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**MARK STUART MULLINEAUX**

**T8407862**

**CURRICULA CHANGE IN RESPONSE  
TO THE CHANGING GOVERNANCE IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)**

**2007**

marked no. T8407862

# ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to provide a causal explanation of a new curriculum model (NCM) within a university college with a view to examining the changing nature of governance in higher education. Critical realist explanatory frameworks guide the structure of the thesis. Accordingly, the thesis first explores the 'efficient causes' behind the NCM, arguing that it evolved from within a broader political, economic, managerial and institutional relational network. This was to give rise to a series of significant structures and mechanisms leading to reforms in Higher Education including widening participation, decreased per capita funding, the centrality of economy and efficiency and a 'lifelong learning' agenda. This thesis also argues, using the theory of integrated institutionalism (Scott, 1995) that the legitimisation of these new demands would be felt through one or more of coercive (through rules and sanctions), normative (through 'appropriateness') or mimetic (through reference to other organisations) means. Testing of the theorised demands and the nature of legitimisation was undertaken through semi-structured 'realist interviews' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) with nine members of academic staff from the college. Analysis utilising *NVivo7* suggests perceived demands of 'changing mission', 'college demands', 'enforcement and monitoring', 'nature of the world' and 'student population'. There exists a high degree of confirmatory evidence for the theorised demands, most especially in terms of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, widening participation and the commodification of HE. The testing of the legitimisation mechanisms suggests a high degree of coercion within governance of HE.

# ORIGINALITY STATEMENT

No part of the material offered herein has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification of this or any other university or institution. All aspects of the work belong to the candidate.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to say thank you, firstly, to my work colleagues and various friends who have had to deal with muses on my doctorate; secondly, my parents to whom I owe so much; thirdly, to Professor Roger Dale: your knowledge, guidance and assistance has been an inspiration throughout. Lastly, to Lou who, above all, has witnessed and lived through the ups, downs, highs and lows since the process began.

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter/Sub-section</b>	<b>Pages</b>
• Abstract	i
• Originality Statement	ii
• Acknowledgements	iii
• Contents	iv-vi
• List of Diagrams	vii
• List of Tables	viii-ix
• List of Abbreviations	x
• List of Appendices	xi
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	<b>1-27</b>
• General Introduction	1-4
• Openness and Researcher Autobiography	4-7
• Linking the Issue and the Object	8
• The Wider HE Context	9-13
• From Meta-Theory to Research Questions	13-18
• Theory Development: 'Efficient causes', Structures and Mechanisms	18-20
• Theory Development: 'Expressions of power'	21-25
• From Issue to Methods and Thesis Structure	25-27
<b>Chapter 2 Theorising 'Efficient Causes'</b>	<b>28-56</b>
• Purpose and Structure of the Chapter	28-28
• Political and Economic Agendas	29-30
• The Changing Political and Economic Landscape	30-31
• The Keynesian Welfare State and Crisis	31-33
• Globalisation and the KWS	33-38
• Paradigm Shift – From Fordism to Post-Fordism?	38-39
• Paradigmatic Shift and Changing Governance	39-40
• Nationstate Political Agendas	40-42
• Statecraft and Intensification	42-43
• The nature of Student Learning	43-46
• Managerial and Institutional Agendas	46-47
• Definitions of Managerialism	47-47
• Historical Setting and Discourse	48-51
• The Impact of Managerialism	51-56
• Concluding Remarks	56
<b>Chapter 3 Structures, Mechanisms and Chronology of Change</b>	<b>57-86</b>
• Purpose and Structure of the Chapter	57-57
• The Changing Governance of Higher Education: Central Themes	57-60
• The Three Es	61-61
• Massification/Serving the Needs of the Economy	62-63
• Increased Competition	63-63

• Commodification: Public to Positional Good	63-64
• Embedding the Three Es, Massification, Competition and Lifelong Learning	64-70
• Globalisation and Competition	70-71
• The NCM: A Model of New Demands	71-72
• New Demands: Impact and Response	72-77
• NCM: From Articulation to Implementation	77-80
• The NCM and Consultation	80-84
• Implementation	85-86
<b>Chapter 4 Methodology</b>	<b>87-109</b>
• Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter	87-88
• Causal Explanation	88-91
• Research Paradigms and the Innate Nature of the Inquiry	91-95
• Ontology and Critical Realism	95-97
• The Critical Realist View of Causation	97-100
• The Explanatory Potential of Critical Realism	100-105
• From Methodology to Methods	105-109
<b>Chapter 5 Research Methods</b>	<b>110-150</b>
• Introduction, Purpose and Structure of Chapter	110-110
• Research Design: Re-Visiting the Research Questions	110-115
• Research Methods: Issues of Warrant	115-117
• Consideration of Methods	117-118
• Data Collection: the Challenges	118-119
• Data Collection: Meeting the Challenges	119-123
• Data Collection: The Interviews	123-125
• Data Collection: The Respondents	125-129
• Data Collection: Matters of Access	129-132
• Data Collection: The Interview Process	132-135
• Data Analysis: Transcription	135-136
• Data Analysis: Consideration of Data Handling	136-139
• Data Analysis: The Essentials of Coding in NVivo7	139-140
• Data Analysis: Coding the Interviews (NVivo7 Perceptions)	140-143
• Data Analysis: Coding the Interviews (NVivo7 Demands and NVivo7 Institutionalism)	143-147
• Issues of Validity	147-149
• Ethical Issues	149-150
<b>Chapter 6 Findings</b>	<b>151-187</b>
• Introduction, Purpose and Structure of Chapter	151-151
• NVivo7 Perceptions	151-153
• Enforcement and Monitoring	153-154
• Student Population	154-156
• Changing Mission	156-157
• Further Perceived Demands and Undertones of	157-158

Institutionalism	
• <i>NVivo7 Demands</i>	159-161
• The Centrality of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness	161-163
• Widening Participation	163-164
• HE: A Commodity to be Paid For	165-166
• Serving the Needs of the Economy and Lifelong Learning	166-168
• Decreased Per Capita Funding	168-168
• Research Funding Centred on the Russell Group	168-170
• More Competitive Domestic and International Environment	170-170
• HE: Positional Rather than Public Good	170-171
• General Refinements	171-172
• Different Impacts	172-173
• Increasing Sophistication	173-174
• Tension Between Demands	175-176
• Final Refinements	176-176
• <i>NVivo7 Institutionalism</i>	176-177
• Coercive Legitimation of the NCM: External and Internal Pressures	177-178
• Coercive Legitimation: Constrained Behaviour and Rule-Setting	178-180
• Coercive Legitimation: Enforcement Through Sanctions and Monitoring	180-181
• Normative Legitimation	182-183
• Mimetic Legitimation	183-183
• A Causal Explanation of the NCM	183-184
• Structures	184-184
• Mechanisms	184-185
• Sub-Legislative and Legislative Mechanisms	185-187
• Miscellaneous Mechanisms	187-187
• Funding Mechanisms	187-187
• Legitimation Mechanisms	187
<b>Chapter 7 Final Remarks</b>	<b>188-193</b>
• Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter	188-188
• The Research Questions and Contribution to Knowledge	188-193
<b>References</b>	<b>194-206</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>207-233</b>

# LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Chapter/no./page	Diagram
1.1 Page 12	<i>Relationship between government, funding Bodies, representative bodies, Agencies and HE institutions (HEFCE, 2005)</i>
1.2 Page 16	<i>The relationship between structures, mechanisms and events (adapted from Sayer, 1992: p.117)</i>
1.3 Page 19	<i>A policy framework for the NCM</i>
2.1 Page 34	<i>Model of interaction between supranational agendas (from Lub, 2002)</i>
3.1 Page 72	<i>A model of new demands</i>
4.1 Page 94	<i>The positivist or successionist view of causation (from Sayer, 2000: p.14)</i>
4.2 Page 99	<i>Critical Realist view of causation (from Sayer, 2000: p. 15)</i>
5.1 Page 116	<i>Toulmin's (1958) Analysis</i>
5.2 Page 123	<i>The realist interview (adapted from Pawson and Tilley, 1997: p.165)</i>
5.3 Page139	<i>Coding in NVivo<sub>7</sub> (adapted from NVivo<sub>7</sub> 'Help)</i>
5.4 Page 142	<i>The process of coding NVivo<sub>7</sub> Perceptions</i>
5.5 Page 144	<i>The process of coding NVivo<sub>7</sub> Demands</i>
6.1 Page 151	<i>Perceived new demands from NVivo<sub>7</sub> Perceptions</i>
6.2 Page 159	<i>Theorised new demands faced by the college</i>

# LIST OF TABLES

Chapter/no./Page	Table
1.1 Page15	<i>The Issue and object mapped to ontology</i>
1.2 Page17	<i>Research aim, question and objectives</i>
1.3 Page 20	<i>Theorising the 'efficient causes' behind the structures using Esland's (1998) relational network.</i>
1.4 Page 23	<i>Varying Emphases: Three Pillars of Institutions</i>
1.5 Page 25	<i>The weave of relational networking, institutionalism within critical realist meta-theory</i>
3.1 Page 75	<i>Proposed funding from the TQEF (HEFCE, 1998: 98/40 para 44)</i>
3.2 Page 81	<i>Indicative learning and teaching strategy consultation document</i>
3.3 Page 82	<i>Response to consultation</i>
3.4 Page 85	<i>Percentage of level 1 modules transferred to the NCM by September 2002</i>
3.5 Page 85	<i>Revised timetable for implementation of the NCM</i>
4.1 Page 101	<i>Theorised causal sequence in critical realism</i>
4.2 Page 106	<i>Intensive and extensive empirical procedures (adapted from Sayer, 1992: p.243)</i>
4.3 Page 107-108	<i>Stages in Explanatory Research (Danermark et al., 2002: p.109-110)</i>
5.1 Page 111	<i>Research Questions and Objectives</i>
5.2 Page 129	<i>Interview sample showing position and attributes</i>

