer all the questions in the pass section. If they want a merit

they've got to do the pass section and the merit section.

(Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Bradley and Bob felt comfortable with the changes that had taken place.

They did not express concerns about the rise in academic standards demanded by

the AVCE because they felt the AVCE curriculum and assessment model

provided the framework for students to gain a deeper understanding of subject

matter than had been facilitated by the GNVQ. The new model appeared to meet

with their expectations of student achievement on a level 3 vocational education

course.

Approaches to teaching

There were significant differences between the way that Bradley and Bob each planned their teaching of AVCE teaching. Both respondents suggested that this was an area where they experienced a greater degree of autonomy than they had with the GNVQ:

> I think there's quite a lot of autonomy in actually deciding how
>
> many hours you want to spend on a topic.
>
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

However, Bradley noted that he was required to follow the curriculum requirements more closely than he did with the GNVQ, and that there was little scope to deviate from this:

> I think the programme is quite prescriptive, from the awarding
>
> body – this is what you should be doing. … This is what you look
>
> for. This is what you should and shouldn't attain. This is the way
>
> we want answers and so on. It's very prescriptive, so it doesn't
>
> allow much for our influence because it's already done. It's been
>
> prescribed for us, so we just follow instructions…. Delivery is left
>
> to us. … We have the autonomy to make it interesting for them.
>
> (Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Bradley employed a range of teaching and learning strategies with his students:

> We use quite a variety of teaching methods. We do some lectures,
>
> maybe if it's a subject which is quite difficult, or they don't know
>
> anything about it, like the structure of the NHS. We need to tell
>
> them about this and the changes and so on. We do some group

work, quite a lot of classroom activities, seminar discussions. We

get them to present their work, you know what they've found out,

and then it goes in their portfolio as evidence that they've done it.

…. We use a variety of methods because they'll get bored with

just someone talking to them all the time. But they like group

work. They like to participate. They like to do practical tasks.

They take responsibility for their learning. … I think they learn

more from each other than lectures all the time.

(Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

This seems to indicate that Bradley believes that it is important for lecturers to use their pedagogic skills to provide opportunities for dialogical engagement by creating a learning environment where students can engage in interactive experiential learning. In order to provide opportunities for relating theory to practice Bradley has included opportunities for students to participate in work experience to gain a deeper understanding of skills covered in the Communication Unit of the AVCE:

Some students go on work experience. We introduce them to the

care industry and we give them the opportunity to organise their

own work experience.

(Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Bradley's comments about student learning and work experience appeared to imply that he thinks that, in order for students be successful, they need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and develop a degree of autonomy that reduces teacher dependency.

In his account of his approach to teaching Bob related his choice of strategies to the organisational skills and academic level of his student intake:

> I think that students clearly have difficulty in meeting the deadlines and in producing work at the appropriate level. So, I made it extremely simple for them. When we did the Marketing Unit I said: 'It is going to be about this product' – so a lot of my teaching was actually, very focused. I'm not sure if it was in the spirit of what was intended but it was the only way I could actually get them to that level.
>
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Unlike Bradley, Bob placed a great deal of emphasis on receptive learning and argued that this method facilitates students' ability to meet the academic requirements of the course:

> A lot of teacher directed activities are cold class teaching, with the emphasis on the teacher leading; the emphasis is on teaching rather than learning. … It was very much the only way I could get forty people to this standard was to have a clear idea every of week of: 'this is what I want you to do; we're looking at marketing mix today; will you write that down'. You know that's very direct teaching, very didactic. … I'm not sure this would necessarily meet the approval of an inspector, but on the other hand, it got students through the Marketing Unit, which is the main priority.
>
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Bob's main priority is student achievement. He is conscious of the emphasis placed on outcomes by college management in the measurement of quality:

> The centre manager isn't going to say to me at the end of the year:
> Did the students enjoy their lessons? He's just going to look at
> their numbers. What was their attendance? What was their
> achievement? He's more interested in that than anything else
> really.
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Bob notes that this lack of emphasis on student-centred experiential learning may not tick all the boxes for Inspectors and qualifies his previous statement he made about his teaching:

> I think to be fair people have taken on board that students have
> benefited from more flexible ways of learning, and that students
> learn in a variety of different ways. So, I don't want to over-
> emphasise the traditionality of teaching, it's just a question of
> getting a balance.
> (Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Despite this qualification, Bob's traditional teacher-centred approach to delivery seemed quite firmly embedded in his practice. He explained that his approach on the AVCE was in keeping with the way he had adapted to the teaching of A levels in the past:

> I'd always been like that myself for teaching A levels. I'd always
> had a very strong focus on me. I suppose perhaps I don't want to

215

lose control of the situation. … So I say 'right, you want to get a

grade A or B' and I'd tell them how to do it.' … That's what I

used to do with A-level student

(Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Bob's approach seems to incorporate a high level of instrumentalism by

prioritising what is needed to get his students through the assessment. It may have

the effect of fostering a degree of dependency on the teacher among his students.

He notes that his students operated effectively under guidance in the classroom

but their ability to work independently had not yet reached a satisfactory level:

I think the students became quite good in the end, in actually

doing what we did in the classroom, but I thought they weren't

very good in managing the student non-contact time.

(Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

The development of skills to enable students to work independently effectively may not

have been fostered by Bob's teacher-centred approach to the delivery of the AVCE.

Despite this, he manages to enable his students to successfully achieve the AVCE. Bob's

approach seems to incorporate a high level of instrumentalism by prioritising what is

needed to get his students through the assessment. It may have the effect of fostering a

degree of dependency on the teacher among his students. He notes that his students

operated effectively under guidance in the classroom but their ability to work

independently had not yet reached a satisfactory level:

I think the students became quite good in the end, in actually doing

what we did in the classroom, but I thought they weren't very good

in managing the student non-contact time.

(Bob, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

The development of skills to enable students to work independently effectively may not have been fostered by Bob's teacher-centred approach to the delivery of the AVCE. Despite this, he manages to enable his students to successfully achieve the AVCE.

Bob's approach to teaching and assessment is not uncommon. Torrance *et al* (2005) report that detailed tutor support in the form of coaching and redrafting assignments, and the possibility of retaking modules tests to improve grades, has underpinned the development of the AVCE and other Level 3 qualifications in the Learning Skills Sector. They suggest that these practices have arisen as a result of the clarifying of objectives and development of an intimate relationship between assessment, pedagogy and learning within qualifications. They argue that this has supported many learners' achievements and led to improved institutional performance. However, the authors express some concern about the nature of the learning that such approaches facilitate:

> We have perhaps identified the greatest paradox of all, the symbiotic relationship between transparency and instrumentalism. The clearer the task of how to achieve a grade or award becomes, and the more detailed the assistance given by tutors, supervisors and assessors, the more likely are candidates to succeed: but succeed at what? Are we now content to accept assessment as learning? Wherein does the challenge of learning reside? From where does an intrinsic sense of achievement arise? Where is the overall, holistic vision of what it is to understand 'business' or become a competent and confident motor

217

vehicle technician?

(Torrance et al, 2005, p.81)

These authors suggest that instrumental approaches to formative assessment can undermine the quality and validity of learning experiences by reducing the challenges learners encounter and the quality of the outcomes that are achieved. Along the same lines, Davis and Ecclestone (2008) suggest that ideas about formative assessment are not well understood, and that the tendency for formative assessments to be instrumental is widespread. They explain:

> Such confusion suggests that practitioners need more insights about how formative assessment practices can help to develop deeper learning, or what Boud calls 'sustainable' learning (Boud and Falchikow 2007). Sustainable formative assessment not only requires that students are involved in feedback, diagnosis and review but also that teachers adapt activities in order for students to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding and to compare their current performance with their past performance (ipsative, or self-referenced assessment).
>
> (Davis and Ecclestone, 2008, p.72)

Davies and Ecclestone's (2008) research focused on the relationship between formative assessment practices and 'learning cultures' in vocational education. They asked why some learning cultures facilitated formative assessment which leads to instrumental learning, while other approaches resulted in deeper forms of learning, promoted student autonomy, and encouraged the development of independent critical learners. This is a question that clearly arises in relation to the work of this first group of lecturers in my study, and the others too.

Summary

The committed lecturers noted that academic standards had been raised for the AVCE and believed this development was a good thing. They found the AVCE assessment criteria easier to work with than the GNVQ ones. They both reported that they experienced a degree of autonomy over their choice of teaching methods. Institutional resources, in terms of the time allocated to whole class teaching, were described as adequate. Although the committed lecturers indicated that some of their student intake was academically weak, they did exert a substantial degree of control over the selection process. Bradley made it clear that he did not feel compelled to recruit students who might struggle with the AVCE in order to generate a viable student population for the course. He stated:

> We don't do bums on seats.
>
> (Bradley, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

The operation of the 'quasi-market' did not appear to have compromised decisions about student recruitment. Both Bradley and Bob were mindful of the 'performativity culture' that they worked within. Bradley reported that his last intake had been successful with almost all the students completing the course and ninety percent of them moving on to higher education, and with one student entering employment. Bob recognised the contribution he was expected to play in sustaining the College's place in the league tables, in relation to retention and achievement. However, these two lecturers had different views about how best to promote successful student achievement.

Bradley and Bob's adaptations to the AVCE are almost at opposite ends of a continuum of teacher-centred/learner-centred models of teaching. There was no indication that they felt compelled to compromise in terms of the ways they

carried out their professional role, which suggests that they both experienced a significant degree of autonomy over the choices that they made about the delivery of the AVCE.

B. Critical compliers

Three informants fitted within this category. David was the Curriculum leader for the AVCE in Business Studies at Drayton College. At the time he was interviewed he was a practising barrister and had a teaching Certificate in Further Education. In the past he had taught the BTEC National and GNVQ. Catherine was the Curriculum Leader for the AVCE in Business Studies at Cannons College, and had worked in further education for nine years. She had a BA in Administration and Business in Industry and an M.Ed in Adult and Further Education. Cora also worked at Cannon's College and was the Curriculum Leader for the AVCE in Health and Social Care. She had taught in further education for thirteen years. Prior to the AVCE, both Cora and Catherine had taught GNVQ students. Cora was previously an informant for the GNVQ research and was classified at that time as a 'strategic complier'.

Perceptions of the AVCE

All of these informants noted that the curriculum content of the AVCE was similar to the GNVQ but that greater depth of understanding was required by students:

> Many of the modules are similar but in far more depth. The basic
> knowledge and the vocational knowledge still needs to be ironed
> out, but I think it is academically more rigorous.
> (Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Cannons College)

> Standards appear to have leapt up.
>
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

The main objections these respondents expressed about AVCE were about the academic level of the qualification and the limited vocational focus which, they felt was inappropriate for the type of students they recruited. In their experience students attracted to vocational education courses were generally academically less able than A level students. The critical compliers argued that the increased expectations of academic achievement of the AVCE did not match the learning needs of their students. They noted that the progression built into A level, the staged student progression from AS to A2 levels, was absent in the AVCE design. This caused these respondents some concern. Catherine felt the modifications to the curriculum and assessment model had not created the sort of course that her students needed:

> It's A2 from day 1, so you have got poorer students doing a more difficult qualification. … I know that the detail and content of the AVCE is much more rigorous but we do need something between the GCSE and the A level because there are a number of students in that group (*category*).
>
> (Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Cannons College)

Furthermore, the problem of the academic level of the AVCE was compounded by the fact that standards had not been raised on the level 2 vocational courses from which students were often recruited. David suggested that there was inconsistency in the way the development of qualifications levels had taken place, and this resulted in some students not being adequately prepared for the requirements of the AVCE:

221

Level three courses have changed enormously but level two

courses haven't. So this year was the first year we were finicky

about selection. There is no way we guarantee progression for

level two students. They had to pass a test. They have to be

reassessed to see whether they can actually cope. … AVCEs are

harder than A levels because with A levels you have got AS, at a

slightly different level to A2. Now with the AVCE you have got

both years at A2 standard. So it's crazy because what should have

been a slightly easier course is now harder. And that is one of the

biggest complaints about the structure of the course.

(David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

Cora explained that although she welcomed a reduction in the emphasis on the

assessment of outcomes which characterised the GNVQ, she still did not think the

assessment model was pitched at the right level. The testing regime was

problematic because of the level of achievement required in students' first year of

study:

One of the problems we had was the amount of assessment. …

Multiple-choice tests went out and now there are more short

answer tests, but things are much harder. …One of the tests in the

first semester was very difficult because students suddenly had to

achieve advanced level standard when they had only been here

about a term. … Whereas, with A level, you're making your

judgements at the end of two years.

(Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

The critical compliers also expressed concern about what they regarded as the insufficient vocational focus of the AVCE. Catherine felt that classifying the AVCE as a vocational qualification was somewhat misleading for students:

A lot of them come onto the course because they see 'Advanced Vocational' and they think vocational that's great, there will be a bit of hands on and time to go out but the syllabuses are so full now that they don't have a chance to do that and we used to have a lot of trips. … Where do you get a practical training these days? It's just not around. From a teaching point of view this (AVCE) is more difficult than A level. There is nothing vocational about it. …to be vocational you have to go out there and do something practical and the information which they are being asked for in the assignments isn't anything that someone on a shop floor is going to be able to find out.

(Catherine, BS, Cannons College)

What appears to be an issue for Catherine is how students can access relevant vocational experience to obtain the information they need to complete their assignments. For example, guidance from the awarding body specifies the size of company that students need to look at and the policies they need to consider, but this generates problems:

Providing access to appropriate information is a real issue – the size and type of company they are required to research.

(Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Cannons College)

Catherine explained that she now had to spend a great deal of her energy on building up resources that could provide case study material for students to analyse and link theory with practice. Work experience was not seen as a viable way to provide this:

> They have had work experience in the past but it hasn't been
> absolutely a success this year. Partly, it's becoming less of an
> issue to send them because most of them work anyway.
> (Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Cannons College)

Creating a meaningful vocational experience which enables students to relate the academic content to workplace practices appeared to be more difficult for lecturers delivering the AVCE in Business Studies. Catherine is unable to resolve this problem satisfactorily. David also notes the shift towards an academic curriculum, and he does not have resources available at his college to offer his students work experience. He believes that greater similarity between A levels and level 3 vocational education courses is inevitable, if parity of esteem for these qualifications is to be achieved:

> Well it (the AVCE) is supposed to be equipping students with
> work-related skills that would be useful for them in the
> workplace. Whereas, I think now it's totally changed. It has now
> become primarily academic rather than vocational because you
> have lost the work experience and teaching some of it has become
> more formal… If you are talking about parity with A levels then
> that's the only way you are going get it.
> (David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

For the critical compliers curriculum change had resulted in the creation of a course model with too great an emphasis on academic knowledge at the expense of vocational skills. This, they felt, was not appropriate for the students that they recruited onto the AVCE.