## LIST OF TABLES CONTD.

5.3 Page 142	<i>From free to tree nodes in NVivo<sub>7</sub> Perceptions</i>
5.4 Page 145	<i>From Tree to Free nodes in Nvivo<sub>7</sub> Demands</i>
5.5 Page 147	<i>Tree to Free Nodes in NVivo<sub>7</sub> Institutionalism</i>
6.1 Page 152-153	<i>The rank ordering of perceived demands by reference totals</i>
6.2 Page 160-161	<i>Rank ordered tree nodes for NVivo<sub>7</sub> Demands by degree of confirmatory responses</i>
6.3 Page 172	<i>General refinements: sources and references</i>
6.4 Page 177	<i>Source and reference order for the three forms of legitimacy</i>
6.5 Page 177	<i>Sources of external pressure</i>
6.6 Page 184	<i>Causal explanation of the NCM: structures by level</i>
6.7 Page 186	<i>Sub-legislative and legislative mechanisms 1980s</i>
6.8 Page 186	<i>Sub-legislative and legislative mechanisms 1990s</i>
6.9 Page 187	<i>Miscellaneous mechanisms</i>
6.10 Page 187	<i>Funding mechanisms</i>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPS	British Psychological Society
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
C-M-O	Context Mechanism Outcome configurations
HEA	Higher Education Academy
SLs	Senior Lecturers
PLs	Principal Lecturers
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FTEs	Full Time Equivalents
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council For England
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQED	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Division
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Institute of Learning and Teaching
KWS	Keynesian Welfare State
LEA	Local Education Authority
LTSN	Learning and Teaching Support Network
NCM	New Curriculum Model
OECC	Organisation For Economic Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SOL	Supported Open Learning
SRFs	Student Report Forms
SWS	Schumpeterian Workfare State
TDAP	Taught Degree Awarding Powers
Three Es	Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness
TQEF	Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund
UK	United Kingdom



# LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Contents
A Page 208-209	Interview Schedule (Pilot 1)
B Page 210-214	EdD interview pilot 2
C Page 215-218	EdD interview
D Page 219	EdD interview informed consent form
E Page 220-230	Interview transcription interviewee 09
F Page 231-232	<i>NVivo7 Perceptions</i> directory Initial Free Node Coding and Actions
G Page 233	<i>NVivo7 Perceptions</i> Directory Free Node codes after revision (in descending order of dominant references within the interview scripts)

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### General Introduction

(The) College has articulated a vision for the modernisation of the curriculum... Changes to curriculum and timetabling, and in methods of learning and teaching, will ensure enhanced responsiveness to new demands. (Institutional Literature, 2001a, p.2)

In 2001 the college that forms the focus of this inquiry made fundamental changes to one of the cornerstones of its provision; its curriculum saw seismic change in terms of both contact hours and modes of learning via a 'new curriculum model' (NCM). The quote is tantalising in the sense that 'something', a set of 'new demands', has elicited a response in the form of a completely new curriculum. Note that this is a 'new curriculum'; it does not represent merely a revised or updated curriculum. Explicitly it is 'new' and represents a response to 'new demands'. One could legitimately ask what relationships, what configurations of power, what hierarchies formed and shaped these new demands. To ask questions of this nature is to query the changing governance in higher education (HE).

The very title of the thesis is suggestive of such a change in governance, a term referring to:

...internal relationships, external relationships, and the intersection between them. Institutions such as universities are doubly structured, by internal configurations of power, and by their intersection with outside interests. Governance occupies the pivotal position between the inner

world (or worlds) of the university, and its larger environment. (Marginson and Considine, 2000: p.7)

Governance, however, represents significantly more than intersections between relationships; aspects of authority and hierarchy are similarly critical (Marginson and Considine, 2000: p.7):

Governance is concerned with the determination of value inside universities, their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of universities as institutions to the different academic worlds within and the worlds of government, business and community without.

Unpicking some of these patterns of authority and hierarchy is a task of some magnitude, but it represents an interesting challenge. Whilst this, however, is the fundamental issue at the core of the thesis, I should like to attend to more general introductory issues prior to returning to it.

The aim of the thesis is to provide a causal explanation of the NCM combined with an assessment of the nature of legitimation behind its inception. The former is undertaken within and through a critical realist explanatory framework based on 'efficient causes', structures and mechanisms (Sayer, 1992, 2000). Parallel to this runs integrated institutionalism (Scott, 1995), the role of which is to provide a theory from which to assess the nature of legitimation. The introduction provides a broad context for HE in the United Kingdom (UK) as well as further examination of the framework itself.

This introduction, therefore, aims to provide both a hors d'oeuvre and an overview of the thesis. Perhaps more importantly, however, it aims to provide a panoramic view of the thesis, a 'view from the top', the aim being to demonstrate where and how the research came into being and how, in a broad sense, I went about conducting and formulating the work. Initially, however, the introduction takes a more introspective view, looking inwards rather than outwards. The NCM was not a subject chosen because of a passing researcher interest, nor was it chosen because it represented merely a suitable object through which to research the issue of governance. Rather, the research topic may be seen in a rather more personal light since it encompasses and represents the underpinning reasons for my leaving higher education and the college that is the subject of this thesis in 2003.

There was, and is, a personal insider involvement here requiring that I am open in regard to both my interpretations and my intentions. Much has been written in methodological literature regarding openness and trust, particularly with reference to research steeped in 'qualitative' methodology (Constas, 1992; Chenail, 1995). It is for this reason that the introduction moves from this general stage to, initially, a largely autobiographical, introspective view of the researcher.

There then follows an explanation as to why the issue of governance in HE has been explored through the medium of the NCM. To achieve this I suggest the NCM to be an instantiation of the changes in higher education governance. Subsequently, the introduction moves to an exploration of the wider HE context, the purpose of which is to begin the process of providing the reader with the form of thick, rich description advocated by Cresswell et al., (2000).

The focus then begins to tighten on the research questions. These are guided at every step by the meta-theoretical

underpinnings of the thesis. Indeed, the thesis may be seen to be tightly woven around the meta-theory, its weave encompassing the format, the methods and the research questions. Without some form of examination of the meta-theory at this juncture it would not be possible to make sense of what follows. The final element of the introduction provides a detailed breakdown of the thesis structure.

## **Openness and Researcher Autobiography**

Researchers face a plethora of difficulties as they progress through projects. In the first instance, they make choices and decisions at every juncture, choices which they tend to be relatively poor at reporting and sharing. This may result in what Constat (1992) terms method-reporting deficit. To address this, Constat advocated a spirit of openness, asking researchers to focus their descriptive and narrative skills on themselves. For this reason, I begin this section with an autobiographical account of my time in education.

Drawing on what Reinharz (1992) terms the epistemology of insiderness may at one and the same time be both the greatest strength and the site of most significant weakness within any thesis. Insiderness may, as Webb (2000) argues, lead to blindness as to how knowledge is used. No acknowledgement or reflection on the researcher's own experiences would leave a significant gap in the thesis, a void to be filled by a sense of distrust in anything a researcher may report (Webb, 2000). Aside from the issue of trust, to make sense of the thesis, the reader would benefit from having some understanding of what drives this desire to explore the nature of governance in HE.

As one significant element of research in this thesis, I should like to provide the reader with a brief resumé of my work in education. This provides, I believe, an important and influential backdrop to the thesis since, in addition to a desire for openness, it is crucial for any researcher to acknowledge their curriculum

vitae and the role this may play in the research they are conducting.

I have taught at virtually every level of education. Four years of teacher training saw me in primary schools (hopelessly grappling with the demands of both reception and infant classrooms), as well as secondary schools (ranging from an inner city comprehensive to a private school). My career after university took me to a grammar school, one rather unsuccessful term as head of department in a Japanese boarding school, four years in further education, three years in a British University and, finally, three semesters in the university college that forms the focus of this thesis. I left lecturing in 2003, although I still teach for a private training provider. I don't think it is too strong a statement for me to say that I had become increasingly disillusioned with education in general and higher education in particular. Despite this disillusionment, leaving higher education was probably the most difficult career move I've ever made, rendered harder by the fact that I'd completed my second degree with the sole intention of teaching in the sector. This was what I had wanted to do; this was what I had aimed for.

During these years in the British education system I have both witnessed and experienced numerous changes at first hand. Arguably the most seismic of these lay in the establishment of the National Curriculum in schools via the 1988 Education Reform Act. My time in Further Education (FE) ran alongside one of the most divisive issues to have affected that sector: the change from 'silver book' contracts to contracts drawn up by the newly formed 'corporation'. I entered higher education only one year after publication of the influential Dearing Report (1997) with its enormous impact on participation rates in HE.

In the spirit of openness I should like to reflect on my time in education in a truly frank and open manner. It is my belief that what has and is happening to education in England is at best

misguided and at worst disastrous. My experience leaves me with the following feelings and impressions; please note, whether these be 'right' or 'wrong', they are significant since they represent the normally hidden aspects of a researcher's thinking.

- Targets should be reserved for the production and development of commodities rather than people.
- There has been a sea-change in the nature of managers in education, from discursive to despotic, with limited scope for questioning and debate, even (perhaps especially) for significant decisions.
- The emphasis on standards in education is laudable; the emphasis on *demonstrating* that these standards have been achieved irrespective of the 'reality' (a term I use extremely advisedly) is much less so. I doubt very much whether a goodly proportion of the FE and HE work that I viewed was reflective of higher standards.
- Linking funding to results is disastrous. Friends and former colleagues laugh at my continual desire to 'run away' from any educational environment in which this formula is in place. FE and HE are focused not on education, but on meeting targets, achieving full time equivalent numbers (FTEs) and, most importantly, passing students (almost irrespective of standard of work). The latter is at least partially due to the link between funding and achievement. I witnessed student reports forms (SRFs) being signed off at the end of year in FE without students ever having submitted the necessary course work. In HE I have experienced exam boards where pitifully poor work is passed and, should it not be, questions are asked not of the students, but of the lecturers. It is now common practice for universities to request explanations of staff should there be a greater than 10% failure rate on their modules.
- The compatibility of maintaining standards whilst simultaneously widening participation and reducing per capita funding is problematic in the extreme. If the truth be told, I did

run from this incompatibility problem in FE to the slightly more insulated world of HE. Unfortunately, HE became more like FE almost as soon as I jumped from one to the other. I was finally to leave HE in 2003; even now, as I teach for a private training provider, I am hampered and hounded in my teaching by so-called 'quality assurance' units from the FE colleges that fund the courses: their first demand is that we have a 75% pass rate. The problem is, I now have nowhere to run!

My final post in education was at the institution which developed the NCM, a position I left in 2003.

The openness espoused by Conostas (1992), Reinhartz (1992) and Webb (2000) is both laudable and has been, in the context of this thesis, extraordinarily beneficial in terms of enabling focus of the research. It was only by being open and revealing my thoughts on education that I was truly able to inwardly appreciate what I was doing and why I was doing it, perhaps the first step in enabling explanation of this externally. Having revealed to the reader my thoughts on education, I am an open book. However, this form of openness also makes the researcher wary as to how they mediate bias out of their work. I should like to attend to this issue in the methods section of the thesis.

It is now relevant to consider why this work is worthy and important. This thesis is about governance in education; governance is the *central* issue. Asking, however, about the nature of governance in HE is problematic if one has no link between this abstract notion and events in the empirical, measurable world. Deep, complex, causal questions lie at the centre of any meaningful investigation into governance. To investigate, explore and unravel questions about governance requires a suitable instance through which facets of governance revealed themselves.



## **Linking the Issue and the Object**

The issue of governance may be seen to be instantiated by the NCM, linking the intangible issue of governance to an object in the empirical, measurable world. Put another way, by examining and exploring an event in the empirical world (the NCM) it may be possible to unravel the nature of the governance behind it. Governance is intangible; it cannot be seen and it has no spatial dimension. In many respects it is a nebulous, undefined variable. The NCM, in contrast, serves as an instantiating object of governance; it is something which people have experienced, and it may be studied with a view to understanding the nature of governance.

The NCM represented a striking opportunity to explore the nature of governance in HE on a variety of levels. In the first instance, it was established in the relatively recent past, meaning access to people who experienced its development at first hand was possible; secondly, its legacy continues and shall continue for some time to come; thirdly, it is an object of some significant magnitude; it would be problematic in the extreme to argue that curricula change within an educational institution is of limited importance when placed within the objectives of a piece of research such as this.

I should say that this work is also about understanding. I would like to understand and explain from where the drivers of the new forms of governance were and are derived. Further to this, I have an inkling that there are many others who would like to have a fuller understanding of the inner workings of HE governance. In order to further this it is necessary to provide a degree of context within which to place both the issue and the object. For this reason, I now focus on the wider HE context.

## **The Wider HE Context**

Whilst a detailed review of legislative processes shall be given in subsequent chapters, it is important to provide a wide-angled tableau of HE in the United Kingdom (UK). This tableau serves to create verisimilitude, transporting the reader into the setting and situation within which to place the issue and the object (Cresswell et al., 2000). With this objective, I shall review the classifications of HE, their legal status in terms of governance, the nature and sources of funding and provide an introduction to some of the significant structural changes of the last twenty years. This context provides a backdrop to, and an indication of, the form and shape of governance of HE in the UK.

There are some 116 universities and 53 HE colleges in the UK (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], 2005). For their part, universities tend to be divided rather broadly into the 'older' universities and the 'new' universities. The former classification includes the ancient universities of Oxford, Cambridge, St.Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen as well as the 'civic' universities founded in the 1950s and 60s. All were established as universities via Royal Charter, statute or Act of Parliament. The 'new' universities were given the title university through the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. Buckingham stands as the only privately funded university in the UK.

The 53 HE colleges represent provision equally as diverse as our universities. Some have been awarded their own taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) whilst others have their degrees awarded by universities. In the UK, colleges with more than 4000 students and TDAP are eligible to apply for the title 'university' whilst less sizable institutions with TDAP can apply for 'university college' status (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], 2005). At the time of the development of the NCM, the college at the centre of this thesis had its degrees awarded by a civic university; in common with many other

colleges; however, it has since been granted both degree awarding powers and university college status.

In terms of governance, HEFCE (2005: p.4) describes universities in the UK as both legally independent and self-governing:

Higher Education institutions are legally independent. Their governing bodies are responsible for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. They are ultimately responsible for all the affairs of the university or college.

As an interesting aside, it is notable that HEFCE does not make clear to whom the institutions are responsible. Given that they are legally independent, this is an interesting conundrum.

In a broad context, all of these institutions have experienced seismic change on a variety of levels since the 1980s. A widening participation agenda has arguably been the most significant of these, the numbers in HE rising from just over 0.8 million in 1987 to 1.72 million in 1995-6 (Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA], 1995) and to over 2.19 million at the time of the development of the NCM (HESA, 2001a).

The funding of UK universities amounted to some £13.4 billion in 2000/2001 (HESA, 2001b). Funds are derived from four primary sources: the UK funding councils (one for each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) (39.7% of total income), tuition fees and education grants/contracts (22.6%), research grants and contracts (16.4%) and endowment and investment income (2.2%) (all figures from HESA, 2001c). The remainder is derived from 'other', unspecified sources. Interestingly, whilst the UK funding councils provide the greatest percentage of the

funds, this percentage saw a steady decline from 40.7% in 1998/99 to 40.3% in 1999/00 and 39.6% in 2000/01 (HESA Finance Tables 1998-2001).

Whilst universities and colleges are legally independent and self-governing, the UK funding councils, being the major contributor of funds, hold a unique position when it comes to impacting on this independence. The funding councils, in addition to allocating funds depending on number of students and type of courses taught, are responsible to parliament for:

- Promoting high quality teaching and research
- Widening access and increasing participation
- Encouraging the development of interaction with business and the wider community
- Advising government on the needs of HE
- Informing students about the quality of HE available
- Ensuring the proper use of public funds.

(HEFCE, 2005)

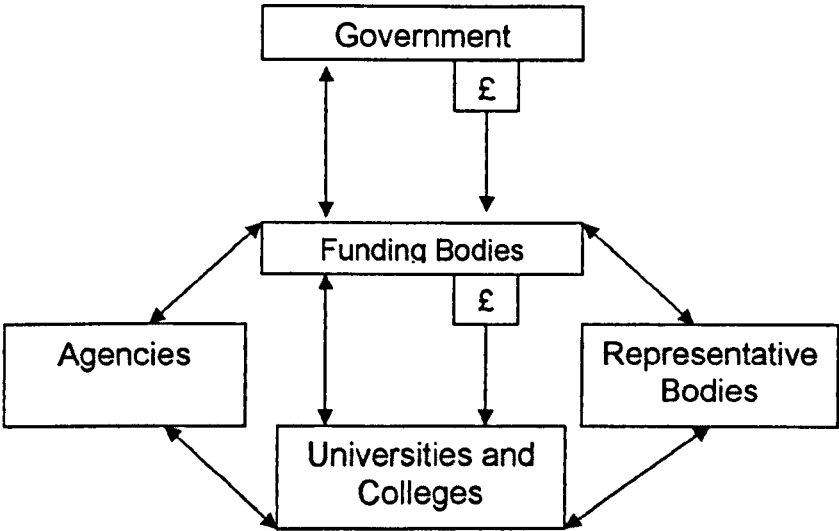
The total amount of funds available to the funding councils is decided by government, but it is the responsibility of the funding bodies to allocate monies to each institution.

In terms of funding, the second tier of finance is derived from tuition fees. The context of funding is rather different from that of earlier decades in that maintenance grants were phased out in 1998. Student loans have replaced this particular system; students paid £1025 per annum in tuition fees at the time of the initiation of the NCM, a fee that has since been raised to a variable fee of up to £3000 (HEFCE, 2005)

With reference to research, this area of funding is dominated by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The first of these was carried out in 1986, with subsequent exercises in 1989,

1992, 1996 and 2001. The ratings are of significance since they are used by the funding councils to allocate monies for research. There is a wide discrepancy between institutions when it comes to both RAE performance and monies received. The 'research-intensive' University of Cambridge had 96% of its staff entered for RAE 2001, with 73% receiving the highest possible research rating (5\*); the 'teaching intensive' college which forms the focus of this thesis had less than 20% of staff classed as research active, none of whom rated above 3a (Higher Education and Research Opportunities, 2001). Approximately one third of the public money for research goes to six universities (HEFCE, 2005).

The funding bodies work at 'arm's length' from central government, liaising with both representative bodies of the HE sector (Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales, Standing Conference of Principals), other agencies (Quality Assurance Agency [QAA], HESA) and the institutions themselves (HEFCE, 2005).



*Diagram 1.1 Relationship between Government, funding bodies, representative bodies, agencies and HE institutions (HEFCE, 2005)*

Quality assurance in UK HE institutions is comprised of four primary components. Internal quality assurance processes

(inclusive of programme reviews, external examiner systems and validation mechanisms) are undertaken by the institutions themselves. Professional accreditation (for example from the British Psychological Society or Chartered Society of Physiotherapists) represents a second tier as these bodies represent the academic and professional interests of their members. Research assessment, as noted previously, forms the third tier and is conducted by the funding bodies. The QAA, the final tier, conducts institutional-level reviews. It is also responsible for 'academic infrastructure', inclusive of a national qualifications framework and subject benchmark statements often relating to what should be expected of graduates in terms of skills, knowledge and conceptual understanding (HEFCE, 2005).

What becomes clear when considering the wider context of HE is that the tableau on which to paint the issue of governance and the object of the NCM is both complex and evolving. The dramatic increase in student numbers, the changes to student finance, the research assessment exercise and the various agencies all have a significant impact on the legal independence of universities and nature of HE governance.

Exploring the issue of governance through the instantiation provided via the NCM is a complex, demanding task requiring a tight focus of both the research aim and the research questions. In the case of this thesis, the aim (an explanation of the NCM) was clear from the origins of the study, but the research questions were to evolve from the immersion of the work in meta-theory.

## **From Meta-Theory to Research Questions**

The college stated that the NCM was a response to 'new demands', demands tantalising in the sense that they were there yet were both intangible and unidentified. To identify these new demands involves asking questions pertaining to what made it

happen or what produced, generated or determined the NCM (Sayer, 1992: p.103), questions which are quintessentially causal in nature.

There exist within social science claimants to this capacity to explain. Perhaps the most explicit of these claims lies in the work of Danermark et al. (2002), a claim rendering their work of particular interest. In *Explaining Society*, claims are made as to the capacity of social scientists to explain events, a capacity best enhanced, they suggest, by immersion in the meta-theory of critical realism. Whilst a detailed appraisal of critical realism and other potential explanatory systems shall be the primary focus of the methodology chapter, in order to make sense of the thesis as a whole, some explanation of its basis and explanatory potential is required at this stage.

This emergent theoretical tradition finds its basis not in epistemology (how we may investigate the nature of reality), but in ontology (the nature of reality itself). Critical realist ontology suggests that there are three levels of reality (Bhaskar, 1978): the real (the realm of mechanisms that make things happen in the world), the actual (what occurs if those mechanisms are engaged) and the empirical (that which we can experience directly or indirectly). The real may be seen to be physical (like minerals) or social (like bureaucracies). The actual is that which occurs when the mechanisms in the real domain are engaged. (see Danermark et al., [2002]; Sayer [2000]). The NCM, represents an event in the empirical domain, experienced as it was directly.

In asking what caused the NCM, one must ask questions in, *but not of*, the empirical domain. That is, the intent is not to assess or in some way evaluate the NCM, interesting though these questions may be. Rather, the intent is explain it. Put another way, and to relate back to the analogy employed earlier, whilst the NCM forms the object of the inquiry, it is the instantiation

itself that gives rise to the questions of greater import. Questions may centre on the nature of the governance that produced the event in the empirical domain, requiring the unravelling of the real and the actual domains of reality:

Ontology	Real-----Actual-----Empirical		
Meaning	Mechanisms	What happens if those mechanisms are engaged	That which we can experience directly or indirectly
The Issue	Instantiated by		The Object
Governance	Linking the issue and the object		NCM

*Table 1.1 The Issue and object mapped to ontology*

Investigating the nature of governance (the real and the actual) requires study of the experiences of people in the empirical domain (the NCM).