Approaches to teaching

Two of these respondents, Cora and Catherine, felt that they experienced a significant degree of autonomy in relation to their choice of teaching methods on AVCE courses:

> The only thing which I control is the classroom delivery – I can
>
> do it anyway I like, as long as I enable the students to achieve.
>
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

However, David felt he had experienced a reduction in his professional autonomy with the move from GNVQ to the AVCE. Interestingly, he did not seem to resent this as he saw this development as enhancing his professionalism:

> I don't know if you have that much influence over it (AVCE)
>
> because essentially the policies have been made. They send the
>
> syllabus, you have got to cover it and you have got external
>
> moderation to check the work. So we have got less control over it
>
> than you used to have in the past. In one respect it is probably
>
> good. It makes you a bit more professional. There is no excuse to
>
> cut your syllabus and you are being forced to meet national
>
> standards.
>
> (David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

Catherine and Cora employed similar strategies in planning their teaching, closely following the syllabus requirements and designing assignments to meet the assessment criteria:

> We create our own schemes of work … they give you out a list
> what needs to be covered and it is up to you to develop it. … Staff
> put together an assignment making sure it covers all the criteria.
> (Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Cora noted that the emphasis on performativity had been reduced with the reduction in assessment demands. However, she felt her students required more guidance in order to meet the standard required:

> All the performance indicators have gone. We used to have to
> meet all those performance criteria. So for this unit there is one
> assessment, the one assignment. … Because it is quite a big piece
> of work to do we tend to break it down into tasks, we help the
> students to cope with it. We devise assignments to meet the
> assessment criteria and then we devise the work to enable the
> student to achieve it. … We seem to have gone over very much
> now to criteria marking – so this is how it is marked, is there
> evidence that the student has done all these things?
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Burley College)

Catherine did feel that with the AVCE there were opportunities for creative approaches to teaching:

> The opportunities (for creative teaching) are there – we do role
> play, we do interviewing skills etc, if that's the best way to do it

226

then we do. We talk about the news – we apply it to theory. I

don't have any problem with doing that. We talk about the whole

competitive environment – we talk about the latest thing that has

happened in America or China – we cut out articles – bring the

news into it – it's motivating. I don't have a fixed routine.

(Catherine, AVCE Business Studies, Burley College)

Catherine and Cora's experience was rather different from that of David. He explained that he now felt compelled to adopt a more teacher-centred approach than he had in the past when delivering the GNVQ. He adopted this approach in order to meet the demands of the assessment model. This adaptation is not dissimilar to that of the 'constrained professionals' who adopted this approach to cover the breadth of knowledge required for the GNVQ assessment model:

In the past there was more discovery learning, more tasks, more

assignment based approach. You haven't got time for that you

know. Teaching methods are more formal. You're having to

transmit at a quicker pace.

(David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

David commented on the fact that course hours had progressively dropped for vocational educational education courses at his college. He suggested that this institutional constraint also contributed to the way that he adapted:

There were 18 hours on GNVQ and 23 on BTEC Nationals. The

students haven't changed. The quality of the student hasn't

changed so therefore you're being asked to do more in less time.

(David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

227

However, he did appreciate the fact that he now had more face-to-face classroom contact hours with his students to teach his subject than he had with the GNVQ. This he suggested enabled him to create a degree of balance between receptive and interactive learning strategies:

> What used to be say a two hour lesson in a week is now four
> hours so that gives you a bit more leeway to use the first session
> for transmission of information, and using the second one for
> more practice based approaches.
> (David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

For David the dates for external moderation samples to be sent off added to his feelings of intensification:

> By May everything has to be finished. We have to send all the
> work for moderation by May 31st. Last year it was May 15th. So
> there is constant pressure of time, pressure on the students,
> pressure on the staff because you have got to deliver. So you have
> got to get the work done and it is much more intense.
> (David, AVCE Business Studies, Drayton College)

Cora also noted the pressure this demand created on her work:

> To make sure that the students have got three quarters of work,
> marked and internally moderated by the cut-off date seems to be
> more pressurised.
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Institutional constraints also appeared to have an impact on the work of Catherine and Cora. Raised standards had implications for selection, retention and

achievement. They explained that they needed to reconsider their recruitment strategy. Retention was not reported to be good at Cannons College. Catherine had lost fifty percent of her students. However, eighty percent of those that completed the AVCE moved on to higher education. Cora also reported that not all her students would successfully achieve the AVCE. In relation to recruitment Cora noted that the Government's agenda for widening participation was compromised by the reality of the students applying for the AVCE and the emphasis placed on the achievement of quantifiable outcomes:

> There is tremendous tension and we do know which way to jump most of the time. In September we will be under huge pressure to recruit because that's money – student numbers. But when OFSTED comes along they want to look at our retention and achievement. If you get too selective you won't be able to select enough students or you have to cut the course. We don't have small courses now, if we haven't got enough students it doesn't run. So it is hard, we can't work miracles and you do get all this emphasis on 'widening participation' which would mean that you would take on people, you would encourage them to get the educational experience – they would get from it whatever it is they got – it might be a piece of paper and it might not or it may be gaining many other things but we don't get paid for the many other things – we don't appear in the league tables for many other things.
>
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

Cora's discomfort about this tension in policy indicates her commitment to widening participation and providing access to disadvantaged learners. In this way she expressed support for liberal humanist ideals in keeping with public service values which dominated further education prior to new managerialism. In response to this situation she realises that she will have to be more selective in her recruitment of students:

> We (in further education) are known as the 'second chance' for a lot of people. … Students enjoy it here so they stay but don't necessarily come out with a certificate. If we are going to be slated for levels of achievement we have to be more selective. Therefore you will limit and narrow participation and only take students who you think have got an earthly chance of coming out with the qualification. So anything about value-added or what they might gain through education can't be taken into consideration because we get our funding based on achievement. … We have very mixed messages always about what FE is about.
>
> (Cora, AVCE Health and Social Care, Cannons College)

For Cora, the possibility of widening participation and creating a 'second chance' for students is constrained by the continuing dominance of the performativity culture.

Summary

The critical compliers expressed concern about the level that the AVCE had been pitched at. They expressed feelings of intensification which they attributed to awarding bodies deadlines for the receipt of externally assessed assignments and to the reduction in whole-class teaching time. They also expressed concern about

the inadequate vocational focus of the AVCE. David explained that there were no resources available for him to set up a programme of work experience for his students. This fact contributed to his view that an appropriate vocational focus had been lost with the AVCE. He had altered his practices in this context by increasing the use of didactic teaching methods.

There were some similarities in the way that Cora planned her teaching of the GNVQ in the past and her approach to the AVCE. She organised her teaching closely in relation to the assessment requirements of these courses. Changes in the curriculum and assessment model had not reduced or enhanced the significant degree of autonomy that she felt she had over choices of teaching methodologies. The choices she made about her approach to teaching suggest that she continued to align herself with the progressive elements of new vocationalism. She does not express criticisms about students' depth of engagement with the subject matter or describe assessment as a 'burden', as she did in relation to the GNVQ. Her criticisms are about the inappropriate academic level and the limited vocational focus of the qualification. This makes her work challenging in a context where students attracted to the course struggle to achieve the appropriate academic level of work. She is aware that this problem is heightened in a context where outcomes are taken to be indicators of quality. This, she feels, will reduce opportunities for students who share similar social characteristics to those in her current intake. Recruitment on to the AVCE in the future will have to exclude those who may be unable to cope with the academic demands of the course. She expresses feelings of loss about this and frustration with the emphasis now placed on performativity. Implicit in Cora's comments is the view that the role of further education is to enhance opportunities for disadvantaged learners. This suggests that she holds a

commitment to public service values which are now compromised by institutional audit.

Catherine's adaptation to the AVCE is very similar to Cora's, in that she plans her teaching in relation to the assessment criteria. This strategy was used by lecturers delivering the GNVQ and may have influenced the approach these respondents adopted under the new regime. Catherine employs a range of collaborative experiential learning methods to enable students to cover the curriculum, which she believes are appropriate to   motivate students and facilitate their learning. However, she is unable to satisfactorily resolve the problem of enabling her students to access vocational experience to obtain relevant information to complete the assignments. She raised concerns about the expectations of academic achievement and the extent to which the AVCE met the needs of students attracted to vocational education courses.

C. Strategic compliers

There were two lecturers who approximated to this category, Alice and Doris, both of whom had been informants for the GNVQ research. Doris is the Curriculum Leader for Health and Social Care at Drayton College. She had taught in further education for twenty-five years and had experience of delivering the PCSC and the GNVQ prior to the AVCE. She is a qualified teacher and vocational specialist. Doris was identified as a 'constrained professional' in the GNVQ study. Alice is the Curriculum Leader for the AVCE in Health and Social Care at Appleton College, and began her teaching career in further education with the GNVQ. She is a qualified nurse tutor and taught nursery nurses in the past. In the GNVQ study she was described as a 'committed newcomer'.

Perceptions of the AVCE

Doris had been implementing GNVQ in a context where full-time course hours had been reduced with its introduction. This resulted in less time being available for whole-class teaching, combined with pressure to cover the detailed and specific assessment criteria of the GNVQ within a limited time-frame. Furthermore, the greater emphasis placed on individualised learning through assignments for GNVQ students was another factor which she felt stifled her opportunities for creative teaching. When the AVCE was introduced the issue of having adequate time for whole-class teaching remained but, despite this, Doris felt positive about a number of features of the new award:

> It's clearer than the GNVQ and you're not overloaded by a vast number of assignments. The whole thing is just much clearer.
>
> (Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

Doris welcomed changes that had been made to the assessment model. In her view it provided a fairer way to assess student achievement than the GNVQ model:

> With the GNVQ you had to have evidence for absolutely everything and students had to pass everything. That was also true of the second version, so students had to pass something like two thirds of the units, they had to pass the assignment and pass the test. They couldn't fail anything at all. If they failed anything they failed the whole course, which seemed absolutely bizarre. But when they brought in the AVCE they actually graded, gave numerical grades to all units, and the unit was either assessed by an assignment or assessed by an exam. You didn't have the dual necessity to pass both and it meant that if you're actually

accumulating figures, you can fail in some areas or gain low

marks in some and high in others and still pass. … It's far fairer to

students.

(Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

In the past Doris had felt that assessment was not as robust as it should have been:

What used to happen with the GNVQ was that you moved heaven

and earth to get every last thing passed, it didn't give a very true

picture of what was going on. You could have weak students,

who, as long as they could write a couple of sentences about a

particular evidence indicator, got through. … With the GNVQ we

used to drag people through. With the AVCE students can

actually make mistakes, but if they can rectify those mistakes they

can get through. So it does mean you could have people who

make a bit of a mess at some point, for whatever reason, can still

actually, by a stint of hard work, do it. And I think that's fairer

than this business of tutors just making sure every indicator is

done.

(Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

The external testing regime for the GNVQ also contributed to the criticisms of

standards that Doris had in the past:

With the multiple-choice test, you've got a one in four chance of

getting it right, haven't you? You know, if you're near as damn it,

you might just get it. … I've known people pass those tests who

don't understand a word of it. I mean statistically that shouldn't

234

happen but it did.

(Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

Alice noted that academic standards had been raised with the introduction of the AVCE:

> The AVCE is certainly more academic than the GNVQ, a whole
>
> lot more academic. … It's different, certainly in depth. They have
>
> to show they understand concepts in a lot more depth than they
>
> would have done for the old GNVQ. … They have to show more
>
> in-depth knowledge, so therefore there's a lot more for them to
>
> learn.
>
> (Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

She implied that she thought that the AVCE had achieved parity of esteem with A levels:

> I think maybe people have stopped seeing it as maybe an easy
>
> option which I think was the case with the old GNVQ. People
>
> accepted that the GNVQ Advanced was easier than doing
>
> traditional A levels. I think that's gone.
>
> (Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

However, Alice expressed some ambivalence with regard to changes in the curriculum and assessment model. In contrast to Doris, she felt more comfortable with the GNVQ:

> I've got no problem with the unit structures but I do think the unit
>
> requirements for completion are a bit woolly. They all say 'must
>
> show evidence of' and 'compare and contrast' but it's still quite

loose. I think the GNVQ was a lot clearer. … There is greater

depth but less coverage, the GNVQ was broader. I think they lose

out by not having that breadth as well. But whether or not you

could do what they are doing in reasonable depth as well

maintaining the breadth, whether or not that would be manageable

I don't know.

(Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

As a 'committed newcomer' when delivering the GNVQ, Alice had not expressed

concerns about the level of student engagement with subject matter. Now she was

unsure whether the reduction in breadth of coverage of the curriculum was better

for students than coverage in depth. Despite feeling positive about some of the

features of the AVCE, Doris and Alice, like the 'critical compliers', felt that the

balance between theory and practice was not present in the way that they thought

it should be on a vocational educational programme:

I think the problem is it can work academically if it is done

properly. … But my concern is that the one area it doesn't really

prepare students for is going into employment. It gives lots of

background but if you are really talking about vocational there are

things we never touch on that they would need quite a lot of

knowledge about in order to operate effectively at junior

management level. For example, health and safety, first aid, all

those practical sorts of things. The AVCE is preparing students

for higher education and going into vocational degrees.

(Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

Alice felt that the AVCE model deviated from her expectations of what vocational education should be about. Doris and Alice responded to this omission as they had in the past, under GNVQ, by introducing an element of work experience into the course. Students' work experience enabled them to gain evidence of achievement in the Communicating with People Unit. It provided students with an opportunity to be observed and engage in a self-assessment, and to plan for improvement:

> I think that the big purpose should be introducing people to their chosen area, careers. … I think that there should be more chance of doing the work experience so that they can see what is out there, have a feel for what's out there to help. … We have two placements in the first year and two in the second year but they're only a week each, so they can only get a taste. But it's really that we can actually afford placements time wise because you've got to get this information into them.
>
> (Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Approaches to teaching

The pressure to 'get through' the assessment demands of GNVQ had led to Doris adopting receptive didactic teaching methods and using handouts more frequently than she would have liked. The pressure she felt to operate in this way had been somewhat reduced with the AVCE:

> The teaching methods are much the same as before really, except because you're not doing an assignment and a test, you haven't got to plan around one or the other. And the other thing is you only have to produce one assignment for each unit. In

comparison, there would be three or four for each unit previously.

So it's much more clear-cut. … I think for a lot of people,

because they are trying to get a lot of information in quickly, tend

to do upfront teaching to start with. Perhaps in the first four or

five weeks and then it goes more into group work, then individual

work and the students getting on with the assignment with you

there giving as much support as you can.

(Doris, AVCE Health and Social Care, Drayton College)

There were some similarities in Doris' approach to GNVQ and AVCE teaching because of the pressure on the AVCE to cover work within a prescribed time-frame to send off samples to the moderator by mid-May. However, with the AVCE she adopted receptive didactic teaching methods in order to introduce students to the complexity of the subject matter, rather than adopting this strategy in order to cover the breadth of unit content as she had with the GNVQ. After an initial introduction to the subject matter there were greater opportunities for use of interactive experiential approaches to teaching and learning, similar to those that she previously employed on the PCSC course. Teaching the AVCE for Doris did provide some opportunities for dialogical engagement and for interactive exploratory learning, with group involvement in discussion and debates. There appeared to be scope for creativity in relation to her teaching.

However, Doris did imply that institutional constraints affected the ways that she could work. Staff turnover was high at her college and it was difficult to recruit lecturers, which she attributed to high housing costs in the area. Frequent changes of lecturing staff meant that it was hard to maintain a stable course team who were familiar with the demands of the AVCE:

Because the number of staff has dropped so dramatically over the years, it's very difficult for staff to attend external training courses. … We haven't really got the staff to keep sending them to external courses to update.

(Doris, HSC, Drayton College)

In addition to this difficulty, Doris was delivering the AVCE at a different College site from the one she was working at when interviewed about the GNVQ, and had lost the support of a Resource-Base Learning Assistant (RBLA):

One thing that has been really sad is that we developed resource-based learning rooms and when we moved sites we were given a much smaller space, but the RBL assistant was not replaced when he left, so it's no longer in use, there's nobody to administer it. You can't leave students there without supervision, without staff, it has to be locked. There's nobody checking all the computers are working, or the printers are working, or updating material or anything. … You need a RBLA to help them sort out the wheat from the chaff on the internet otherwise you just get mountains of information. … I mean that you have to quite skilled really to work on the internet and find out exactly what you want. But students haven't necessarily got those skills. … It's a funding problem.

(Doris, HSC, Drayton College)

Doris expressed frustration about these constraints, rather than about the changes in the curriculum and assessment model. She believed that the AVCE was

239

potentially a very good course that equipped students with the skills they needed

to progress to higher education:

> I suspect that if we were in an inner city area where you could
>
> attract staff, it (the AVCE) would be a very slick operation.
>
> There's no reason why it shouldn't be. But given that you've got
>
> the sorts of students you've got, plus the lack of time, plus
>
> changeovers in staff, or lack of staff, it can't be that. And it's a
>
> real shame because it could be.
>
> (Doris, HSC, Drayton College)

Alice had been 'committed' to the GNVQ reform and had adopted a

'flexible facilitator' approach to her teaching on the GNVQ. However, she was

able to maintain this role with the AVCE:

> I think the teaching role is very much to support the students to
>
> become more independent learners; certainly the AVCE lends
>
> itself to that.
>
> (Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

When interviewed about the GNVQ, Alice had expressed the view that teaching

should not be 'teacher-centred' and that didactic approaches were not effective.

She favoured individualised learning, and in line with this she welcomed the

emphasis that the AVCE placed on increased student responsibility for their

learning. In fact, in this respect she saw the AVCE as more satisfactory:

> I think a lot more of trying to teach students to find information
>
> themselves, whereas before, we may have actually given them
>
> information for them to then go away and sort out. In some cases

we might give them some information but they have to go down

to the library to use the internet for them to actually do their own

research. It makes them more independent. … They've got to

show that they are independent and that they can analyse

information…. They've got to show and demonstrate that they've

done research and then analyse it in far more depth than they

would have had to do with the old GNVQ.

(Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

In addition, as with the GNVQ, Alice reported that there were ample opportunities

to foster collaborative interactive classroom activities with AVCE students:

In the classroom they work in small groups, they do presentations.

(Alice, AVCE Health and Social Care, Appleton College)

Alice did not express any sense of the intensification of work arising from either

managerial or institutional constraints. She indicated that she experienced a

significant degree of autonomy with regard to her choice of teaching methods.

Summary

Doris's adaptation to the AVCE was different from her adaptation to the GNVQ.

She believed that the assessment requirements of GNVQ, and the breadth of the

curriculum, prevented her from adopting the teaching strategies she was

comfortable with. She felt compelled to frequently adopt didactic teaching

methods which she found unsatisfactory. Furthermore, she was disappointed at

her students' lack of depth of engagement with the subject matter and the limited

analytical skills that they developed. In the GNVQ study she expressed a

preference for interactive experiential learning methods because she believed that

they facilitated student learning that would promote the development of analytical skills. In contrast to her experience of the GNVQ, the AVCE provided Doris with greater opportunities for creativity because she felt that she had the space to incorporate experiential learning strategies into her teaching. Although she was critical of the limited vocational focus of the AVCE, she was able to introduce an element of work experience into the course in order partly to redress this deficiency. She was positive about the academic standards required for the AVCE and did not feel they were too high for her students to achieve. It was institutional constraints that she cited as having the most negative impact on her work, rather than the AVCE curriculum and assessment model.

Alice's description of her approach to teaching on the AVCE was very similar to the approach she described for the GNVQ. She was categorised as a 'committed newcomer' under GNVQ because she was not critical of the curriculum and assessment model and because her adaptation mapped on to the role of the 'good lecturer' advocated for GNVQ teaching. By contrast, Alice was not so comfortable with the AVCE and raised some criticisms about the increased academic emphasis which she thought had been achieved at the expense of an appropriate vocational focus. Like Doris she was able to partially redress this difficulty by providing some work experience but not to the extent that she would have liked, because of the academic demands of the AVCE. She preferred the GNVQ assessment model, finding it more straightforward. However, despite the misgivings Alice expressed about the AVCE, she was able to maintain the 'flexible facilitator' role in relation to her teaching.

D. Creative complier

The lecturer, Alex, who fell into this category had worked in further education for twenty-six years and been involved in teaching both BTEC Nationals and GNVQ. He began his career teaching Liberal Studies. He was a qualified teacher with a BSc in Economic Development and an MA in Economics and Finance. He had undergone training to be a standards moderator for the AVCE and he was the Curriculum Manager responsible for the AVCE in Business Studies at his college.

Perception of the AVCE

Alex noted that assessment for the AVCE was more robust than it was for the GNVQ, and that it is a much more demanding qualification. He favoured the balance created between external examinations and course work assessment, and the fact that, unlike the GNVQ, students do not have to pass all of the assessment components to achieve the qualification. However, he expressed a number of criticisms about aspects of the qualification's design:

> I think as a model it could work. I think it needs quite a bit of editing. It needs a fresh look at the units to make them more in touch with student experience at this level and more clarity in the assessment criteria. I think it could potentially be quite a good course. … I just wish that the units that are in the curriculum were related to the vocational experience that 16 to 17 year-olds are having, or going to have. That's my main problem.
>
> (Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

In addition to these concerns Alex believed that the level of student understanding of the subject matter required for the AVCE was higher than it was for the

GNVQ. However, the academic ability of the students he recruited for the course had not changed. Several of his students were described as academically weak:

> There's no progression in the AVCE which is interesting, in that second year units are no more difficult or any easier, than first year ones. … The AVCE Business is a much more demanding qualification than the GNVQ. … They've been pitched conceptually to a higher level, and they've made demands on students that are unrealistic in terms of research.
>
> (Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Alex's criticisms of the AVCE are very similar to those expressed by the critical and strategic compliers. However, the way that Alex adapts his practices to deliver the AVCE is somewhat different to the approaches of these other respondents.

Approach to teaching

Alex spent more time engaged in whole class teaching with the AVCE students than he had with GNVQ students. He felt that he needed this opportunity to equip students with the knowledge and skills to enable them to produce assignments at an appropriate standard:

> They need much more input because many of the things that they're expected to write about are concepts that they've not yet developed or encountered in real life. … I mean it's almost like you're talking about corporate strategy and so on and their experience of work is on a check-out.
>
> (Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Alex described the ways he worked with students to enhance their understanding of the subject matter. In relation to teaching methods he claimed:

> I don't think they're (teaching methods) dissimilar from the GNVQ. … It depends what you are doing. I would definitely use group work for example, let's say that managers have got some money from say some fund or other for staff development or whatever, and I would have one group disseminating that information, the other group receiving it, and seeing how the information has changed as it crossed. For example, if they were doing negotiation skills managers have, we would actually do a negotiation between two groups.
> (Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Alex felt the need to adapt his approach to teaching his students with the AVCE. He explained that with the GNVQ there was greater emphasis placed on gathering information to complete assignments. For a large proportion of their time, students worked semi-independently on their assignments. However, this approach was no longer appropriate because in order for students to successfully complete the AVCE, they needed to acquire a deeper level of understanding of the subject matter, combined with effective analytical skills. Alex described the ways he worked with students to develop their research skills to aid their understanding of the subject matter. He now placed greater emphasis on the development of these skills than he did with the GNVQ:

> The GNVQ was so much more straightforward. If you gave them assignments to get on with they would do them. This is an interlocking assignment that is research-based, information based,

evidence-based and it takes a long time for students to learn how

to interpret theory and present it in a way that is required for

assessment. … With the GNVQ I think the focus was very much

more on evidence gathering than with the skills associated with

that, so we are trying to develop that side. … I think it's through

helping students devise questionnaires, helping them to actually

get information from their research methods, to understand how

to use the internet for example, to get information. To always

question the value of information because, you know, it could

come from anywhere. So I'd say that there's a growing emphasis

on research methods and study skills and how to get information.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

The skills required for AVCE assignment production appeared to be of a

higher order than those needed to obtain the GNVQ. Although Alex was unhappy

about the academic demands made on AVCE students, because he thought they

were too challenging, he found effective ways of supporting them with their

research. He addressed his other criticism of the AVCE, the lack of appropriate

vocational focus, with work experience placements. Alex used work experience

placements in businesses to bridge the gap between student understanding and

their vocational experience. His adaptation in relation to this is similar to several

other respondents:

The emphasis in the placement is on access to information. So for

example, management in enterprise, a great deal of that really is

to do with management styles, culture, the contribution of

management towards achievements and objectives of the

organisation, the role of enterprise and innovation. … What I am

encouraging students to do is to choose a place where you can

find out about those things, where you get that sort of

information.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

However, the reality is that suitable placements which enable students to increase

their understanding of organisational management are not always readily

available:

Students doing an AVCE will have to do quite intensive research

into a business, and one of the really difficult things is obtaining

information of the right quality that they can use.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

To try to ensure that all his students have access to learning about company

policies from a 'real' organisation Alex has developed what he describes as the

'adopt a group' approach. Alex managed to exercise a degree of creativity in

relation to students' vocational experience because of his personal contacts:

Increasingly, my own view is that the only way we are going

solve this is to work with companies to get them to provide

information that can be used by whole groups, and I call it 'adopt

a group'. And that's what we now do. So, for example, we are

working closely with a large oil company and they've been

posting on our intranet information about their HRM, their

customer services, their marketing and so on. It was a bit of luck

because one of our students' parents is on the Board. For this

reason alone we managed to get in at board level and it's really an

exciting development. They're used to working with post-

graduate research students; they saw there was a gap in terms of

working with the community at this level and they're pleased to

do so. And that is a really good development.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Unlike other respondents interviewed for this research, Alex appeared to have

found a solution to the problem of students having access to company information

at an appropriate level. Despite the misgivings that he expressed, he indicated that

he had tried to respond to changes in the curriculum and assessment model in a

positive way:

From a challenge point of view it's quite interesting. I quite like

changes, so from that kind of perspective they're interesting,

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Perhaps a significant factor in accounting for positive attitude Alex

expressed was the degree of control he had over his work. Not only did he

experience a significant degree of autonomy in relation to teaching methods, he

also felt in a position to influence the achievement of his students:

I think I've got a lot influence now, or could develop a lot of

influence over the success rate. In other words, I now think I'm

learning how to get students through. It's taken two years, but I

think I have some pretty well formed ideas of why students don't

achieve and why they do. But in terms of the curriculum, I think

that you've got pretty much freedom of how to do it in any way

248

that you like, but at the end of the day your students have got to

pass, they've got to meet the assessment criteria.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

In contrast to some of the respondents, Alex actively sought to find solutions he was comfortable with to resolve the problem of raised academic standards and vocational knowledge.

Summary

Alex did not indicate that institutional constraints impacted on the choices he made about how to deliver the AVCE. He exercised some control over the recruitment of students and reported that retention on the AVCE had been good. He did not express any sense of the intensification of work. He employed a range of teaching methods in the delivery of the GNVQ, all of which are advocated within the awarding body guidance (see Chapter 6). He did not express any feelings of discomfort about this.

What appears to a more recent requirement for Alex is getting students to produce work of a higher academic standard. He suggested that equipping students with a reasonable grounding in research methodology played an important role in this. This enabled students to produce assignments of the required standard that were analytical and evaluative. He has risen to this challenge successfully and appeared pleased with the way he now organises the AVCE course and the outcomes for students:

A lot of skills such as problem solving, and all those kinds of

things that are not obvious, at the time of delivery, are

nevertheless honed and developed during the course, and are

invaluable later on. And the students, to their credit, get a holistic

view of business studying a course like this.

(Alex, AVCE Business Studies, Appleton College)

Unlike the other respondents in this research, Alex had integrated the delivery of Key Skills within the course. This was the model for the delivery of Key Skills on both the BTEC National and the GNVQ. Other respondents in this study expressed the view that Key Skills should be integrated and taught in a vocation context; however their college's policy was to deliver key skills separately rather than integrate them within specific qualifications. Alex did not suggest that he faced this kind of institutional constraint, which would have made the integration of Key Skills difficult for him. He was therefore able to ensure that delivery was in keeping with his own views about the most effective way of teaching and learning these skills. He explained:

I make a definite effort to use full-time rather than part-time staff

when it comes to Key Skills delivery, because they are more

likely to be part of an AVCE course team, and also they will be

better placed to see the opportunities for delivery. And they're

more likely to understand Key Skills.

His views about this were in keeping with the advice of the Awarding Body, which noted that, although Key Skills are certificated separately, they can be effectively delivered by relating teaching to the vocational area of a particular AVCE. Each unit has signposting to Key Skills to support delivery and assessment of this content.

Conclusion

The AVCE appears to have addressed some of the concerns raised by policy-makers about the shortcomings of the GNVQ assessment model (see Chapter 4). Assessment was apparently more manageable and academic standards were raised. These measures helped give the AVCE a degree of credibility which the GNVQ lacked, and opened up the possibility of achieving parity of esteem with A levels. The concerns about 'standards' led to a more rigorous moderation process which focused directly on lecturers' judgements about student achievement. The Standards Moderation process for the AVCE represented a departure from the 'audit accountability' (Power, 1994) associated with the GNVQ, where the audit acted indirectly upon systems of control rather than directly upon first order activities. The AVCE Standards Moderator was not concerned with systems in place to track student achievement but with first order activities in terms of appropriate assessment judgements. However, these arrangements were not perceived positively by the majority of informants, who expressed feelings of loss in relation to the lack of opportunity for face-to-face interaction with moderators/external verifiers that they now had, in comparison with those they had had in the past. This contact involved the potential to provide professional development opportunities for them and their course teams, when the role also incorporated support and advice. A criticism shared by all the informants was that the AVCE emphasised the academic at the expense of a vocational focus. The uneven balance between academic and vocational learning was in their view inappropriate for a broad based vocational educational qualification.