For critical realists, cause is intimately related to *natural necessity*, the components of which are structures, generative mechanisms and tendencies (Danermark et al., 2002). The generation of any given event stems from an interaction of structures, powers and mechanisms (Collier, 1994: p.43):

Things have the powers they do because of their structures...Structures cause powers to be exercised, given some input, some "efficient cause"...

This in turn is an example of a mechanism having generated an event, a mechanism being that which can cause something in the world to happen (Danermark et al., 2002). The relationship between structures, mechanisms and events has been portrayed diagrammatically (Sayer, 1992: p.117):



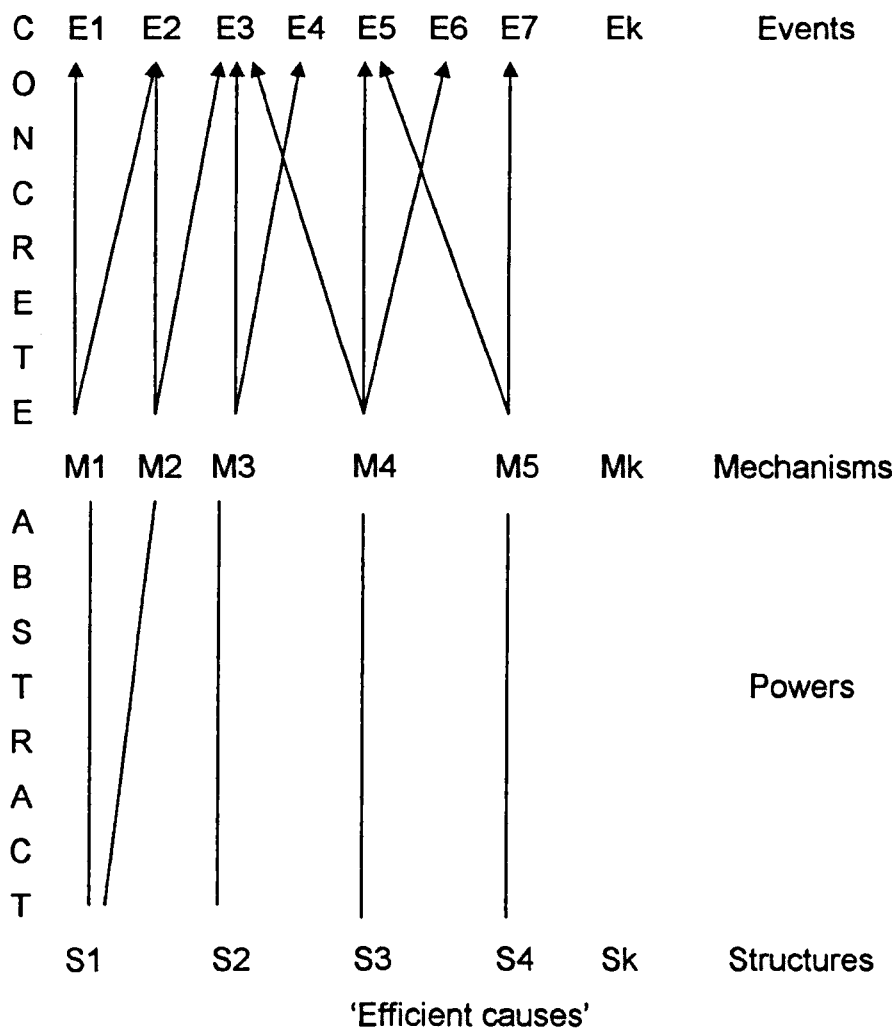


Diagram 1.2 The relationship between structures, mechanisms and events (adapted from Sayer, 1992: p.117)

In seeking, then, a causal explanation of the NCM, a series of stages may be seen to be required. In the first instance, some attempt to unpick the nature of the deep, underlying 'efficient causes' (Collier, 1994) is necessary. The second stage may be seen to be an identification of the structures and mechanisms resulting from these efficient causes. An attempt to understand how these structures exercise power is similarly important. These processes lie in the real and actual domains. The final stage lies in the empirical domain, studying people in their causal contexts to allow them to review the establishment of the NCM as they experienced it. Employing critical realist meta-theory impacted directly on the nature of the research objectives as the following table portrays:

Research Issue	Nature of governance in HE
Research questions	What caused the NCM? How are powers exercised by structures?
Research objective 1 <b>Theorise as to the new demands</b> This leads to questions guided by critical realist meta-theory:	i. What comprised the 'efficient causes' underpinning the structures? ii. What comprised the structures and how were their powers expressed? iii. What were the mechanisms behind the NCM?
Research objective 2 <b>Generate theory</b>	From the analysis of efficient causes, structures and mechanisms generate a testable theory of new demands Generate a testable theory of how powers were exercised
Research objective 3 <b>Testing theory</b>	Test the theory of new demands through research of those that experienced the NCM directly.
Research objective 4 <b>Reflection on critical realism's explanatory potential</b>	Reflect on the experience of employing critical realism, including issues associated with transposing critical realism into research

*Table 1.2 Research aim, question and objectives*

In addition to a stipulation that ontology is central and that only by investigating the real and actual domains can events in the empirical domain be explained, critical realism advocates the generation and testing of theory. Whilst avoiding dogmatic stances in terms of theoretical frameworks and method, critical realist work encompasses the *generation and testing of theory*; this theory may take the form of conceptual abstraction in the shape of abduction (recontextualizing or redescribing the object). This requirement makes demands of the method, demands reflected upon in research objective 3.

The generation of theory would be required to meet the research objectives of identifying the 'efficient causes' as well as the structures and mechanisms resulting from those causes. A further theory would be required to test how the powers were expressed. I should like to turn my attention to the efforts made to devise these theories and to recontextualise the object within them.

### **Theory development: 'Efficient causes', structures and mechanisms**

The explanatory potential of critical realism relies on the capacity to identify efficient causes as well as the structures and mechanisms resulting from these (Sayer, 1992). Danermark et al. (2002) suggest recontextualising the object of study within a new frame of reference: a process known as abduction. The issue at the heart of the thesis, governance, occupies both the inner world of the university and its larger environment (Marginson and Considine, 2000). An initial task, then, was to establish a theoretical framework within which the NCM could be recontextualised as something more than merely a new curriculum within a college. As Marginson and Considine had suggested, it was perhaps better viewed as the result of a myriad set of both internal and external factors. These factors may be seen to include relationships within the university as well as the worlds of government, business and community. In other words, universities and college exist within a relational network.

The model propagated by Esland (1998) provides a useful means for exploration of the relational network surrounding the NCM. It conceives of a set of inter-related agendas (political, economic, managerial and institutional) which, when combined and infused with one another, define and shape the frameworks of policy. At its most basic, argues Esland (1998: p. 32), an agenda is a set of intentions – a plan, strategy or programme of business – based on some assumptions as to what can be

achieved in relation to certain ends. The analytical distinction between the four different domains of agendas and agenda-setting agencies may assist in understanding the relationship between the formation and implementation of education policy:

... each level or sphere can be viewed as a set of networks and institutions, or constellations of exchange and practice, which define and shape the frameworks of policy (Esland, 1998: p.32).

In the first instance, I framed a relational network based on political, economic, managerial and institutional agendas, these initial musings being viewable below:

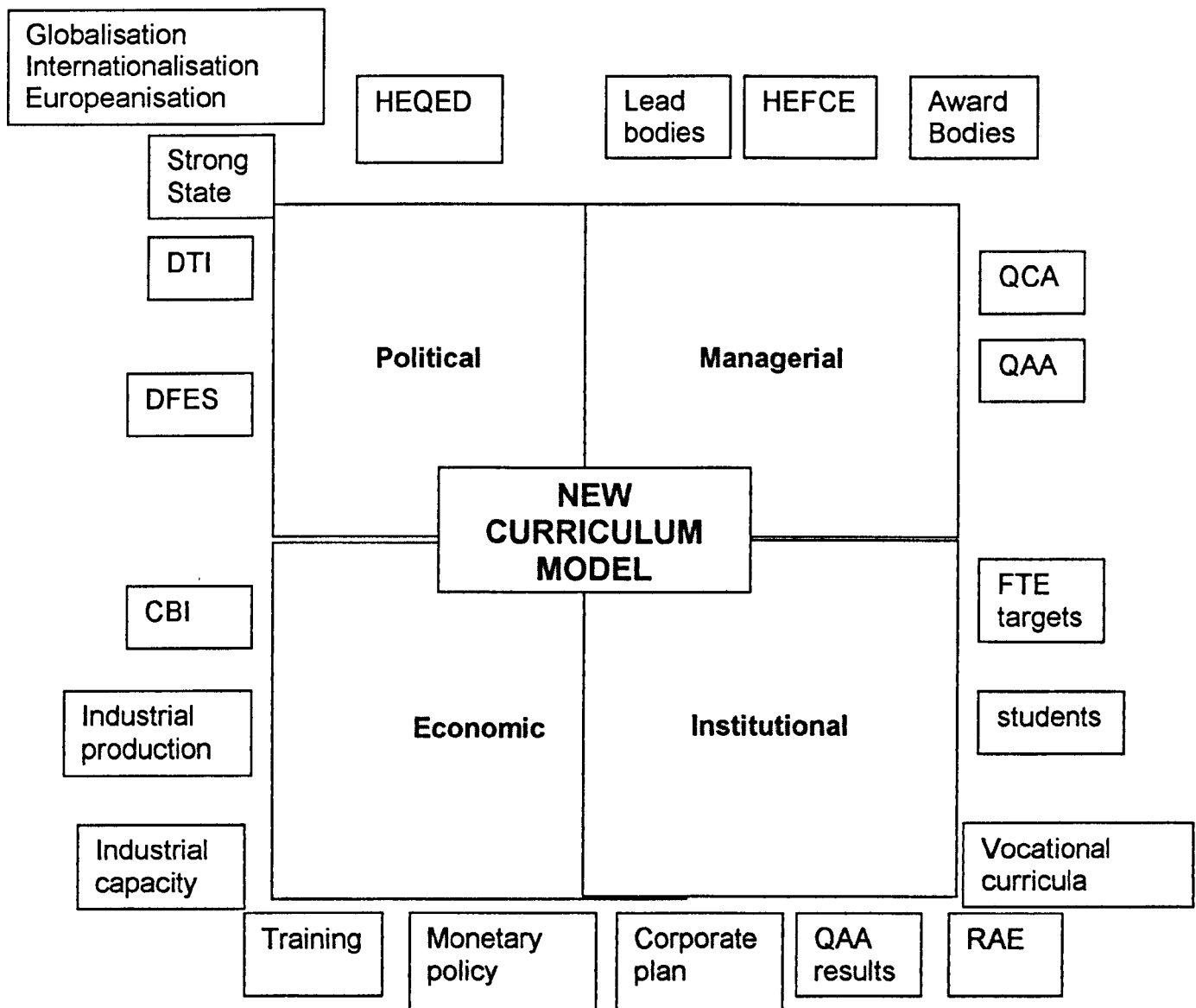


Diagram 1.3 A Policy Framework for the NCM

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Esland's (1998) relational networking was its provision of a framework which allowed for exploration of both the 'efficient causes' as well as the structures and mechanisms of the NCM. That is, the framework was suggestive of an investigation into the political, economic and managerial agendas that could be seen to have surrounded the NCM. It would then be possible to take these agendas and superimpose them on sector level (HE) and institutional level agendas. That is, the 'efficient causes' of the wider political, economic and managerial relational network could be unpicked. Subsequent to this, the structures and mechanisms put in place as a consequence of those agendas could be identified.

By way of elucidation and to use and relate back to Sayer's (1992) diagram of efficient causes, structures, mechanisms and events find below a brief summary of the place of Esland's model.

<b>Events</b>	NCM? Mergers? Increased numbers?			
<b>Mechanism</b>	Eg Targeted funding			
<b>Structures</b>	Structures with <b>powers</b> to action agendas and bring about mechanisms e.g. HEFCE, QAA, RAE			
<b>'Efficient causes'</b>	Political agenda	Economic agenda	Managerial agenda	Institutional agenda
Esland's relational network				

*Table 1.3. Theorising the 'efficient causes' behind the structures using Esland's (1998) relational network.*

The thesis utilises Sayer's (1992) explanatory sequence, moving from efficient causes on a broad level to increasingly more focused structures and mechanisms in the HE sector and, finally, the institution. This clear development may be seen in the second and third chapters, encompassing as they do 'efficient causes' in chapter 2 and the 'structures, mechanisms and events' in chapter 3.

## **Theory development: 'Expressions of power'**

The research objectives focused not simply on the 'efficient causes', structures and mechanisms. There was a further objective centring on expressions of power. In essence, this asks questions about how structures express and transmit the intentions inherent in the political, economic, managerial and institutional agendas. The college suggested that it was responding to 'new demands', the implication being that the agendas had altered. Theorising as to the nature of this change became central to the thesis.

This task requires the asking of questions of organisations and structures, a role undertaken by institutionalists. Institutionalism may be seen as an analytical and theoretical framework that raises 'provocative questions' about organisations (Scott, 1995: p.xiii). Having impacted significantly on the study of organisations in the 1970s (Scott, 1995; Zucker, 1988; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991), institutionalism now appears with growing frequency in political science and sociological analysis of organisations (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Amongst others, 'provocative questions' of institutionalist scholars have centred on asking why organisations of the same type so closely resemble one another (the form of isomorphism identified by Di Maggio and Powell, 1983) and on whether behaviour in organisational settings may be regarded as rational, conscious choice (a logic of instrumentalism: see Rowe, [1989] and Brennan and Buchanan, [1985]) or as the result of shaping by conventions, routines or habits (a logic of appropriateness identified by March and Olsen, [1989], [2004]). Interestingly, institutionalism may also ask questions as to why and how laws, rules and other forms of regulative and normative systems arise in organisations, a question especially pertinent to this enquiry.

Employed independently of each other, the various guises of institutionalism (amongst them functionalist analysis of

organisations, resource dependence work, rational and sociological institutionalism) would provide a rather different perspective as to the origins of the NCM. I should now like to draw this debate into a theoretical framework by undertaking three tasks. Firstly, I should like to adopt a definition of institutions; secondly, I shall portray a typology of institutionalism and, thirdly, I shall explicate the approach adopted as a theoretical framework herein. It should be noted from the outset that the basis of this framework is founded in the work of Scott (1995).

In his 'broad definition' of institutions, Scott (1995: p.33) provides the following view:

Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carriers – cultures, structures, and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction. In this conceptualization, institutions are multifaceted systems incorporating symbolic systems – cognitive constructions and normative rules – and regulative processes carried out through and shaping social behaviour.

A typology of institutions is then portrayed showing three pillars of institutions (Scott, 1995: p.35):

	<b>Regulative</b>	<b>Normative</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>
<b>Basis of compliance</b>	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken for granted
<b>Mechanisms</b>	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
<b>Logic</b>	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
<b>Indicators</b>	Rules, laws, sanctions	Certification, accreditation	Prevalence, isomorphism
<b>Basis of legitimacy</b>	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Culturally supported, conceptually correct

*Table 1.4 Varying Emphases: Three Pillars of Institutions*

The foundation underpinning all three pillars lies in the provision of one key facet: legitimacy (Scott, 1995: p.45):

Each of the three pillars provides a basis for legitimacy, albeit a different one. In a resource-dependence or social exchange approach to organizations, legitimacy is sometimes treated as simply a different kind of resource. However, from an institutional perspective, legitimacy is not a commodity to be possessed or exchanged, but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws.

The quintessential elements of the theoretical approach adopted herein are then succinctly and effectively set out by Scott (1995: p.34), namely that:

One possible approach would be to view each of these facets as contributing, in interdependent and mutually reinforcing ways, to a powerful social framework...



The thesis, then, adopts a form of integrated approach to institutionalism, one which D'Andrade (1984: p.98) conceives as the culmination of associated forces:

...social sanctions plus pressure for conformity,  
plus intrinsic direct reward, plus values, are all  
likely to act together to give a particular meaning  
system its directive force.

In essence, the thesis promotes the conceptualisation of the NCM within a legitimacy framework inclusive of coercive (key indicators being rules, laws and sanctions) mimetic (key indicators being pressure to imitate and emulate other organisations' activities) and normative forces (indicated by the effect of professional standards on organisations). The thesis, then, adopts an integrated view of institutionalism.

With some justification, accusations of 'sitting on the fence' could be levelled here and I should like to tackle this issue at this stage. The adoption of integrated institutionalism is suitable for this thesis for three key reasons. In the first instance, institutionalism enables the asking of 'provocative questions' of the organisation as to the nature of legitimacy (coercive, mimetic, normative). That is, it asks whether the power expressed by structures and organisations can be seen to be based on coercive, mimetic or normative legitimation.

Secondly, and more specifically, an integrated approach has been adopted since neither the researcher on the one hand, nor the thesis on the other, seek to, nor make any pretence at, engagement in partisan sociological debate suggesting the promotion of one institutionalism over another. Rather, the thesis is about the evolution of a new curriculum in an HE college; by adopting an integrated approach, I allow for alternative ways of viewing the processes that precipitated the NCM, thereby providing a degree of distance between myself

and the theory (particularly important given the views openly expressed earlier). In interviews, it is possible to utilise the various interpretations of legitimacy to provide alternatives.

Thirdly, this ability to provide alternatives is a crucial element when incorporated within the meta-theory of critical realism that binds the thesis since this meta-theory requires the *testing of theory*. Having been so open in my views earlier, it was important to have some distance between those views and the research. Institutionalism means I can test theory, but it is not *my* theory. To adopt a singular view of institutionalism would significantly detract from the ability to offer alternative views when testing that theory.

### From Issue to Methods and Thesis Structure

The thesis represents a tightly woven amalgamation of relational networking and institutionalist theory within a critical realist meta-theory. A summary of the weave is shown below:

<b>Issue:</b> Governance in HE	<b>Instantiated by</b> issue and object	<b>Object:</b> NCM
Research aim:	Causal explanation of NCM	
Research objectives	<p><b>Generate a theory</b> of new demands through the examination of efficient causes, structures and mechanisms within the political, economic, managerial and institutional domains</p> <p><b>Generate theory</b> as to how structures express power: Scott's integrated institutionalism (1995)</p> <p><b>Test theory</b> of new demands and integrated institutionalism through research</p>	

*Table 1.5 The weave of relational networking, institutionalism within critical realist meta-theory*

The research methods took the form of semi-structured interviews with nine respondents, the objective being to identify the structures and mechanisms that could explain the NCM. Establishing the nature of legitimacy (coercive, mimetic, normative) was the second major objective of the research. Each interview was transcribed in full and analysed using *NVivo7* data analysis software. The results are presented as structure-mechanism-event configurations in the same portrayal as Sayer (1992).

The structure of the thesis knits into critical realism at each stage and aims to move from a broad conceptualisation of the 'efficient causes' to a greater focus on the structures and mechanisms that lay behind the inception of the NCM. Accordingly, the thesis is broken down into the following chapters:

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the political, economic, managerial and institutional agendas theorised to provide the 'efficient causes' behind the structures and mechanisms of the NCM.

Chapter 3 examines the structures and mechanisms resulting from the broader political, economic, managerial and institutional agendas of the previous chapter. From here an examination of the development of the NCM, from inception to implementation is provided.

Chapter 4 considers the explanatory potential of critical realism and places this alongside other methods of explanation, providing a rationale for the choice of critical realism as a meta-theory behind the study. This is essentially a methodological discussion.

Chapter 5 considers the methods used, including issues of warrant, data collection, analysis, and issues of validity.

Chapter 6 presents the structure- mechanism-event configurations alongside the detailed findings from the research.

The final chapter reviews and reflects on the study with a particular focus on the adoption of critical realism as a meta-theory underpinning the work.

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **THEORISING 'EFFICIENT CAUSES'**

### **Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

Chapter 2 sets out to examine the deep 'efficient causes' (Collier, 1994) lying behind the structures and mechanisms of the NCM. By way of reassurance, detailed scrutiny of the college and the NCM itself shall be the subject of the following chapter. For its part, the format of this chapter employs Esland's (1998) policy framework to investigate what Brint and Karabel (1991: p.346) would term the relational networks and structures of power within which organisations change. There is little doubt that, in terms of governance, Marginson and Considine (2000) would regard the chapter as of significant import, given the examination of the college in relation to the wider context. In addition the chapter exhibits and provides a distinctly historical dimension providing more of the rich, thick description advocated by Cresswell et al. (2000).

The review is broken down into discrete, yet interwoven sections and begins with an examination of the political and economic relational networks including notions of 'New Right' ideology, the issue of globalisation (with associated concepts of Europeanization, supranationalism, internationalisation) as well as an exploration of the discourse concerning the 'crisis' of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS) (Jessop, 1994; 1995; 2003).

There then follows a review of the impact of institutional and managerial agendas reference their role in context provision for the development of the NCM. This investigation shall focus on the conceptualisation of discourse as social action, on managerialism and on institutional inquiry (after Hall and Taylor, 1996).