The lecturers did not complain about their lack of influence over the new curriculum and assessment model, or suggest that this amounted to deprofessionalisation. The passing of time may be a significant factor in explaining

lecturers' responses to these features of the AVCE. They had all worked with the GNVQ for nine years, and during this period there was no requirement for them to engage in curriculum development. It may be the case that most lecturers no longer saw this as an important aspect of their role, or as an area which they felt they should have significant control over. In the course of their interviews, the informants raised different issues from those that the lecturers delivering the GNVQ focused on. This in itself is not surprising given that that this phase of the research took place five years after the interviews with GNVQ lecturers. Incorporation and new managerialism had been in place for ten years, and over this period of time resistance to aspects of managerialism may have declined: increasingly, the values and practices associated with this had perhaps become a 'part of everyday life' or the 'norm'. They were no longer novel. Lecturers' long-term exposure to them had probably influenced their continuous professional socialisation.

However, the managerial context in which lecturers work continues to be one in which they are affected by the operation of the market, by reduced funding levels, and by accountability in terms of student achievement. Informants from Appleton and Burley College did not report that student recruitment was threatened by competition from other providers. However, the lecturers at Burley College said that they were now forced to reconsider their recruitment practices because of the emphasis placed on outcomes in relation to college funding. The informants at both Appleton and Burley College reported that they exercised a significant degree of control over the selection of students for the AVCE. In contrast to this, lecturers at Cannons and Drayton College recruited in a situation where market competition for students was relatively strong, and as a result they enrolled students who were not well equipped to cope with the academic demands of the AVCE. Catherine and Cora from Cannons College noted

a tension between the role of further education in providing students who had not fared well in compulsory school with a second chance and the emphasis now placed on outcomes. They felt that this would have an impact on recruitment practices in the future. At Drayton College both Doris and David commented on the weak academic level of their students. The market situation limited the applicants that they could recruit on to their courses. Without an adequate student population, the courses would not run because they would not be economically viable.

Institutional constraints did have a bearing on how lecturers responded and adapted to the AVCE, especially for lecturers at Drayton College who, during the course of their interviews, drew attention to the way these factors impacted on their work. Doris reported that inadequate resources and high staff turnover made the delivery of the AVCE more difficult than she felt it needed to be. David complained of having less time overall allocated to teach the AVCE than he had with the BTEC National and the GNVQ. As a result, there was less time to engage in experiential learning approaches to teaching and learning. This evoked feelings of intensification for him, as he felt under pressure to cover the curriculum within a limited time-frame.

The data derived from the GNVQ study revealed a much clearer relationship between lecturers' perceptions and adaptations to curriculum change than those emerging from the AVCE study. Lecturers' responses to the AVCE did not reveal a consistent pattern of adaptation within the categories constructed. Furthermore, there was also some diversity with regard to their methods of implementation. However, despite this, there was general conformity with the role of the lecturer implicit in awarding body documentation described in Chapter 6. This documentation recommends that lecturers provide opportunities for collaborative exploratory experiential learning for students in the delivery of the

qualification to further their understanding of subject matter. With the AVCE there appeared to be a closer fit between the perceptions of policy-makers and lecturers about the professional role of lecturer. The majority of lecturers (6) were comfortable about adopting the teaching strategies recommended in the awarding body guidance. They felt it important to have opportunities to employ collaborative experiential learning strategies to deliver the course effectively.

Where there was deviation from this prescribed role it appeared to be related to the professional background of the informant. The responses and adaptations of these lecturers can be seen to relate to the 'frames of reference' derived from their professional experience and training. Four of these lecturers, Alex, Bradley, David and Doris, had taught on the BTEC National or the PCSC course, and the GNVQ. They shared similar characteristics in terms of their professional experience and training, and were therefore likely to have undertaken their professional training at a time when experiential learning methods were promoted by awarding bodies and the FEU (see Appendix 2). The other two respondents who adapted in accordance with awarding body recommendation were Catherine and Cora, both of whom had MAs in Adult Education which may have promoted the learning and strategies recommended for the AVCE. The professional socialisation of these respondents may partly explain why they were comfortable with these approaches to teaching recommended for the AVCE.

The committed lecturers both indicated that they carried out their work in ways that were in keeping with their individual notions of what the role of a professional lecturer should be. Bradley's adaptation appeared to be grounded in his commitment to interactive experiential student-centred learning, which may have been derived from professional socialisation through teacher education. He

254

wanted to promote students' depth of understanding of the subject matter and felt that the AVCE curriculum and assessment model enabled him to do this. He indicated that the 'audit accountability' of the GNVQ, which manifested itself in the detailed performance criteria, did not always provide opportunities for this. Bob's adaptation to teaching the AVCE appears closely related to his professional socialisation through A level teaching. The fact that both respondents were comfortable with the changes to the curriculum and assessment model is likely to have made their adaptations to AVCE teaching relatively unproblematic.

The significance of 'frames of reference' is also illustrated by the way that Bob and Alice deviated from the recommended approach to delivery for the AVCE. Bob reported his reliance on didactic approaches to teaching and attributed this to his experience of A level teaching. Alice was classified as a 'committed newcomer' for the GNVQ research and continued to adopt a flexible facilitator role, which she was comfortable with for the AVCE. Alice was the only respondent who was not teacher trained and came from a nurse educator background, where this approach is likely to have been one she employed in the past. Both these respondents continued to adopt a role that was in keeping with their view of what the professional lecturer should be, and one that was somewhat at odds with the officially specified role. Doris (strategic complier) was also interviewed for the GNVQ research and at that time she was classified as a 'constrained professional'. She retained her commitment to interactive experiential learning methods and was able to utilise her pedagogic skills more effectively with the AVCE. The perspectives Alice and Doris expressed about teaching and learning in relation to the AVCE were consistent with those that they had expressed five years earlier when GNVQ data was collected.

255

Alex (creative complier) had experience of working on the BTEC National and the GNVQ but his professional background differed in one respect from that of the other informants in this research. He had been trained as a Standards Moderator for the AVCE which may have offered him a deeper insight into the assessment principles and standards of achievement required, as well as giving him more information about suitable sources of evidence of achievement, than the other lecturers. Participation in this training contributed to Alex's professional socialisation and is likely to have influenced the ways he adapted to the AVCE. He appeared to have the confidence to exercise a greater degree of creativity in his work by experimenting with new ways of working with his students, such as his 'adopt a group' approach which provided students with an innovative way to access material for their studies. It may well be the case that other respondents could have operated in a similar way if they had not felt constrained by institutional resources, managerial constraints or the quality of intake of their students. Alex exercised a significant degree of autonomy over the organisation of the course and his teaching. Although he shared many of the criticisms of the AVCE expressed by the 'strategic compliers' and 'critical compliers', he had been able to make the course work at a level he was satisfied with, and this strategy can be described as 'creative mediation' (Gleeson and Knight, 2006). He adapted in ways that were compatible with his views about effective teaching and learning strategies.

Within this small sample of lecturers there were a range of responses and adaptations to the AVCE regime, which appear to be shaped by their different backgrounds and generational positions. These were factors that also seemed to be important in explaining lecturers' responses and adaptations to the GNVQ.

Conclusion

The 1990s were turbulent times for FE colleges: major institutional changes took place in line with new managerialist ideas, involving the transformation of the organisational status and mode of operation of colleges, and significant changes in the contractual and working conditions of lecturers. New contracts of employment established inferior conditions of service for lecturers, which entailed shorter annual leave and an increase in teaching hours. Following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, colleges adopted new managerial practices and were subject to new forms of funding and quality assurance procedures, which gave rise to new forms of accountability and created a performativity culture. These developments transformed the institutional environment in which lecturers carried out their work.

During this period, there were also major curricular changes the field of FE, and these have been the main focus of this thesis. In place of the older BTEC regime, inspired by the new vocationalism, with its mixture of progressivism and a commitment to the preparation of students for broad areas of work, many colleges introduced GNVQs. This was designed to transform the roles of both lecturer and students. The latter were to be 'empowered' by being put in charge of the learning process, being responsible for seeking out the information necessary to achieve transparent assessment goals. The lecturer was to take on the role of offering guidance about where information could be obtained and, above all, to be assessor of what had been learned. Moreover, the assessment process was tightly constrained by criteria laid down by NCVQ. Subsequently, GNVQ arrangements underwent modification over three phases, culminating in the AVCE regime, which in some ways reintroduced elements of the older BTEC system. Thus,

within a relatively short period of time FE lecturers faced two major re-structurings of what they were to teach and, especially, how they were to teach it.

I have suggested that the fundamental character of the switch to GNVQ, and the subsequent move back from it, provide a distinctive context for exploring lecturers' responses and adaptations to dramatic and rapid change. In order to gain insights into these processes, during the course of my research, I raised a number of questions:

- Do the pedagogical principles of GNVQ and AVCE courses differ from those which characterised previous vocational educational courses that informants delivered? And how do they differ from one another?

- Can a commitment to distinctive educational philosophy, be discerned in the accounts provided by Health and Social Care and Business Studies lecturers? If so, are there any similarities with those identified by primary school teacher researchers, who have drawn attention to the significance of an attachment to the Plowden, humanistic, child-centred philosophy, for school teachers' adaptations to the requirements of the National Curriculum?

- If respondents do hold a particular view of teaching and learning, to what extent is it possible for them to practice in preferred ways in the new order? Does the experience of FE lecturers, with regard to intensification and reform overload, mirror the well documented experience of school teachers?

- How far do differences in background and values account for way in which lecturers approach their work?

As a basis for answering these questions, I began by considering research findings which focused on the impact of new managerialism and related institutional developments, within both compulsory schooling and further education. There are debates within the literature regarding the significance of new public management and institutional reform for teachers' and lecturers' work. There are claims that new forms of professionalism are emerging (Hargreaves, 1994, Gipps *et al*, 1995, Cooper and McIntyre, 1996), but other commentators have argued that managerialist reforms have led to the intensification of work and de-professionalisation (Hyland, 1996, Woods *et al*, 1997, Esland *et al*, 1999).

I considered the significance of these developments in relation to the specific institutional context in which my informants worked. Data collected for the GNVQ phase of this research revealed that while all the lecturers were affected by these developments this did not occur in a uniform way. The impact varied in relation to lecturers' perceptions of these developments and the institutional contexts in which they worked. FE colleges, following incorporation, had been placed in direct competition with one another and had been obliged to cut their costs so as to survive in the market place. For lecturers at four of the five colleges – Burley, Cannons, Drayton and Emery – the 'quasi-market' position of their institution was reported to have impacted on their practices in recruiting students. Increasingly, they competed for students with schools and sixth form colleges offering GNVQ courses. The pressure they were under to ensure that their courses were cost-effective led them to exceed their recruitment targets in order to sustain the viability of their programmes. This was achieved by relaxing

the entry criteria, which resulted in some students being recruited who struggled with the academic demands of the course. This, in itself, posed challenges for the lecturers in the classroom, especially in a context where their workloads had increased and there was pressure to make efficiency savings, which had led to a reduction in course hours. Several lecturers felt there was inadequate time to cover the breath of the curriculum in a satisfactory way. Morale was also undermined in some colleges as a result of the imposition of new contracts of employment. The situation at Appleton College, on the 'greenfield site', was somewhat different from the others, in that the competitive nature of the market did not impact on their student recruitment policies.

The impact of the quasi-market remained an important factor with the AVCE. Pressures on colleges to maximise student numbers continued to lead to some students being recruited on to the AVCE who struggled with the demands of the qualification. Once again, this affected some colleges much more than others. It was a major problem for the inner-city colleges, but not for Appleton College, on the 'greenfield site'. Some informants at the other colleges complained about the hours allocated to teach the AVCE, but this did not seem to prevent lecturers delivering the course in accordance with their professional preferences. Institutional factors did contribute to the kind of environments for learning that could be created. However, adaptations varied even within the same institution, leading me to conclude that institutional context, in itself, did not provide an adequate explanation for the various responses and adaptations identified in both phases of this research.

Responses and adaptations need to be understood in relation not only to institutional context but also in relation to the professional values held by

respondents. I therefore explored the perceptions lecturers' held about the qualification they were implementing, so as to consider the views about the nature of learning and teaching to which they were committed. Where informants revealed that they held particular views about teaching and learning, I explored the extent that it was possible to practice in their preferred ways in the new order. In my data analysis consideration was given to the significance of professional biography and biographical resources in contributing to an explanation of how differences might be accounted for in how lecturers carried out their work.

I have examined in some detail the responses that a small sample of FE lecturers made to these curricular changes. Almost inevitably, the lecturers who were interviewed all complied with the GNVQ regime to a large extent, though their adaptations to it varied: some believed that there was a need to present large amounts of information to students if they were to be able to complete the assignments successfully; others operated closer to the manner in which the GNVQ ideology recommended. However, lecturers' attitudes towards the new regime differed much more dramatically: some resented it and denied that it offered an adequate education for FE students; others were quite enthusiastic; while one lecturer seemed to represent a more mixed position.

With regard to the AVCE there was greater consensus amongst the informants about the merits and shortcomings of the qualification. Criticisms were made by several respondents about the qualification's design in that it was thought to be 'over academic' at the expense of a relevant vocational focus. In addition, the lack of progression within the qualification's structure meant that Year 1 and Year 2 students were assessed at the same level. Informants pointed out that this differed from General Advanced Levels where students were assessed against AS

levels before going on to A2. This lack of progression within the AVCE was generally seen as problematic. More positive views were expressed about the subject content in the AVCE units and the methods of assessment: these were perceived to be an improvement on those for GNVQ. Some differences in responses to the AVCE were identified in the data but there was greater similarity in terms of pedagogic approaches adopted for implementation. Where differences were identified, even within the context of similar institutional environments, the explanation seemed to lie in the professional identities of lecturers and their previous experience. This echoed the findings from studies focusing on teachers in the compulsory sector.

In accounting for the adaptations of lecturers to curriculum and organisational change, Higman (2003b), James and Biesta *et al* (2008) and Gleeson and Knight (2006) found that lecturers' biographical resources enabled them to exercise a degree of discretion with regard to implementation and to reassert their identities in an attempt to reconstruct professionalism through resistance and contestation. Studies focusing on FE lecturers' professional identities have revealed that vocational background, values and biography all contribute to diverse professional identities.