## **Political and Economic Agendas**

The model forwarded by Esland (1998) and examined in the introduction is suggestive of the wide-ranging, integrated political and economic policy framework which gave rise to the NCM. On a broad level, the model implicates an important role for 'globalisation' and subsequent interpretations of this process by government in general and government departments in particular. Control of the money supply through the pursuit of monetarist policies and tight fiscal control is similarly suggested. The role of this section is to highlight and explore these political and economic agendas in detail to provide an indication of the deep efficient causes which precipitated the development of the NCM.

As far back as the 1970s, some observers in the field implied that it is in the very nature of capitalist states to bring their educational practice into line with the prevailing labour requirements of their economies (witness, for example, the highly influential work of Bowles and Gintis [1976]). More latterly, and in a similar vein, theorists have suggested that higher education has been forced to respond to the dominant social pressures of capitalism and globalisation (Jarvis, 1999). Despite these predictions, few could have imagined that the political rhetoric inherent in Callaghan's Ruskin speech of 1976 would have foreshadowed the form and extent of change in educational circles that it has purported to have done.

There are clearly widely acknowledged links between the supposed 'needs' of capitalism and the education systems that exist within them (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). However, these links cannot be simply read off from an abstract analysis of the 'needs'; rather, the links between the needs of capitalism and the education systems require examination in particular instances if we are to understand them adequately. As a catalyst for change, the Ruskin speech is frequently held up to be a pivotal moment (Esland, 2000); henceforth, the analysis goes, the State sought

to weaken the established powers of the post-war bureaucratic-professional regime in favour of more centralised government control (to be considered in greater detail in later sections). Yet, to accept this view of the Ruskin speech is to accept only a shallow and piecemeal part of the story that may be seen to involve history, the supposed failure of the Keynesian Welfare State and assertions of a movement in the direction of a post-Fordist Britain (Jessop, 1994; 1995; 2003).

## **The Changing Political and Economic Landscape**

In an historical sense, the post-war years had arguably produced one of the most settled and economically productive periods in British history. The landmark economic agreements of the time, the Marshall plan and the Bretton Woods agreement are frequently held up as highly significant in precipitating stable economic growth. The Marshall plan (origins 1947 and first payment commenced 1948), offered significant financial aid for a European Recovery Programme (\$12,500,000,000) as well as establishing an Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OECC). By 1951, when the Plan was superseded by the Mutual Security Administration, the head of the OECC (Paul Hoffman) reported growth of 30% in Western Europe since 1940 (Dulles, 1993; Greene, 1970).

The Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 is of no less significance, establishing the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and a system of exchange rate controls (Open University Business School, 2000). Stable exchange conditions and growth remained for over twenty years and were perhaps most famously summed up by Harold Macmillan, British Prime Minister, in July, 1957:

Indeed let us be frank about it: most of our people have never had it so good. Go around the country, go to the industrial towns, go to the farms and you will see a prosperity such as we

have never had in my life-time – nor indeed in the history of the country.

A further key feature of the post-war 'settlement' was the increasing development of the welfare state within an implicitly Fordist labour process and accumulation regime. This implicitly Fordist post-war settlement, suggests Jessop (1994: p.15) was characterised by four key traits:

- The mass production of complex consumer durables.
- A virtuous, balanced cycle of mass production and consumption in a largely autocentric national economy.
- A key role for institutionalised collective bargaining within a Keynesian Welfare State (KWS).
- An urban-industrial wage earning society.

The Beveridge Report of 1942 represents the cornerstone of welfare legislation and effectively linked the state to social responsibilities through welfare provision in terms of social security, health, education and income (Beveridge Report, 1942). Within this 'welfare state' there existed mass public provision of welfare amidst a Fordist labour process characterised by the mass production and mass consumption of consumer durables (Loader and Burrows, 1994).

For Jessop (1994; 1995; 2003), the typical form of the Fordist state is that of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS), a brief review of which now follows. The evolution from the KWS towards what Jessop terms the Schumpeterian Workfare State (SWS) forms a significant context for the eventual development of the NCM; significantly the move towards the SWS may be seen to be based on a perceived crisis.

### **The Keynesian Welfare State and 'Crisis'**

The KWS is seen by Jessop to perform two distinctive functions within Fordist states: firstly, to secure full employment within



relatively closed national economies and to do so through demand side management (i.e. to adjust demand to the supply-driven needs of Fordist mass production with its dependence on economies of scale and full utilisation of relatively inflexible means of production [Jessop, 1994: p.17]); prosperity went hand in hand with this social responsibility-lead, demand side management until the 1970s when a series of factors were deemed to seriously impact on it and were to precipitate the 'crisis' of the KWS. The crises associated with the KWS were to give rise to a series of programmes designed to counter or reduce the perceived problems.

The 1970s saw a world much changed from that which enriched the post-war settlement. The United States found itself embroiled in an extremely expensive conflict in Vietnam resulting in a severe deficit in its accounts. One of the cornerstones of stable economic growth, the Bretton Woods agreement, was to suffer as a direct result; the US under Nixon devalued the dollar resulting in the demise of the agreement in 1970. Within three years the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled the price of oil (partially since oil was priced in dollars) and increased the price twice more in subsequent years. Quite apart from significant inflation, the result, argue those from the 'fiscal crisis' school of thought, was a 'structural gap' between state revenues and expenses which in turn lead to political, economic and social crises (O'Connor, 1973).

The combination of these factors was met by a series of programmes designed to combat or reduce the perceived crisis, initially by attempting to promote full employment despite stagflation and to maintain welfare commitments despite tendencies towards fiscal crisis. Further efforts to revive the economy centred on an increasing emphasis on economic austerity in an attempt to squeeze out inflation. It was the ultimate failure of these revivalist efforts that was to precipitate the true 'crisis' of the KWS (Jessop, 1994). The world economy

faced significant challenges and arguments promulgating the need to change and restructure became evident:

It soon became clear that a major restructuring of the world economy would have to be carried through, involving the liquidation of a huge amount of capacity, the disappearance of a large part of existing employment, and the introduction of new technological systems. (Gamble, 1988: p.7)

This quote reveals a good deal of the underpinning discourse surrounding the 'crisis' of the KWS. Note the 'restructuring of the *world* economy' with its implicit acceptance of the forces of globalisation and the necessity for the sacrifice of one of the cornerstones of the Fordist KWS, namely full employment.

Other theorists fall in broad alignment with this analysis, Jessop (1994: p.25; 2003: p.7), for example, arguing that growing internationalisation, the regionalisation of global and national economies and a paradigmatic shift from Fordism to post-Fordism have served to undermine the congruence between Fordism and the KWS. The issue of globalisation is difficult to ignore since it forms a factor of significant and widespread proportions; it is to this particular issue that the review shall now consider prior to the conceptualisation of a paradigm shift towards the SWS.

## **Globalisation and the KWS**

The investigation in higher educational literature of forces acting on supranational, national, institutional and managerial levels, to suggest but a few, is an on-going process. On a macro scale, levels of analysis have deliberated upon the pivotal areas of globalisation itself (Marginson, 2000; Deem, 2001) as well as internationalisation (Kampf, 2002) and Europeanisation (Lub, 2002).

Innumerable researchers in the field of higher educational research have explored the term globalisation, first coined by Modelski (1972). Of importance in the current context is to attempt to identify the hegemonic discourse surrounding globalisation and, significantly, to identify the impact that theorists suggest it may have on university curricula. Whilst it is acknowledged that both of these are fraught with difficulty since social theorists appear unable to fully agree on either its definition or its implications (Deem, 2001; Lub, 2002), their exploration is necessary to the inquiry.

At this stage, it is perhaps useful to view Lub's (2002) model of the interaction between the various levels of supranational agendas since this provides an indication of their potential scope:

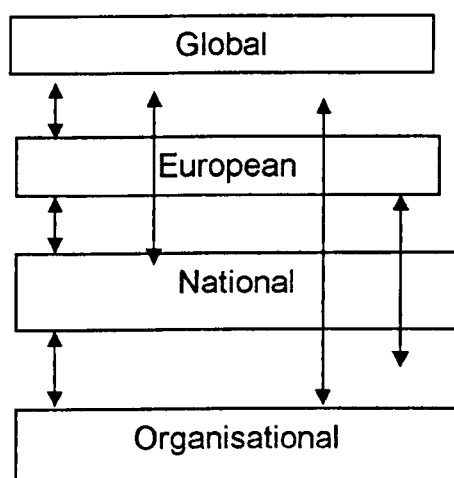


Diagram 2.1 *Model of interaction between supranational agendas (from Lub, 2002)*

Defined by some authors as 'a material set of practices drawn from the world of business' combined with a neo-liberal 'market ideology' (Currie and Newson, 1998), 'globalisation' is frequently regarded as the growing role of world systems encompassing a centrality of information and communication hitherto unseen (Marginson, 2000). Giddens (1990: p. 64) alludes to similar traits:

Globalisation can...be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events many miles away and vice versa.

Seen to encompass notions of the universalisation of capitalism, globalisation may be seen to involve the rise of finance capitalism as well as trading bloc emergence (Peters and Roberts, 2000). It is notable that hegemonic discourse concerning globalisation typically revolves around a change in power relations between, on the one hand, multinational companies and, on the other, political decision-making processes. Further to this, globalisation is seen to have altered the political and economic context of higher education through subsequent interpretation of how best to deal with the process, of which more later.

Interpretations and assumptions regarding the prevailing economic conditions, especially with regards to globalisation, significantly influence the political agenda with regards to higher education. Conservative thinking of the Thatcher years tended to rely on a set of inter-related interpretations of the new world order under globalisation. Firstly, globalisation was regarded as an unstoppable *process*, neatly side-stepping the notion forwarded by Gray (1998) that it may be a political *project* promoted by political and financial élites; secondly, and in broad alignment with New Labour's form of human capitalist thinking, this process requires reforms to improve the quality of skills (the 'Upskilling thesis' [see Reich, 1991]). The first of these assumptions is crucial in providing exoneration of the State from responsibility for unemployment, whilst the second is crucial in terms of the provision of justifiable cause for incursion into education and training.

Arguments regarding globalisation have evolved significantly in the literature in recent years to include investigation of both internationalisation and Europeanisation. Political steering of higher education can be seen on a number of levels since there are numerous actors impacting on higher education as implied by Lub (2002) above.

The implication is that changes in the nationstate and its position in the international order influence the higher education institutions within that nationstate. On a global level, for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is seen by some observers to have successfully brought upskilling theses into mainstream nationstate thinking, as Mesikämnen (2002) implies. Furthermore, the abolition of subsidies and tariffs, the floating of exchange rates, the privatisation of state assets, the encouragement of direct foreign investments, the downsizing and commercialisation of public sectors are all viewed as responses (although they may be drivers) to globalisation (Peters and Roberts, 2000).