Gleeson and Mardle (1980) and Robson (1998) both drew attention to the significance of the prior occupational socialisation. The former found that this had affected the way FE lecturers approached their work with students and enabled them to socialise students to the norms and practices of a given vocational area. There was some evidence of this being valued by the informants for this study. In planning the implementation of the GNVQ, all the respondents had included a work experience placement for their courses, despite the fact that it was not

obligatory and that they were operating in context where the hours to provide a course had been reduced and the breadth of content had increased. The lecturers claimed that it was imperative that students had the opportunity to relate theory to practice. With regard to the AVCE, work experience was thought desirable by all the respondents in the study; they questioned the value of pre-vocational courses without such provision. However, in several cases resource issues prevented their providing this option. The knowledge and skills possessed by lecturers in their vocational fields was an important aspect of their identity which informed curriculum planning. Gleeson and Mardle (1980) found that some FE lecturers do not consistently see themselves as educators. Within their sense of professional identity they may, for example, see themselves as nurses or engineers first.

However, the respondents for this research indicated that being an educator was an important aspect of their professional identity when they talked reflectively about theories of teaching and learning and their expertise in relation to this. The literature on adaptations to change in the compulsory sector, and especially in primary schools, had looked at the significance of commitment to Plowden ideology, or progressive educational philosophies at secondary level, in relation to adaptations (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). The work of these researchers stimulated my own approach and led me to consider whether lecturers teaching on pre-vocational Business Studies and Health and Social Care courses subscribed to any distinctive educational philosophy, in a similar way to the primary school teachers.

Analysis of my data suggests that what was significant in accounting for differences in attitudes amongst lecturers were the frames of reference, derived from their professional training, ideology and career stage, which they made

reference to in their accounts of their perceptions and adaptations. In the case of the GNVQ, for those constrained professionals who had been in post during the BTEC era, generally speaking the change was experienced as de-professionalisation. They reported the intensification of their work and expressed feelings of loss in relation to their pedagogic skills. They did not feel that the GNVQ competence-based design was appropriate for a vocational educational course since they believed that it resulted in superficial understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, the rhetoric of student empowerment was questioned by constrained professionals because their students appeared to adopt a 'treasure hunt' approach when researching assignments, and as a result seemed to engage passively with knowledge as 'fact'. They believed that with the GNVQ there was less opportunity to focus on the process of learning and the broader educational outcomes that vocational education might have to offer. In their accounts of how they taught on the PCSC and BTEC courses they talked about the way in which these courses lent themselves to an experiential pedagogical approach, with course content and an assessment structure facilitated the development of critical thinking skills. They also felt that there were greater opportunities to relate learning to students' needs and interests.

The views that they expressed about their favoured pedagogical approaches map on to aspect of new vocationalism. Pring (1995) notes that a key characteristic associated with this tradition is the emphasis on the process of learning. Great emphasis was placed on encouraging students to reflect on their experiences within and outside of formal learning, in the context of cooperative and practical models of classroom teaching. The aim was to enable students to be guided towards grasping the deeper significance of the subject matter. The

accounts provided by informants indicated that they implicitly aligned themselves to aspects of new vocationalism and that they were at odds with GNVQs 'controlled vocationalism' (Bates *et al*, 1998).

Implementing GNVQs brought these lecturers' values and beliefs about their professional role into question. On an emotional level they expressed feelings of loss, frustration and anger in similar ways to teachers studied by Marshall and Ball (1999) and Woods and Jeffrey (2002). Implementation of GNVQ had been a particularly challenging experience for them and they were not happy with the pre-vocational course they had constructed. Their professional identities had been undermined by the requirements of the GNVQ and the limited scope for their preferred forms of educational practice. There was some evidence of tension and conflict between the role prescribed for the 'good lecturer' delivering the GNVQ and notions of what the role of the professional should be on the part of the constrained professionals and the strategic complier.

By contrast, the other lecturers seemed to operate with a different notion of professionalism, one that was largely compatible with both the new institutional arrangements and the new curriculum. Those lecturers who had not been centrally involved in the BTEC regime compared GNVQ with the various sorts of educational and other work that they had previously experienced, and were generally much more positive towards the changes. I have suggested that the personal occupational biographies of the 'committed newcomers' predisposed them towards feeling comfortable with competence-based approaches to education and the managerialist discourse that had come to prevail within further education.

265

The case of AVCE was more complex, and new categories had to be constructed to accommodate the differences in lecturers' perceptions of and responses to the AVCE. None of the lecturers approximated to the GNVQ category of the 'constrained professionals'. The critical compliers exhibited some characteristics of this group in that they highlighted tensions between the rhetoric of a widening participation agenda and managerial imperatives that influenced their College's work. They had retained their public service values in the new managerialist context. Unlike the GNVQ respondents, they did not raise concerns about the qualification's unit structure as regards the fragmentation of knowledge; this was not seen as hampering students' holistic understanding of subject matter. Both the critical compliers and the strategic compliers reported feelings of intensification. However, neither group suggested that the demands of the assessment model reduced their autonomy in relation to teaching strategies. Here, again, I argued that differences in approaches to teaching identified in the data could be explained in terms of the professional biographies of the lecturers.

All the AVCE lecturers can be described as compliant with the new regime. But they were not unthinkingly 'conformist'. They were compliant because there was no inherent conflict between their definitions of their professional role and the expectations of the programme. Six of the eight lecturers adopted the role of the 'good lecturer' for the AVCE by employing the teaching methodologies recommended for the course by the awarding body. They employed a mixture of collaborative student-centred teaching strategies, and supported students with their semi-independent research for assignments. These lecturers did not feel that the 'pressure to get through' impinged on the ways that they planned their teaching. The reduction in course work assignments created a

space to explore subject matter in greater depth than had been the case with the GNVQ. The AVCE had gone some way to meeting the criticisms voiced by lecturers of the GNVQ but it also provided much more opportunity for lecturers to exercise their professional autonomy. Despite the fact that there was far more prescription about how to deliver the AVCE than had been the case with the GNVQ, this was not greeted with resentment or seen as impinging on lecturers' professional autonomy. The interviews reveal something of the process by which six of the eight lecturers, whilst compliant, also felt that they had room to manoeuvre and to re-negotiate their roles.

One factor that may account for the lack of resentment expressed about the role of the lecturer within the AVCE may be the passage of time. Lecturers lost a degree of professional autonomy with the GNVQ and their expectations of their role may have adjusted accordingly. Another significant factor, identified in Coffield *et al's* (2008) research, is that lecturers' outright resistance to policy was dissipated because their values were reflected in the policy, for example in the commitment to widening participation and raising achievement.

A key issue discussed in the literature concerns the influence of structural forces and the scope for individual agency. Research by Esland *et al* (1999) suggested that the impact of new forms of strategic management which link curriculum and teaching inputs and assessment outputs is most acutely felt by main grade lecturers operating at the chalk face. However, they do not report a uniform response. Lecturers who had recently been recruited into the sector from industry, for example, did not hold critical perceptions of change. Meanwhile, lecturers performing a middle management often played a mediating role in translating policy in ways that were acceptable to both lecturers and management.

267

Shain and Gleeson (1999) also note variation in the responses and adaptations of lecturers to educational reform and identified three categories of responses: compliant, old timers, strategic compliers. The latter was seen to represent a reworking of professionalism. Along the same lines, Coffield *et al* (2008) found diverse perceptions of policy and change and how the pressure to meet targets was dealt with. Gleeson and Knight (1999) and James and Biesta (2007) talk about the possibility for agency with their concept of 'creative mediation', which suggests that even when lecturers are working within pressurised institutional contexts there may still be opportunities for creativity and agency.

The constrained professionals in the GNVQ study did express feelings of being de-professionalised and working in ways with which they were not comfortable. They attributed this to structural constraints, but in this they differed sharply from lecturers in other categories. My findings lead me to suggest that there is some scope for individual agency in response to curricular reforms, most notably through a process of creative mediation, which may provide scope for the creation of new forms of professionalism. Therefore my research findings resonate with the research studies mentioned. However, as Coffield *et al* (2008) point out, it is important to bear in mind that such opportunities are likely to be influenced by the wider economic and social situation of the college, lecturers' and managers' personal values, professional traditions, years of experience and the nature of their employment contract.

In providing an account of how GNVQ and AVCE policy has been implemented on the ground I have suggested that responses and adaptations of lecturers will reflect their current working practices, their views about the sort of education they are engaged in, their judgements about their central professional

task and how it ought to be carried out. Moreover, their attitudes will relate both to the goals of the new curriculum and even more to the operational procedures imposed upon them. And they will be forced to develop modes of work that enable them to meet the new requirements, but these will also be shaped by their own previous modes of operation, the nature of the knowledge and skills they have, as well as their attitudes towards what has happened. Furthermore, there is likely to be a process of development and change over time, as they start to get a clearer sense of what the demands are, of what is and is not possible, of what they can and cannot get away with, and so on. Note here that those lecturers who had been in post under GNVQ would have been likely to have drawn on their adaptations under that regime in accommodating to AVCE, in the sense that their starting point for the later curriculum reform would have been different from anyone coming from outside; just as there was a difference in response to GNVQ between those who had been centrally involved in teaching under BTEC and those who had come from elsewhere. This highlights the fundamental point that lecturers' responses and adaptations to these curricular reforms were shaped by the particular frame of reference that they had previously developed, this having been generated by their career trajectories and the attitudes and pedagogical practices emerging out of these.

The findings of this longitudinal case study contribute to research that relates to curriculum policy implementation and the significance of teachers' and lecturers' professional identities. I have attempted to identify factors which may account for the differing responses and adaptations which have been identified during two phases of curriculum policy reform. My data analysis reveals the ways that professionals re-position themselves in relation to changing role

269

requirements. I have suggested that how a policy is implemented will depend upon general working conditions and how these are shaped by other policies. For example, the two curricular reforms examined here operated against the background of extensive institutional change in the FE sector. Moreover, local working conditions varied considerably for lecturers in different colleges, and perhaps even for those within the same college across departments. We must remember that it is this whole situation to which lecturers must adapt, not just particular curricular requirements in isolation.

This case study has relevance for teacher educators because it captures something of how professional biography predisposes lecturers to favour certain pedagogical approaches which can make responses to changing curriculum requirements challenging if they are not perceived to be compatible with circumstances in which they have to implement it. There is a place on training programmes for recognition and discussion of tensions in policy such as the emphasis placed on widening participation and funding related to outcomes. Similarly, lecturers' in FE are expected to respond to the diverse needs of learners, yet in recent years the emphasis has been on a 'one size fits all' approach with which many informants in this study were not comfortable. Having said this, the recently elected 2010, coalition government have stated that in relation to compulsory schooling teachers need to be able exercise a greater degree of autonomy in the classroom. This may filter down to further education, and if this is the case lecturers will need to have expertise in relation to curriculum design and development. This will enable them to respond creatively to changing requirements and to support their students in meeting national standards for qualifications. This expertise was an important aspect of lecturers' professional

identities in past but not so significant for recent recruits into the sector. This needs to be re-established to enable lecturers to be effective educators in the ever changing world of further education: lecturers need to have been exposed to range of theories related to teaching and learning, and methods that enable them to meet the diverse needs of their learners.

Policy makers need to be aware of problems associated with initiative overload in further education, and the impact that this can have on professionals working in the sector. There need to accessible, clear mechanisms for those working at the 'chalk face' to feed back concerns to those charged with responsibility for policy development. It was also evident that the informants for this research felt that there were limited opportunities to provide feed-back about their experience of delivering the GNVQ to those who had designed the programmes and assessment procedures. Strong views were expressed about the conflictual relationship between the stated goals and general ideas behind the policy and the actual operational procedures imposed, for example in relation to notions of student 'empowerment' and the prescriptive nature of the GNVQ assessment requirements. The operational procedures were influenced by various political and educational ideas, but also by notions of what is feasible, what is required in order to make a policy defensible in the face of media scrutiny, and so on.

It has been noted that in the case of GNVQ especially, the new curriculum arrangements were a complex product of compromise and negotiation amongst various stakeholders, this process continuing over time and leading to changes in the policy even while it was being implemented. Oates (2008) employs the concept of 'temporal discontinuity' to capture the inadequate synchronisation in the sequence of design, piloting, and evaluation that is common in the policy

process. He argues that this was the primary cause of this qualification's troubled history:

> There could be no accumulation of evaluation since re-design invalidated prior information and invalidated precise findings. Evaluation data was always grossly incomplete due to the compressed evaluation timescales. Despite the best intentions of evaluators, they simply could not keep up with the frequency and scale of changes. Successive changes were over-determined by sectional interests rather than valid evaluation information. In addition, the nature of the contested territory (learning and teaching, qualification structure, and assessment models) led to an increasingly complex qualification. One thing became increasingly clear as the evaluations rolled on: teachers were increasingly frustrated and confused by the changes.
> (Oates, 2008, p.114)

The result of this, he claims, was that during the qualification's 10-year life it never really emerged from piloting. He suggests that the problem of temporal discontinuity is one which remains a serious deficiency in the formulation, development and implementation of much educational policy in the UK.

There is a tension between providing training for some set of occupations, especially for jobs that primarily require manual or social skills, and the requirement to make vocational qualifications equivalent to academic ones, and allow transfer between vocational and academic routes. Broad-based vocational qualifications have traditionally been composed of a blend of vocational skills and academic knowledge. Achieving an appropriate balance of these elements was not

achieved within either the GNVQ or the AVCE. Attempts by policy-makers to create qualifications that have parity of esteem between different routes, within a single qualifications framework; have proved to be a challenging task. Different perspectives about this have dominated the development of these qualifications at different stages in the policy-making process. What do not appear to have informed this endeavour are the experiences of the professional lecturers, charged with the difficult task of implementing the courses, which enable students to successfully achieve these qualifications. In reviewing and revising vocational education qualifications, it might be wise for policy-makers to listen to 'front-line' professionals and learn from their pedagogic expertise and experience. My aim in this thesis has been to provide some insight into those experiences in the context of the curricular reforms that took place in FE during the 1990s.