Perhaps even more pertinent is the Europeanisation process; since the United Kingdom entered the then European Community in 1974, there have been movements in the direction of convergence in European political and economic policy (most notably the 1987 Single European Act and the 1992 Maastricht treaty). The essence of the message from the literature appears to be one of a change in what may be referred to as system levels. That is, theorists argue, there exists now a new level where political steering of higher education may take place: the macro level. Made up of the global level (OECD, General agreement on trade and services), and the supranational/ European level (European Union [EU] higher education programmes, Treaty of Maastricht, Bologna process), higher education, it is argued, is increasingly being steered by political forces of a non-domestic origin (Kampf, 2002). Indeed,

Aronowitz and DiFazio (1999) argue that nationstates have been superseded by 'metastates': a combination of these aforementioned international political directorates and multinational companies.

Education in general and higher education in particular has not been immune to the hegemonic discourse of globalising and Europeanising forces. Arguably the most striking indication of the effect of these processes on education lies in the aforementioned Bologna process; based on two international declarations (Sorbonne, 1998 and Bologna, 1999), this process aims to create a European Higher Education area, or a 'Europe of Knowledge'. Aiming for convergence and harmonisation of European higher education systems, this process is perhaps indicative of the desire for mobility, flexibility and 'upskilling' of the workforce in the European area to meet the demands of globalisation, a concept reflected by Mesikämnen (2002: p.2):

The EU wants to tie the education markets with the integrated regional systems, to back up the development of the European labour market and the overall competitiveness of the continent.

Universities, then, are seen to be fundamentally challenged by both globalisation and Europeanisation as well as by nationstates and organisational infrastructures. Indeed, there are those who would argue that universities shall either adapt to this new environment or be replaced by new kinds of knowledge organisation (Scott, 2002). This represents a dire warning, a warning which some authors suggest is derived from an alliance of 'New Right' and 'Managerial' discourse of the 1970s and 80s (see Clarke and Newman, 1997, an argument which this study shall consider in the following section).

Globalisation (in its broadest sense), and the reported effects of globalisation, represent merely the first of Jessop's arguments

regarding the undermining of the congruence between the KWS and Fordism; the second regards that of a paradigm shift and it is to that I would now like to move.

### **Paradigm Shift: From Fordism to Post-Fordism?**

The congruence between the KWS and Fordism was undermined, argues Jessop (1994), not only by 'globalisation', but also by a paradigmatic shift from Fordism to post-Fordism. The essence of Fordism lay in the mass production and consumption of consumer goods allied to the mass provision of welfare; Fordism was also deemed to encompass reliance on economies of scale and relatively inflexible means of production within closed economies; post-Fordism, in contrast, conceives of a very different accumulation regime.

Post-Fordism represents a paradigm based on flexibility: of machines, systems, and labour. Rather than economies of scale, post-Fordism is seen to enable economies of scope derived from flexibility of labour. That is, the regime of capital accumulation becomes capable of adapting to a changing market place by increasing (or, indeed, decreasing) the scope of its production rapidly. This represents a form of what Jessop was originally to term 'hollowed-out' states (Jessop, 1994), but which this author now refers to as a process of 'denationalisation' (Jessop, 2003). The notion of 'hollowing-out' is inextricably linked to the hegemonic discourse concerning globalisation considered above and centres on the alleged reduction in the capacity of nationstates to project power. Nationstates suffer since

...capacities to project its power even within its own national borders are decisively weakened both by the shift towards internationalized, flexible (but also regionalized) production systems and by the growing challenge posed by

risks emanating from the global environment.

(Jessop, 1994: p. 24)

The culmination of Jessop's (1994: p.24) argument is that these complex and intersecting changes precipitated a fundamental reorientation of the capitalist state in the form of the 'hollowed-out Schumpeterian Workfare State' (SWS). The SWS, it is suggested, is well suited to the task of dealing with the 'crisis' of the KWS and Fordism and has two fundamental traits:

- to promote product, process, organisational and market innovation in open economies in order to strengthen as far as possible the structural competitiveness of the national economy by intervening on the supply side and
- to subordinate social policy to the needs of labour market flexibility and/or to the constraints of international competition.

Born out of an inferred crisis of the KWS and Fordism, this paradigmatic shift towards the SWS has significant implications for analysis of education policy in general and higher education policy in particular. It is within the shadow of this paradigmatic shift that Callaghan's Ruskin speech of 1976 can now be viewed and that shift within the historical context detailed above. This shadow was to have enormous repercussions for educational discourse throughout the 1980s, 90s and today, not least in terms of the change in governance that was to evolve from it.

### **Paradigmatic Shift and Changing Governance**

In his later work, Jessop (2003) has alluded to a key impact of the paradigmatic shift: destatisation. This is a 'trend in reinvention of the state' from:

...centrality of government to more decentralized forms of governance. (Jessop, 2003: p.9)



This change involves:

...movement from the taken-for-granted primacy of official (typically national) state apparatuses towards the taken-for-granted necessity of varied forms and levels of partnership between official, parastatal, and nongovernmental organizations in managing social relations. Hence it also involves a shift from the top-down hierarchical political organization typical of sovereign states to emphasis on promoting and/or steering the self-organization of interorganizational relations. (Jessop, 2003: p.9)

This new form of governance expresses itself through expansion of mechanisms such as 'regulated self-regulation' and officially approved 'private interest government' (Streeck and Schmitter, 1988 in Jessop, 2003: p.9). The growth of parastatal organisations in the HE sector reflects this concept of paradigmatic shift from *government* to *governance*. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the establishment of HEFCE in 1992 and QAA in 1997.

For its part, HEFCE is a 'non-departmental body' which has 'distinct statutory duties that are free from political control' (HEFCE: *A Brief Introduction to HEFCE and the HE sector* [online]). As an example, however, of 'regulated self-regulation', the QAA perhaps surpasses all others in that it is 'an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of HE and through contracts with the main UK HE funding bodies' (QAA: *The QAA: An Introduction* [online]). The effects of this change in governance were wide ranging as the subsequent section aims to demonstrate.

## **Nationstate Political Agendas**

From the point of view of this study, it is now important to review the effects that researchers claim these combined political processes have had, firstly, on internal nationstate political agendas and, subsequently, on the relational networks of higher education institutions.

The process initiated by Callaghan's labour administration was furthered by Thatcherite ideology of the 1980s, epitomising the Neo-Fordist, market capitalist predilection for market flexibility, reduced social overheads and the celebration of competitive individualism (Brown and Lauder, 1999). Conservative discourse management, viewing prevailing educational thought in education and training as inimical to both enterprise and competitiveness, was eventually to precipitate the hard managerialism of Higher Education in the 1990s (Trow, 1993).

Enshrined within the Weiner thesis (1981), Conservative discourse management promoted the idea that Britain's economic problems stemmed from the fact that it was a nation of anti-industrial values. Even the most cursory glance over government briefs reveals the lack of trust in our education system to provide flexibility within a free-market, globalised economic climate (the highly influential Dearing report of 1997, and the Jarratt Report of 1985, for example, both emphasised the necessity for universities to serve the needs of the economy, implicitly suggesting that they failed to do so).

On a national political level, it was Conservative ideology of the late 1970s and 1980s that was to form the focal point from which wide-ranging attacks on the educational establishment were derived (Esland, 2000). As noted above, there appears a notable distinction between the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS) policies of pre-1979 and the on-going movement towards what

Jessop terms the Schumpeterian Workfare State (SWS) initiated in the Thatcher years (Jessop, 1994; 1995).

Central to this attack on the welfare state were the dual programmes of 'national renewal' and attacks on the supposed 'dependency' culture. At its core, the transition towards SWS involves a shift in settlement from a situation where the economy was to serve social policy by funding it to one where social policy was to serve the economy by providing the kind of workforce deemed to be required. Active intervention in the economy to stimulate demand (advocated by Keynesian economics) was to be replaced by more active intervention in social policy to improve the supply of labour.

### **Statecraft and Intensification**

The workforce, supplied by education providers, therefore became the subject of a new form of statecraft; employing highly effective discourse management, education was demonized for its lack of compatibility with commercial objectives (also referred to as the 'Weiner Thesis' [1981] reported in Esland, 1996). This ideology, within which accountability, efficiency and effectiveness were central, was to filter through to higher education via a steady stream of reports (Jarratt, 1985; Lindop, 1985; Dearing, 1997), Green Papers (*The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s*, 1985; *The Learning Age*, 1998) and White Papers (*Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*, 1987).

The Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act (1992) was to firmly ensconce conservative ideology into the heart of the education establishment. Accountability, effectively disguised under a rather nebulous cloak of 'quality', combined with economy, efficiency and effectiveness became central tenets of education policy in the latter Conservative-controlled years (Harvey and Knight, 1999). The combined effect of these was a powerful set of new demands which the introduction to this thesis considered.

The effect at the institutional level of this political process has been widespread, touching every aspect of higher educational life. Amongst the most significant of the effects noted in the literature is that of intensification; the compression of curricula in terms of contact time and, indeed, space is a suggestion promulgated by numerous authors including Esland et al., (1999) and, notably, Marginson (2000). This intensification process manifests itself at the curricular level in a variety of ways; from Marginson, there is the suggestion that the 'inner sanctuary' of academic work is no longer secure from the processes of organisational change. Intensification has been seen in terms of firstly massification (often subsumed within the concept of widening participation), in reduced staff numbers (through the combined process of rationalisation and downsizing) and then in the combined effect of these: increased staff:student ratios.

In a similar vein, Kampf (2002) argues that the very essence of the 'academic heartland' is experiencing a fundamental change. The exact nature of this change is examined by Randle and Brady (1997) who suggest that lecturers felt that their judgement and control over the educational process was being eroded. Similar work by Ainley and Bailey (1997) reflects both intensification and the deskilling / deprofessionalisation thesis in that staff felt there had been a decline in space and scope for professional autonomy.

## **The Nature of Student Learning**

Others have noted the potential impact of political agendas in terms of the changes in the innate nature of higher education courses, arguing that they are now more focused on *connaissance* rather than *savoir* (Foucault, 1991; Symes and McIntyre, 2002). In order to dovetail with political agendas, the former of these is characterised by competence-based learning, whilst the latter's traits include transformation of the learner's sense of self. Increasingly, it is the former that takes precedence, resulting in a pedagogy of the workplace driven by

economic imperatives within a commodification culture (an emphasis on courses that can be successfully marketed, Winter, 1995).