APPENDIX 1

THE PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF GNVQ INFORMANTS

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leader for GNVQ	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching	Qualifications	Previous occupation	Type of contract
Alan: Programme Leader for GNVQ Business Studies. Appleton College (Greenfield site in the Home Counties)	10	BTEC National teaching and curriculum development. GNVQ Advanced.	Cert. Ed. TDLB assessor qualifications.		Silver Book contract
Alice: Programme Leader for GNVQ Health and Social Care. Appleton College (Greenfield site in the Home Counties)	1	GNVQ	SRN TDLB assessor qualifications.	20 years experience of working in a nursery.	Negotiated contract

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leader for GNVQ	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching	Qualifications	Previous occupation	Type of contract
Brenda: Programme Leader for GNVQ Business Studies. Burley College (West London, urban site)	12	BTEC teaching but as a part-timer with little responsibility for curriculum development. Full-time when GNVQ was introduced.	MIPD: Mangement Institute Personnel Diploma. TDLB assessor qualifications.	Personal Manager Trainer in Industry	Negotiated contract
Betty: Programme Leader for GNVQ Health and Social Care. Burley College(West London, urban site)	7	BTEC National GNVQ Advanced.	B.Sc Sociology MA in Education and Training TDLB assessor qualifications.		Silver Book contract
Carol: Programme Leader for GNVQ Business Studies. Cannons College(Outer London suburb)	6	GCSE O level GNVQ Intermediate	Cert Ed TDLB assessor qualifications.	14 years of school teaching	Silver Book contract

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leader for GNVQ	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching	Qualifications	Previous occupation	Type of contract
Cora: Programme Leader for GNVQ Health and Social Care. Cannons College (Outer London suburb)	8	NNEB Nursery Nursing GNVQ Intermediate	M.A in Education Cert. Ed Registered Health Visitor and RGN Working towards TDLB qualifications.		Negotiated contract.
Dawn: Programme Leader for GNVQ Business Studies. Drayton College(Central London, urban site)	20	GCSE A levels BTEC National GNVQ Advanced	B.A History MBA. TDLB assessor qualifications.	Taught A levels in schools.	Silver Book contract
Doris: Programme Leader for GNVQ Health and Social Care Drayton College(Central London, urban site)	18	PCSC GNVQ Advanced	B.Ed Cert. Ed FE. TDLB assessor qualifications.	Infant and Primary school teacher.	Silver Book contract

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leader for GNVQ	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching	Qualifications	Previous occupation	Type of contract
Emery College (Metropolitan County: city Suburb, Midlands) Programme Leader for GNVQ Business Studies - Eric	16	BTEC National GNVQ Advanced	HND, DMS, B.Ed, Currently taking an MA in Industrial Relations. TDLB assessor qualifications.		Negotiated contract.
Emery College (Metropolitan County: city Suburb, Midlands) Programme Leader for GNVQ Health and Social Care - Ellen	12 Years	BTEC National GNVQ Advanced	BA Law/Sociology CQSW MA Social Work Cert Ed FE. TDLB assessor qualifications.		Negotiated contract

APPENDIX 2

INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF AVCE INFORMANTS

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leaders for the AVCE	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching on BTEC National or similar	Qualifications	Previous occupation
Alex: Programme Leader for AVCE Business Studies. Appleton College (Greenfield site in the Home Counties)	26	Liberal Studies BTEC National GNVQ	BA Business Development MA Economics and Finance Cert Ed. FE TDLB assessor qualifications.	
*Alice: Programme Leader for AVCE Health and Social Care. Appleton College (Greenfield site in the Home Counties)	7	GNVQ	SRN TDLB assessor qualifications.	20 years experience of working in a nursery

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leaders for the AVCE	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching on BTEC National or similar	Qualifications	Previous occupation
Bob: Programme Leader for AVCE Business Studies. Burley College (West London, urban site)	10	GCSE O level GCSE A level BTEC Intermediate and National. GNVQ.	B.SC Economics and Sociology PGCE MA Education and Sociology. TDLB assessor qualifications.	School teacher for 10 years prior to entering FE.
Bradley: Programme Leader for AVCE Health and Social Care. Burley College(West London, urban site)	10	GNVQ Advanced. GNVQ Intermediate GNVQ Foundation,	SRN Qualified Nurse Tutor BA Ed. Cert. Ed FE TDLB assessor qualifications.	Nurse Tutor for 11 years prior to entering FE.

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leaders for the AVCE	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching on BTEC National or similar	Qualifications	Previous occupation
Catherine: Programme Leader for AVCE Business Studies. Cannons College(Outer London suburb)	9	GNVQ Advanced.	BA in Administration (Business and Industry) M.Ed in Adult and Further Education. TDLB assessor qualifications.	14 years of school teaching prior to entering FE.
*Cora: Programme Leader for AVCE Health and Social Care. Cannons College (Outer London suburb)	13	NNEB Nursery Nursing GNVQ Intermediate.	M.A in Education Cert. Ed. FE. Registered Health Visitor and RGN TDLB assessor qualifications.	
David: Programme Leader for AVCE Business Studies. Drayton College(Central London, urban site)	15	BTEC National GNVQ Advanced	B.A History Law Degree Cert. Ed. FE. TDLB assessor qualifications.	Practicing Barrister

Institution and name of Informants - Programme Leaders for the AVCE	Years in FE	Experience of curriculum development and teaching on BTEC National or similar	Qualifications	Previous occupation
*Doris: Programme Leader for AVCE Health and Social Care. Drayton College(Central London, urban site)	23	PCSC GNVQ Advanced	B.Ed Cert. Ed FE. TDLB assessor qualifications.	Infant and Primary school teacher.

*Denotes respondents that were interviewed in 1997 about their responses and adaptations to the GNVQ.

Appendix 3 GNVQ Lecturers: Interview Schedule

Interview Planning

<u>Location</u>   Need a college where we have access to both a Business Studies Dept

and a Health and Social Care Department.

<u>Focus:</u>   Informant needs to be someone who has been in the system for 7 years. Ideally

informants need to be teaching a course in l997 which replaces a similar one

taught in l990

<u>Describe:</u>   college

catchment area - socio-economic characteristics

recruitment of students - has it increased or decreased since 1990?

physical environment

Prior to interview collect syllabus, course outline, assessment criteria etc.

_____

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. INTRODUCTION

AIM here to establish which courses will be used as a basis for comparison. Ideally we are looking for an GNVQ/NVQ course which has replaced one in the same subject which was offered in 1990.

How long have you been working in this field?

Probes: subject area, recent history of changes in courses and qualification outcomes (the course)

What are you teaching now?

Probes: area, qualifications, outcomes

(If more than one course focus on the changes that have taken place between 1990 and 1997 in one particular subject .)

2. COURSE CONTENT

(referring to course outline)

 How does the content of this course compare to the one which you taught on the

 same subject in l990?

Probes: similarities/ differences

      range of material, depth,

      theoretical aspects

      practical aspects.

3. TEACHING DELIVERY

How does the delivery of the course you teach today compare to the teaching approach which you employed in l990?

Probes: similarities/differences

      face-to-face teaching

      individual/groupwork/role play

      teaching materials and other resources

      room and facilities

4. TIME

How does the amount of delivery time that you have for this course compare to the amount of time you had for the course in 1990?

5. STAFF-STUDENT RATIO

How many students do you have in your class? Is this more or less than you had in the class in 1990 or is it about the same number?

6. COURSE ASSESSMENT

How does the assessment of this course compare to the assessment of the course in 1990?

Probes: similarities/differences

written practical, exams/portfolio

'Is it possible to see a portfolio?'

7. MODERATION AND VALIDATION

How does the validation of the course you are teaching now compare to the validation procedure adopted for the course that you taught in l990?

Probes: similarities/differences

group/team meetings

contact with other colleges

external criteria

influence of Lead Bodies/ Employers?

8. STUDENT PROGRESSION

What avenues are there for progression for students taking this course?

How do the paths for progression compare to those available to the students on the course in 1990?

Probes: *educational progression*

employment outcomes

9. STUDENT RETENTION

What proportion of the students complete the course and how does this compare to the proportion who completed the course in 1990?

How does the motivation of students on the current course compare to the motivation of the students on the course in 1990?

If differences -

e.g. What do you think are the reasons for the differences?

Probes: How and at what stage is retention measured?

How is it monitored?

Who manages the information?   (Why?)

10.. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

What are the criteria for selection (for this course) and how does it compare with the criteria which were employed in the selection process of students in 1990?

Probes: qualifications required/ ability in generic skills

How are students recruited - changes- open days, advertising, financial incentives.

extent to which the lecturer is involved

whose responsibility is it to manage recruitment.

11. IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL'S ROLE

Do you feel your job has changed since 1990?

IF YES - in what way?

Probes: on responses already given and the comparisons with 1990

1. Do you need different skills?

2. How much time do spend proportionally on teaching and administration

3. Are you satisfied/not satisfied with standards achieved by students studying

GNVQs?

Probes: Professional integrity in their role as assessors

(Are qualifications needed such as D32 or D33?)

4. Do you have more or less job satisfaction than you had in 1990, or is it about the

same?

Probes: contact between other lecturers.

levels of achievement

time with students

staff development opportunities

IF there has been a very substantial change in the professional's role -

Why do you think there has been this massive change in your role?

12. LINES OF ACCOUNTABILITY - CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Can you tell me about how much say you have in the new curriculum and the way in which it is to be delivered.

Why do you think this is?

13. PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Finally could you tell me briefly about your own educational background

**Probes:** HE qualification

years in teaching

years in this college

Contract: Silver Book

Negotiated Post l992

CEF Contract

14. OTHER

Is there anything further you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 4

AVCE Lecturers: Interview Schedule

Interview Planning

Interviewer: to explain the rationale for the study – follow-up from 1997 GNVQ implementation research. Interviews will explore:

- The main changes that have introduce with the move from NCVQ to QCA for the AVCE;

- Sources of support available to assist lecturers with the implementation of the AVCE;

- Teaching and learning strategies employed by lecturers;

- Issues related to selection, retention and progression;

- Resource issues impacting on the delivery of the AVCE

- The professional backgrounds of informants.

_____

AVCE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Q.1 Can you tell me a little about your professional background and how long you have

been teaching on vocational education courses in this area?

(If it is the same informant as the one for the GNVQ study ask for an update)

(*frames of reference*)

Q.2 What changes were made to the Advanced GNVQ in September 2000?

Q.3 How were you briefed about the changes and how did your course team plan for

these? (*communication*)

Q.4 What kinds of support did/do the awarding bodies offer you in relation to preparing

course to deliver the new AVCE? (*communication*)

Q.5 Do students studying the AVCE also take a Key Skills qualification?

Q.6 Do students get the opportunity to engage in extra-curriculum activities?

Q.7 How many hours a week do students attend timetabled classes? (*Resources*) What do

students do during the non-timetabled sessions?

Probes: projects, group exercises, private study.

Q.8 Are any students studying A levels alongside their AVCE?

If yes, what are they? Is there a common pattern or combinations?

Q.9 Do students engage in practical placements during the course?

If yes, where do they go, for how long, how is this placement assessed?

Q.10 What kinds of teaching methods do you use with AVCE students?

Is this any different to those employed for the GNVQ?

(*Resources, degree of autonomy, frames of reference*).

Q.11 What factors influence the teaching methods employed?

Q.12 How is the programme externally verified – does the moderation proves offer

opportunities for advice and support?

(*communication, audit – high trust/low trust*)

Q.13 Can you tell me about retention rates and factors that you have identified as

influencing this? Is the pattern the same as it was for the GNVQ?

Q.14 What is the progression rate to HE and employment?

(*policy objective*)

Q.15 Do you think that the AVCE has achieved parity of esteem with A levels?
(*policy objective*).

Q.16 What are your view about the changes that have taken place from the GNVQ to the AVCE?

Probes: Unit structure, assessment requirements etc.

(*Policy objectives, frames of reference*).

Q.17 What is the purpose of vocational education? Do you think that the AVCE content, teaching methodology advocated are compatible with your views about this? What do you think the role of the professional lecturer should be? (*Frames of reference*)

Q.18 How would describe your role as a professional lecturer?

(*frame of reference, student-centred/learner centred continuum*)

Q.19 Is there anything further you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.

1.

APPENDIX 5: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ADVANCED GMVQ UNIT

UNIT 8 RESEARCH IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Element 8:1:   Investigate types of research used in health and social care

Performance criteria:

1. different sources of data are explained
2. different techniques for data collection used in research relevant to health and social care are summarised
3. the main advantages and disadvantages of different data collection techniques are explained:

    4   characteristics of different types of sampling methods are identified

Range: Techniques: questionnaire; interview (structured, in-depth); observation

             Sources of data: primary sources, secondary sources

Sample methods: random, quota, stratified, opportunity

Evidence indicators: A project which identifies research and sample methods relevant to health and social care· outlining the main advantages and disadvantages of different techniques. Evidence should demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the range dimensions in relation to the element. The unit test will confirm the candidate's coverage of range.

Element 8.2: Construct a structured research instrument to survey opinion

1. the research problem is clearly defined

2. types of questions are appropriate to the types of responses required

3. clear, unambiguous and non-threatening questions are developed

4. question order and layout are appropriate and clearly presented

5. appropriate probes and prompts are designed to support questioning

Range: Types of question: closed questions, open questions

   Forms of response: open response, rating scales, semantic differential, ranking Evidence indicators: Production of either a structured questionnaire or structured interview schedule on a topic related to a health and social care context. Evidence should demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the range dimensions in relation to the element. The unit test will confirm the candidate's coverage of range.

Element: **Investigate methods of interpreting information**

Performance criteria:

1. reliability and validity of data are explained
2. potential sources of error arising from the collection methods and instruments, analysis methods and interpretation of data are explained

3. the ways in which presentation of data can affect the messages conveyed are explained

4. different types basic statistics are applied and calculated correctly

Range: Types of research: quantitative; qualitative

Sources of error: leading questions, non-response, misuse of statistics, sampling errors

Presentation of data: tables, graphs, text
Basic statistics. frequency counts, mean, mode, median, measures of probability

Evidence indicators: A project which demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which information is interpreted. Presentation of the conversion of numerical data into other presentational forms and examples of basic statistical calculations. Evidence should demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the range dimensions in relation to the element. The unit test will confirm the candidate's coverage of range.

Appendix 6: An Example of AVCE Unit Guidance

UNIT 6: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES IN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE (ADVANCED)

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This unit develops your research skills by improving your knowledge of the research process. You will then carry out a small-scale research project in a health, social care or early years topic.

You will learn about:

- the purpose of research in health and social care
- research methods used in health and social care
- methods of analysis, validation and how to present research results
- ethical issues that must be considered when researching.

This unit can support research work for other advanced units.

This unit also links to the research units of BTEC Nationals in Caring, Health Studies and Early Years

This unit will be assessed through your portfolio work only. The grade awarded will be your grade for the unit.

WHAT YOU NEED TO LEARN

Purpose of research in health and social care

Research in health and social care is often carried out to review existing knowledge, describe a situation or problem, and provide explanations. It is therefore important that you appreciate how research might have an impact on your professional life and organisations in which you will work.

Research can be carried out to:

- plan service delivery by establishing the relevant demography
- explore patterns of disease (epidemiology)
- obtain feedback on services for quality assurance
- explore social science hypothesis
- extend and improve individual and collective knowledge, understanding and practice
- review and monitor changes in health and social care practice.

Research methods

To carry out a research project you need to select the best method of research to suit your purpose. Research methods you will need to investigate include:

- quantitative and qualitative methods and their uses
- primary sources of data, such as interviews, observation notes, experiments
- secondary sources of data, such as books, statistical reports on standard morbidity rates, demography.

You will also need to learn about basic sampling. You will need to learn how to ensure the validity and reliability of your research. You will need to learn how to record data accurately.

Planning research

You should view research as problem solving. This will help you to formulate an initial, simple argument or hypothesis and identify variables. You will need to:

- explain what you are trying to find out and why it is useful and relevant to do this research
- review what is already known and published about your research topic
- explain the research methods you have chosen and justify why they are appropriate
- understand different forms of sampling
- identify ways of checking whether your research meets appropriate ethical standards
- be aware of sources of bias and inaccuracy that occur in obtaining data
- explore appropriate methods to analyse and present your findings.

Presenting research

The clear presentation of findings is crucial to communicating your research. You will need to:

- consider appropriate methods to present your findings and the validity of your conclusions
- suggest recommendations for developing research in the areas of your study
- reference your research report appropriately, for example the Harvard reference system.

Ethical issues

It is almost impossible to conduct value-free research in this area. It is therefore important that you understand ethical issues that might arise when carrying out research or in using the results. You need to consider an individual's rights including confidentiality. You also need to be aware of care values.

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

You need to produce a report of a research project that you have designed and carried out. The project should have relevance to a health, social care or early years setting.

The report must show your skills in research and your understanding of research methods in this field. It should include:

- a rationale for the research, and the research methods you have chosen
- a review of what is already known in the area of your project
- an exploration of ethical issues that are relevant to your project
- a presentation of findings with conclusions, including appropriate data and statistics, diagrams, charts and a bibliography.

To achieve a grade E your work must show:	To achieve a grade C your work must show:	To achieve a grade A your work must show:
• an accurate description and application of an appropriate research methodology to a relevant issue in health, social care or early years • a clear summary of a relevant literature search • an identification of the relevant ethical issues • the use of appropriate methods to present your findings in an accurate, clear and coherent manner.	• independent selection and application of an appropriate research methodology and clear explanation of your decisions • a review of the validity of your research sources and identification of possible sources of error or bias in your own work that might influence your conclusions • an analysis of the effect of ethical considerations on your research project.	• a comprehensive approach to the design of your research project and in carrying out the methodology • realistic and valid conclusions drawn from your findings, suggestions of ways in which your work might be improved and reasoned recommendations for further research • justification of your choice of research methodology and an explanation of alternative research methods that might appropriately be used in relation to your type of project.

296

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Teaching strategies

This unit aims to develop students' vocational research skills. They must prepare a research plan, implement and monitor the project and prepare conclusions. They must produce a written report and consider the ethical issues involved in carrying out research. Students can link their research for this unit with any of the subjects covered in the other advanced units.

Research methods

Before producing a design, students will need considerable guidance on the use of primary and secondary data sources, qualitative and quantitative methods and the appropriateness of the measurement tools. Students are not expected to know about each of the research methods in detail, but should understand that there are a variety of methods for different purposes.

Many students have difficulty proposing a suitable hypothesis and they will need guidance with this. Once they have proposed their hypothesis, students will need to identify the independent and dependent variables. Students can work in groups or individually to produce a research design.

Students will need ongoing advice and support in carrying out their research. A structured programme of review and monitoring sessions would be helpful to ensure that they are able to progress well.

Resources

Planning research

Choosing a research topic

Students will need guidance to make sure that they choose a research topic that is realistic and will allow them to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria. They could get ideas from articles in journals, books, reports, discussion with experts in the field and from the media. The research question should interest students, and be one to which they can obtain reasonable answers. Brainstorming sessions can be used to discuss topics.

Reviewing prior research

Most research work involves substantial use of published literature and students should be encouraged to search for relevant and current sources. Some useful sources are government/local government reports and publications, standards/codes of practice, journals and newspapers, abstracts and materials from health education authorities.

Students may find it difficult to abandon sources they have reviewed that are not relevant to their project. However, they should be encouraged to use only sources that are directly related to the research topic.

To help students identify good and bad research reports, it may be helpful to provide examples of reports from nursing, social care or education journals.

Collecting research data

In most cases, students will collect information from a sample of people. It is therefore important that they understand the different forms of sampling – simple, random, systematic, stratified.

Before students start collecting data they will need to think about how they are going to analyse and present the results. They will need to identify suitable tools (eg statistical techniques) and methods of coding and classifying information.

Presenting research findings

Students should be encouraged to develop a basic structure for their reports and should reference all the material they have used in the report in the text and in a bibliography. They should use a standard system for referencing their sources, for example the Harvard system.

A common structure for reports is:

- title
- contents
- abstract
- introduction
- literature review
- objectives
- method
- results
- discussion
- conclusions
- recommendations
- bibliography
- appendices.

Students should, wherever possible, use bar charts, histograms, pie charts, pictographs and tables to illustrate their data analysis. They should also be aware of the measures of central tendency, for example median, and mode calculated from frequency tables.

Ethical issues

Students should consider the effects of the gender, race and culture of the participants on their research results. It is also helpful if students can understand the effect their own gender or ethnic group could have on the collection of data. Students should, for example, be aware of how the participant perceives the researcher and also how, for example, the gender of the researcher may hinder or help the research process when interviewing participants.

Students must understand the harmful effects of research; they need to understand that to cause harm or distress to people who take part in their research is unacceptable and unethical. Students need to be aware that ethics provides a set of guidelines by which they can judge the possible consequences of their actions.

Issues that might cause ethical problems include the right to privacy, confidentiality, and the Data Protection Act (if they intend to store personal data on computer). When considering ethical issues, students should consider the participants, and whether they need informed consent to take part.

Assessment strategies

When grading student evidence you should consider the following general qualities that distinguish between the three grades:

- increasing depth and breadth of understanding
- increasing evaluation, analysis and synthesis
- increasing autonomy, independence and originality
- increasing objectivity and critical understanding.

Grade E

Students should identify the type of research they are going to do (descriptive, experimental or action). They must give a rationale for their research and develop a valid hypothesis. They must give details of the methodology they intend to use. Students must also be able to identify the limitations of their research method.

Students do not need to carry out an in-depth literature review, but they must consult recent data, for example relevant articles from journals.

Students should accurately reference all the sources they used in the text to support their statements or opinions. They should also provide a bibliography using a standard referencing method and giving full details of the sources.

They should identify, obtain and analyse primary and secondary source data. It is important that students do not just collect data but they should also be able to discuss the extent to which their conclusions can be generalised. For example, can the findings of a study on the smoking habits of 20 students in a local college or school be applied to the general population, or can a study in a large industrial town be applied to a small rural village?

It is essential for students to review and monitor their research rationale regularly and provide evidence of this, either in the body of the text or in a simple diary of dates and issues monitored.

To achieve a grade E students must have identified any ethical issues that might arise and summarise how they dealt with them.

Grade C

To achieve a grade C students need to go one step further and justify their choice of research methodology, for example 'I chose to carry out an observation of children at play because it will give me opportunities to study the children's activities without interference of adults'.

Students must assess the validity of the resources they use, showing they understand the philosophical or political background of the authors. For example, they should understand the differences between information supplied by a government agency such as the Health Education Authority and that supplied by a tobacco or alcohol company.

Identifying possible sources of error is an important activity. Students must be able to identify any possible sources of error (for example, in methodology, design of questionnaire, sampling) and be able to evaluate the effect of these errors or possible errors on the overall research. They should explain how the sources of error were minimised.

All charts and diagrams should be clearly annotated and labelled.

Students should begin to appreciate what they themselves bring to the research project through their attitudes and values, etc. They should be able to identify any issues that might have posed a problem to their objectivity and explain how they tried to overcome them.

Grade A

The research at A grade will include all of the above presented in a clear, coherent, well-structured way.

In addition students should aim to interpret the results of their work. Students must be able to draw and justify realistic conclusions and make and justify recommendations for further research. They must also make recommendations for change. Recommendations should be addressed to the appropriate person or organisation, for example the town council, headteacher or head of a residential home and be carefully phrased, using words such as 'consider' and 'consult'.

They should consider how their findings might be different if they used other research methods and justify the methods they used.

Key Skills

This guidance highlights the most relevant Key Skills opportunities in this unit. It contains suggestions only. You will need to check that students have produced all the evidence required to meet part A **and** part B of the Key Skills specifications. Students may need to develop additional evidence elsewhere to meet fully the requirements of the Key Skills specifications.

Guidance is referenced in two ways:

K – keys to attainment

These are Key Skills or aspects of Key Skills which students should achieve as they meet the vocational requirements of the units. Only part B of the Key Skill is highlighted – you will need to check that students achieve part A.

S – signposting

These are opportunities that can be incorporated naturally into the learning programme.

APPLICATION OF NUMBER, LEVEL 3		Key Skills Reference
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**	
• searching for relevant and current sources of data • reviewing and monitoring changes in health and social care practice • obtaining feedback on services for quality assurance • planning service delivery by establishing the relevant demography	N3.1 Plan, and interpret information from **two** different types of sources, including a large data set.	S

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, LEVEL 3			Key Skills Reference
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**		
• using the Internet to obtain information	IT3.1	Plan, and use different sources to search for, and select, information required for two different purposes.	S
• showing an ability to understand the Data Protection Act (if they intend to store personal data on computer)	IT3.3	Present information from different sources for **two** different purposes and audiences. Your work must include at least **one** example of text, **one** example of images and **one** example of numbers.	S
IMPROVING OWN LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE, LEVEL 3			**Key Skills Reference**
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**		
• developing their vocational research skills. (They must prepare a research plan.)	LP3.1	Agree targets and plan how these will be met over an extended period of time, using support from appropriate people.	S
• implementing and monitoring the research project • proposing a suitable hypothesis • using a standard system for referencing their sources (for example the Harvard system) • using primary and secondary data sources, qualitative and quantitative methods • learning about basic sampling • learning how to record data accurately • using secondary sources of data, such as books, statistical reports on standard morbidity rates, demography	LP3.2	Take responsibility for your learning by using your plan, and seeking feedback and support from relevant sources, to help meet the targets. Improve your performance by: — studying a complex subject — learning through a complex practical activity — further study or practical activity that involves independent learning.	S

IMPROVING OWN LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE, LEVEL 3		Key Skills Reference
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**	
• taking part in a structured programme of review and monitoring sessions • assessing the appropriateness of the measurement tools	LP3.3 Review progress on **two** occasions and establish evidence of achievements, including how you have used learning from other tasks to meet new demands.	S

PROBLEM SOLVING, LEVEL 3		Key Skills Reference
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**	
• describing a situation or problem, and providing explanations (this is often the focus of research in health and social care) • proposing a suitable hypothesis • selecting the best method of research to suit your purpose • selecting suitable research methods that allow appropriate data to be collected • carrying out research using suitable methods to find solutions • ensuring the validity and reliability of the research.	PS3.1 Explore a complex problem, come up with **three** options for solving it and justify the option selected for taking forward. PS3.2 Plan and implement at least **one** option for solving the problem, review progress and revise your approach as necessary. PS3.3 Apply agreed methods to check if the problem has been solved, describe the results and review your approach to problem solving.	K K K

WORKING WITH OTHERS, LEVEL 3		Key Skills Reference
When students are:	**They should be able to develop the following Key Skills evidence:**	
• working in groups or individually to produce a research design.	WO3.1 Plan complex work with others, agreeing objectives, responsibilities and working arrangements.	S

References

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

Apple, M. (1986) *Cultural Politics and Education, Buckingham*, Open University Press.

Argyris, C. and Schon, D. (1974) *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Audit Commission/OFSTED (1993) *Unfinished Business: Full-time Educational Courses for 16-19 year olds*, London, Audit Commission.

Avis, J. (1996) 'The myth of the post-Fordist society', in: Avis, J. Bloomer, M. Esland, G. Gleeson, D. & Hodkinson, P. (eds) *Knowledge and Nationhood: Education Politics and Work*, London, Cassell.

Avis, J. (1999) 'Shifting identity: new conditions and the transformation of practice: teaching within post-compulsory education', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Vol. 51, No 2, pp. 245-264.

Avis, J (2003) 'Re-thinking trust in a performance culture: the case of education', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 315-332.

Bathmaker, A. 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*, Vol. 31, No.1, pp. 47-62.

Ball, S. (1990) *Politics and Policy Making in education: Explorations in Policy Sociology*, London, Routledge.

Ball, S. (1990) *The Micro-Politics of the School: Towards a Theory of School Organization,* London, Routledge.

Ball, S. (1997) 'Good School/bad School', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 18, No.3, pp. 317-36.

Ball, S. and Gewirtz, S. (1997) 'Girls and the education market', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 9, No.2, pp. 207-222.

Ball, S. (1998) 'Ethics, self interest and the market form in education', in Cribb, A. (eds.) *Markets, Managers and Public Service? Occasional Paper No. 1*, London: Centre for Public Policy Research, Kings College London.

Ball, S. (2003) 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity', *Education Policy*, Vol. 18, No.2, pp. 215-228.

Barnes, D. Johnson, G. Jordan, S. Layton, D. Medway, P. and Yemonas, D. (1988) *A Second Report on the TVEI Curriculum: Courses for 14-16 year olds in Twenty-six Schools*, Sheffield, Training Agency.

Bates, I. Bloomer, M. Hodkinson, P. and Yeomans. D. (1998) 'Progressivism and the GNVQ: context, ideology and practice', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol.11, No.2, pp. 109-127.

Bates, I. (1984) 'From vocational guidance to life-skills: historical perspectives on careers education', in: I. Bates, J. Clarke, P. Cohen, D. Finn, R. Moore & P. Willis (eds), *Schooling for the Dole: the new vocationalism,* London, Macmillan.

Bates, I, (1998a) The Competence and Outcomes Movement: The Landscape of Research, Leeds: 14-19 Research Group, School of Education, University of Leeds.

Bates, I. (1998b) 'The Empowerment Dimension in the GNVQ: A Critical Exploration of Discourse, Pedagogic Apparatus and School Implementation', *Evaluation and Research in Education*, Vol.12, No.1, pp. 7-22.

Bates, I, (1998c) 'Resisting 'empowerment' and realising power: an exploration of aspects of GNVQ', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 187-205.

Bates, I. Bloomer, M. Hodkinson, P. and Yeomans. D (1998) 'Progressivism and the GNVQ: context, ideology and practice', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol.11, No.2, pp. 109-127.

Belbin, E. Downs, S. and Perry, P. (1981) *How do I Learn: an experimental programme to introduce young people and their teachers to the many ways of learning*, Further Education Unit (FEU).

Bird, M. (1998) *The Implementation of Educational Policy: A case study of the Open College of South London*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics.

Bird, M, Esland, G, Greenberg, J, Sieminski, S, and Yarrow K. (1999) 'The implementation of GNVQ in further education: a case study', in Flude, M. and Sieminski, S. (eds.) *Education, Training and the Future of Work: Developments in Vocational Education and Training, Volume 11*, The Open Univeristy/Routledge, London and New York.

Bloom, B. (1956) *A Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives*, New York, Mackay.

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

Bloomer, M. (1998) 'They tell you what to do and then they let you get on with it': the illusion of progressivism in GNVQ', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol.11, No.2, pp. 167-187.

Bowe, R. Ball, S. and Gold A. (1992) *Reforming Education and Changing Schools,* London, Routledge.

Braverman (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York, Monthly Review Press.

Callaghan, Rt Hon J (1976) Ruskin College Speech, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 22 October.

Broadfoot, P. and Osborn, M. (1988) 'What professional responsibility means to teachers: national contexts and classroom constants', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 9, No.3, pp. 265-288.

BTEC (1985) *Guidelines*, London, BTEC

BTEC (1986) *Course and Unit Design*, London, BTEC.

Burke-Johnson, R. (1997) 'Examining the validity structure of qualitative research', *Education*, Vol. 118, No.2, pp. 282-292.

Cantor, L. and Robert, I. (1974) *Further Education in England and Wales*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Cantor, L. Roberts, I. and Pratley, B. (1995) *A Guide to Further Education in England and Wales*, London, Cassell.

Capey, J. (1995) *GNVQ Assessment Review*, London, NCVQ.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, London, Falmer Press.

Casey, K. (1995) *Work, Self and Identity*, London, Routledge.

CCETSW (1980) Paper *16:1: Regulations and Guidelines for Courses Leading to the Preliminary Certificate in Social Care*, London, CCETSW.

Chitty, C. and Simon, B. (eds) (1993) *Education Answers Back*, London, Lawrence and Wishart.

Coffield, F., Edward, S., Finlay, I., Hodgson, A., Spurs, K., and Steer, R. (2008) *Improving Learning, Skills and Inclusion: The Impact of Policy on Post-compulsory Education,* Oxon, Routledge.

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

Confederation of British Industry (1989) *Towards a Skills Revolution*, London, CBI.

Confederation of British Industry (1993) *Routes for Success. Careership: A Strategy for all 16-19 Year Old Learners*, London, CBI.

Cornbleth, C. (1990) *Curriculum in Context*, London, Falmer.

Crochbach (1982) 'Prudent aspirations for social inquiry', in W. Kruskal (eds.), *The Social Sciences: Their Nature and Lines*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Crosland, A. (1974) *Socialism Now and other Essays*, Cape.

Davies, J. and Ecclestone, K. (2008) 'Straight-jacket or springboard?: formative assessment in Advanced Vocational Science', *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol.19, No.2, pp. 71-86.

Dearing, Sir Ron (1996) *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year-Olds*, London, SCAA.

Department for Education/Employment Department/Welsh Office (1991) *Education and Training for the 21ˢᵗ Century*, London, HMSO.

Donmoyer, D. (2000) 'Generalizability and the single-case study', in Gomm, R. Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.) *Case Study Method: key texts, key issues*, London, Sage.

Eccelstone, K. (2002) *Learning Autonomy in Post-16 Education: The politics and practice of formative assessment*, London & New York, Routledge Falmer.

Edexecl (2000) *Compulsory and Optional Units: Advanced Subsidiary Vocational Certificate of Education in Business Studies; Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in Business Studies; Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (Double Awards) in Business Studies*, London, Edexcel Foundation.

Edexecl (2000) *Compulsory and Optional Units: Advanced Subsidiary Vocational Certificate of Education in Health and Social Care; Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in Health and Social Care; Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (Double Awards) in Health and Social Care,* London, Edexcel Foundation.

Esland, G. (1996) 'Knowledge and Nationhood: the New Right, Education and the GlobalMarket' in Avis, J. Bloomer, M. Esland, G. Gleeson, D. and Hodkinson, P. (eds) *Knowledge and Nationhood*, London and New York, Cassell.

Esland, G. Yarrow, K. Esland, K. and Murphy M. (1999) 'Managerializing organizational culture: refashioning the human resource in educational institutions', in Ahier, J. and Esland, G. (eds) *Education, Training and the Future of Work Vol. 1: Social, Political and*

Economic Contexts of Policy Development, The Open University and Routledge, London and New York.

Farrington, I. (1991) Student-Centred Learning: Rhetoric and Reality? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 15, No.3, pp.15-21.

Fullan, M. (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. London, Cassell/Teachers College Press.

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

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) (1994) *Measuring Achievement*, Circular 94/12, Coventry, FEFC.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-identity*, Cambridge, Polity.

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods*, London, FEU.

Gipps, C. Brown, M. MaCallum, B. and McAllister, S. (1995) *Intuition or Evidence? Teachers and National Assessment of Seven-Year-Old*s, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Gleeson, D. and Mardle, G. (1980) *Further Education or Training? A case study in the theory and practice of day-release education*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Boston and Henley.

Gleeson, D. (1989) *The Paradox of Training: Making progress out of crisis*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes and Philadelphia.

Gleeson, D. and Knight, D. (2006) 'Challenging Dualism: Public Professionalism in 'Troubled' times', in *Sociology*, Vol. 40, No.2, pp. 277-295

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, Doubleday.

Goodson, I. (1988) *The Making of Curriculum: Collected Essays.* Lewes, Falmer Press.

Habermas, J. (1972) *Knowledge and Human Interests,* London, Heinemann.

Hall, G. E. (1995) 'The local educational change process and policy implementation', In Carter, D. and O'Neill, M. (eds) *International Perspectives on Educational Reform and Policy Implementation*. London: Falmer Press; pp.101–121.

Hammersley, M. Gomm, R. and Foster, P. (2000) 'Case Study and Theory', in Gomm, R. Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.) *Case Study Method: key texts, key issues*, London, Sage.

Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing teachers, Changing times: Teachers' work and Culture in a Postmodern Age*, London, Cassell.

Hargreaves, D. (1994) 'The new professionalism: the synthesis of professional and institutional development', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol.10, Vol.4, pp. 423-38.

Helsby, G. Knight, P. and Saunders, M. (1998) 'Preparing students for the new work order: the case of Advanced General National Vocational Qualifications', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 24, No.1, pp. 63-78.

Higham, J. (2003a) 'Continuity and Discontinuity in the '14-19 Curriculum', *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training*, Working Paper 4.

Higham, J. (2003b) 'Curriculum Change: a Study of the Implementation of General National Vocational Qualifications', *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol 14, No.3, pp. 327-350.

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (eds) (1997) *Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications,*
Frameworks and Systems, London, Kogan Page.

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (1997) 'From the 1991 White Paper to the Dearing Report: A
Conceptual and Historical Framework for the 1990s', in Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (eds)
*Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Frameworks and System*s, London, Kogan
Page.

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (1999) *New Labour's Educational Agenda: Issues and*
Policies for Education and Training from 14+, London, Kogan Page.

Huberman, M. (1988) 'Teacher careers and school improvement'. *Journal of Curriculum*
Studies Vol. 20, No.2, pp. 119–32.

Hyland, T. (1994) *Competence, Education and NVQs: Dissenting Perspectives*, London
and New York, Cassell Education.

Hyland, T. (1996) 'Professionalism, Ethics and Work Based Learning', *British Journal of*
Education Studies, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 168-180.

Hyland, T (1996) 'Professionalism and competence', in Hodkinson, P. and Issitt, M. (eds)
The Challenge of Competence: professionalism through vocational education and training,
London, Cassell.

James, B. and Biesta, G. (2007) *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education:*
Understanding How Students Learn, Oxon, Routledge.

Jeffrey, B. (1999) 'Sidestepping the substantial self: the fragmentation of primary teacher's
self through audit accountability' in M. Hammersley (ed). *Researching School Experience:*
Ethnographic Studies of Teaching and Learning, London, Falmer.

Jeffrey, B. (2002) 'Performitivity and Primary Teacher Relations', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 17, No.5, pp. 531-546

Jephcote, M. and Salisbury, J. (2009) 'Further education teachers' account of their professional identities', *Teacher and Teacher Education*, Vol. 25, pp. 966-972.

Jessup, G. (1991) *Outcomes: NVQs and the Emerging Model of Education and Training*, London, Falmer Press.

Jessup, G. (1995) 'Characteristics of the GNVQ model', *British Journal of Curriculum and Assessment*, Vol. 20, No.3, pp. 8-11 and 16.

Kennedy, H. (1997) *Learning works: widening participation in Further Education*, Coventry, FEFC.

Knight, P. Helsby, G, and Saunders, M. (1998) 'Independence and prescription in learning: researching the paradox of Advanced GNVQ', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol, 46, No.1, pp. 54-67.

Labour Party (1996) *Aiming Higher: Labour's Plans for Reform of the 14-19 Curriculum*, London, Labour Party.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (2000) 'The only generalization is: there is no generalization', in Gomm, R. Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.) *Case Study Method: key texts, key issues*, London, Sage.

Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-level bureaucracy,* London, Sage.

Mannheim, K. (1952) Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 'The Problem of generations'.

Marshall, B. and Ball, S. (1999) 'Tales Fear and Loathing: Teachers' Work and Recent Policy Reform', in Hammersley, M. (Eds) *Researching School Experience: Ethnographic studies of teaching and learning*, Falmer Press, London and New York.

Mather, K., Worrall, L. and Seifert, R. (2007) 'Reforming further education: the changing labour process for college lecturers', *Personnel Review*, Vol.36, No.1, pp. 109-127.

Melrose, S. (2010) 'Naturalistic generalizations', in Mills, A., Durepos, G. and Wiebe, E. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research*, Californian, Sage.

NCE (1993) *Learning to Succeed: Report of the National Commission on Education*, London, Heinemann.

Nias, J. (1989) *Primary Teachers Talking: A Study of Teaching as Work*, London, Routledge.

Oates, T. (2008) 'Going round in circles: temporal discontinuity as a gross impediment to effective innovation in education and training', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol.38, No1, pp.105-120.

OFSTED (1994) *GNVQs in Schools 1993/4: Quality and Standards of General National Vocational Qualifications*, London, HMSO

OFSTED (1996) *Assessment of General National Vocational Qualifications*, London, HMSO

Oliver, P. (2004) *Writing Your Thesis*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Sage.

Pollard, A. Broadfoot, P. Croll, P. Osborn, M. and Abbott, D. (1994) *Changing English Primary Schools? The Impact of the Educational Reform Act at Key Stage 2*, London, Cassell.

Pollitt, C. (1990) *Managerialism and the Public Services: the Anglo-American experience*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

Power, M. (1997) *The Audit Society: the Rituals of Verification*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Pring, R. (1995) *Closing the Gap: Liberal education and vocational preparation*, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

Raggatt, P. (1994) 'Implementing NVQs in Colleges: progress, perceptions and issues', *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* Vol.18, No.1, pp. 59 – 74.

Randle, K. and Brady, N. (1997) 'Managerialsim and professionalism in the 'Cinderella service', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Vol. 49, No.1, pp. 121-139.

Ryan, P. (1992) (ed). *International Comparisons of Vocational Education and Training for Intermediate Skills*, London, Falmer Press.

Seddon, T. (1997) 'Education: deprofessionalised? Or reregulated, reorganized and reauthorised', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol.41, No.3, pp. 228-246.

Scott, D. (2000) *Realism and Educational Research: New Perspectives*, London, Routledge.

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*, Vol. 14, No.4, pp. 445-462.

Sharpe, P. (1998) The Beginnings of GNVQs: an analysis of key determining events and factors, Journal of Education and Work, Vol. 11, No.3, pp. 293-311.

Smithers, A. (1993) *All Our Futures: Britain's Education Revolution*, London, Channel Four.

Smithers, A. (1999) 'A critique of NVQs and GNVQs', in Flude, M. and Sieminski, S. (eds) *Education, Training and the Future of Work: Developments in Vocational Education and Training, Volume 11*, The Open Univeristy/Routledge, London and New York.

Smithers, A. (1997) *A critique of NVQs and GNVQs, Education 14-19: Critical Perspectives, London*, Athlone Press.

Spours, K. (1997) 'GNVQs and the Future of Broad Vocational Qualifications', in Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (eds) (1997) *Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems*, London, Kogan Page.

Stake, R. (2000) 'The case study method in social inquiry', in Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.) *Case Study Method: key texts, key issues*, London, Sage.

Stenhouse, L. (1967) *Culture and Education*, London, Nelson.

Strauss, A. Schatzman, L. Ehrilich, D. Butcher, R. and Sabshin, M. (1963) 'The hospital and its negotiated order' in Friedson, E. (eds), *The Hospital in Modern Society,* Macmillian.

Raggatt, P. (1994) 'Implementing NVQs in Colleges: progress, perceptions and issues', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol.18, No.1, pp. 59–74.

Raggatt, P. and Williams, S. (1999) *Governments, Markets and Vocational Qualifications: An Anatomy of Policy*, London, Falmer Press.

Reeves, F. (1995) *The Modernity of Further Education*, Wolverhampton, Bilston Community College Publications & Education Now.

Robson, J. (1998) 'A profession in crisis: status, culture and identity in the further education college', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Vol. 50, No.4, pp. 585 – 607.

Torrance, H., Colley, H., Garratt, D., Jarvis, J., Piper, H., Ecclestone, K., and James, D. (2005) *The Impact of Different Modes of Assessment on Achievement and Progress in the Learning Skills Sector*, London, Learning and Skills Research Centre.

Watson, J. and Wolf, A. (1991) 'Return to Sender', TES, 6 September.

Whiteside, T. et al. (eds) *16-19 Changes in Education and Training*, London, David Fulton.

Williams, R. (1962) *The Long Revolution*, Hamondsworth, Penguin.

Wolf, A. (1997) *GNVQs 1993-1997: A National Survey Report*, London, FEDA.

Woods, P. (1993) *Critical Events in Teaching and Learning*, London, Falmer Press.

Woods, P. (1995) *Creative Teaching in Primary Schools, Buckingham*, The Open University Press.

Woods, P. Jeffrey, B. Troman, G. and Boyle, B. (1997) *Restructuring School and Reconstructing Teachers: Responding to Change in the Primary School*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Woods, P. and Jeffrey, B. (2002) 'The reconstruction of primary teachers' identities', *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 89-106.

Yeomans, D. (1997) *A longitudinal study of the development, implementation and impact of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative with particular reference to selected*

secondary schools and curriculum subjects (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds).

Yeomans, D. (1998) 'Constructing Vocational Education: From TVEI to GNVQ', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 2, No 2, pp. 127-148.

Young, K. and Mills, L. (1980) *Public Policy Research: a review of qualitative methods*, London, Social Science Research Council.

Young, M. (2003) 'National Qualifications Frameworks as a Global Phenomenon: a Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 16, No.3, pp. 223-237.