I should like to elaborate on this last point. On one level at least, critical exploration of discourse may reveal (in the following section) why this emphasis on competence-based learning holds precedence within university regimes dominated by 'cost-effectiveness'. Whilst Jessop (1994, 1995) may argue that there has been a paradigm shift from the inherently Fordist KWS to the inherently post-Fordist SWS, there are numerous authors that would disagree a) with the premise of Jessop's argument that the SWS is well suited to the task of dealing with the 'crisis' of the KWS (see Grieve Smith's *Full Employment: A Pledge Betrayed*, 1997 and Gray's *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*, 1998) and b) that post-Fordism is in any sense a reality (see Avis' *The Myth of the Post-Fordist Society*, 1996).

Still further effects of the political agenda are evident in terms of the trend for 'student-centred learning' and the transmogrification of the student into a learner and, more specifically, a learner for life (Avis, 1996). These two concepts have significant implications for this study, since they strike at the very essence of the pedagogical process. The first may be seen to have an impact on the nature of curricula delivery, as the institutional literature (2001b) appears to suggest:

All subjects will ensure their curriculum offers part time and flexible learning opportunities. Our timetable and our delivery methods will offer the opportunity for students from all sections of the community - at times and in places that suit them.

The second of these, involving concepts of 'learning for life' also has major implications, perhaps the most apparent of which lies

in the emphasis on transferable skills or 'key skills' within, or attached to, modern university curricula.

Amongst those researching the higher education sector, Marginson (2000) and Marginson and Considine (2000) stand out in terms of identifying what is termed the 'deconstruction of the academic profession' (albeit in a specifically Australian context). Embattled by the reworking of programmes and courses, the growing use of part-time academic staff, the development and deployment of new instructional and delivery systems and the growing role of administrators in academic affairs, university curricula are being compressed as never before.

The complexion of educational discourse currently reflects an uneasy connubiality between the Neo-Fordist / early post-Fordist, market capitalist thought derived from the disparate and loose amalgam of the Conservative years and the Post-Fordist, producer capitalist polity of New Labour. For the Labour administration, the development of human capital stands out as a priority and represents increased opportunity for individuals and magnet-economy status for the United Kingdom. The effects of both market capitalism and producer capitalism have been dramatic and wide-ranging on the connate nature of education at every level.

The influence of polity over education has reached a level never hitherto witnessed. In many respects, the politicisation of higher education has been a 'quiet revolution' that has already taken place, resulting in academic capitalism in which staff have become state-subsidised entrepreneurs who expend their human capital stocks in increasingly competitive situations (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

This concept of a quiet revolution is pivotal here; if there has been, as Slaughter and Leslie imply, such a revolution in higher

education, it would clearly be an interesting line of inquiry to establish *how* this has taken place. The politicisation of HE gives a tantalising indication perhaps of why, but fails to deal with the crucial aspect of how, a role undertaken both by the integrated institutionalism (Scott, 1995) detailed in the introduction and by the managerial and institutional discussion to follow.

## **Managerial and Institutional Agendas**

The themes of 'crisis' and 'change' of the previous section continue in the second: managerial and institutional agendas. The two sections, however, are perhaps best seen as interwoven, since much of the drive towards institutional reform has been based on the perceived crisis of the welfare state (Clarke and Newman, 1997) considered previously. Initiating 'change' may be fraught with difficulty and obstacles, yet notions of crises may smooth the path of reformists since, as Gramsci (1971: p.184) alluded to, crises:

...create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life.

Whilst many aspects of this argument are interesting, it is the use of the word 'dissemination' that gives rise to a range of questions; whilst 'crises' may provide a more favourable terrain for subsequent change, this does not truly explain how ideas are disseminated and legitimated (coercively, mimetically, or normatively) over time. Attempts to unravel issues of dissemination and subsequent legitimisation have come from a variety of sources, perhaps most notably from analysts of discourse. This section, subsequent to providing definitions of managerialism, aims to briefly further the historical perspective of

the previous section and to consider both discourse and analysis of the discourse of 'crisis' and 'change'.

## **Definitions of Managerialism**

Managerialism has been defined in a variety of ways, Harvey and Knight (1999: p.234) arguing that the term refers to the primacy of financial criteria:

Managerialism in HE refers to the tendency for professional managers, through their decision making role, to alter academic processes on the basis of non-academic criteria, amongst which financial criteria have been prominent, or in response to management theories or functions.

This definition, however, perhaps misses the discursive, social legitimisation aspect of managerialism; for this reason, Trowler's (2001: p. 185) definition is preferable in that it identifies managerialism as providing a broad:

...framework of values and beliefs about social arrangements and the distribution and ordering of resources. It provides a guide and justification for behaviour oriented to efficiency and economy, market responsiveness and the control of employee behaviour towards these ends by managers.

There is broad agreement amongst researchers that managerialism has permeated British Universities; research by Universities UK (2001), Fulton (2001) and Reed, (2001) bear testament to this. The implications of this permeation shall be considered later, but it may be prudent to consider the discursive, social legitimisation aspects of managerialism first. I would like to do this by examining 'discourse'.



## Historical Setting and Discourse

The political-economic and social welfare 'settlements' of the post-war years considered in the previous section are seen by some observers to have been overlain by a third 'settlement': that of the organisational genre (Clarke and Newman, 1997). This third side to the triumvirate settlement centred on two modes of co-ordination: bureaucratic administration and professionalism (the bureaucratic-professional regime) and the subsequent notions of 'public service'. In terms of education, this concept of bureau-professionalism is significant since some authors view it a) as an actively sought principle and b) as including a high degree of autonomy for educational professionals.

In line with this high degree of autonomy, educationalists were trusted and encouraged to apply their expertise for the public good as a 'public service'. This principle, argue Clarke and Newman (1997: p. 6):

...underpinned the expansion of public education, based on a view of the curriculum as the province of the 'professional expertise' possessed by teachers and academics...

This bureaucratic-professional settlement was to be attacked from a variety of quarters: from feminists who saw it as legitimating a social settlement based on patriarchal power relations; from disability groups who were lined up against what they saw as pervasive discrimination against disabled groups; thirdly, and arguably most potently, from what some theorists now view as the evolution of an increasingly allied 'New Right' and 'New Managerialist' discourse (Clarke and Newman, 1997), a concept to which I should now like to turn.

Literature discussing managerialism frequently refers to the concept of discourse and its analysis. Its pre-eminent place in

this review, both in the previous section and in this one, cannot be denied; for this reason, exploration of 'discourse' is an important step in providing context to change in university curricula.

For Fairclough (1995), discourse is the use of language as a form of *social practice*, either through text, speech or (perhaps rather more problematically) iconic / diagrammatic representation. The emphasis on social practice implies that it is more than just text, speech or other communicative form; it is a socially and historically situated mode of action: it is socially shaped, but also socially shaping (Fairclough, 1995: p. 131). As such, discourse may be a significant source of power since:

The power to control discourse is seen as the power to sustain particular discursive practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over other alternative (including oppositional) practices.

It is an imbalance in capacities to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed which results in a subsequent imbalance in power relations between participants in discourse events. Discourse, and the analysis of discourse as a social practice, employs Gramsci's theory of hegemony; power relations are seen to both control productivity in discourse practice and highlight how a particular line of discourse constitutes one domain of hegemony (Fairclough, 1995: p.2).

This conceptualisation of discourse provides a useful background for analysis of notions of 'crisis' and 'change'. One could now argue that the 'crisis' of the Fordist KWS involved a calculated intervention to shift discursive practices as part of the engineering of social change, seen by Fairclough as the 'technologisation of discourse'.

Centred on the aforementioned conditions of 'crisis', a form of technologised discourse management, argue Clarke and Newman (1997), was employed by the 'New Right' in a three pronged attack; firstly, the costs of the welfare state were scrutinised given the fiscal 'crisis'; secondly, the effects of the welfare state were attacked for their supposed development of a dependency culture and, thirdly, the welfare state itself was attacked as an active agency in the process of national decline. The KWS was viewed as a potential blockage to the remaking of Britain as a competitive and enterprising society (Clarke and Newman, 1997). As an integral element of the KWS, the bureau-professional regime (involving a high degree of professional autonomy over academic affairs) was not immune from this attack.

Clarke and Newman (1997) go on to suggest that there evolved a loose amalgamation between the discourse management of the 'New Right' and a newly emerging managerialism as the words of conservative ministers from the time suggest:

Efficient management is the key to the [national] revival...And the management ethos must run right through our national life. (Michael Heseltine in Clarke and Newman, 1997: p.34).

Neo-Taylorist, neo-scientific managerialism found favour with the 'New Right' due to its belief in the innate superiority of the market and the benefits of managerialism in terms of disciplining the public sector to the needs of a 'globalised' economy requiring flexible means of production.

How the discourse of this alliance became a pervasive presence in the language of public sector reconstruction is a matter of some debate. According to Burr (1995), discourses seek to mobilise, to build alliances and support for specific social projects. Additionally, they aim to establish themselves as

normalised 'truths' – the self-evidently correct frameworks of thought and action. For Clarke and Newman (1997), change has been legitimated in and through 'narrative structures'. In the first of these, and a particularly powerful and pervasive narrative structure, change is put forward as natural and an obvious requirement given prevailing conditions of 'crisis'; a second is the need for change as a defence against hostile forces (especially newly emerging economies).

The view of discourse presented above suggests that discourse is both a social practice and a significant source of power. If this were the case, one would naturally expect to see numerous impacts of this social practice on universities. The next section is dedicated to exploring this idea.

## **The Impact of Managerialism**

Narrative structures provide a concrete element to discourse and its expression may be seen in the texts and speeches of the Thatcher, Major and Blair administrations (note the green papers, white papers, Acts and speeches listed previously). A key aspect of the initial change promulgated by the Thatcher administration lay in neo-Taylorist/neo-scientific forms of managerialism, as Pollitt (1993: p. 56) alluded to:

The central thrust, endlessly reiterated in official documents, is to set clear targets, to develop performance indicators to measure the achievement of those targets, and to single out, by means of merit awards, those individuals who get results. The strengthening and incentivising of line management is a constant theme.

Quite apart from this form of emphasis on performance indicators, the narrative structures of discourse may be damning; there are stern warnings for those HE institutions that fail to respond to the new world order. Witness, for example, the

necessity for HE responsiveness promulgated by Jarvis (1999) who suggests that lack of institutional responsiveness to dominant social pressures may result in them being by-passed by the initiative of multi-national companies (no thought is given to the possibility that HE institutions, rather than being merely reactionary to dominant social pressures, may be driving forces in examining and challenging those forces).

Other observers suggest a movement from 'soft' managerialism to 'hard' human resource management; the former, typical of the 1960s and 1970s, was characterised by the innate trust in the bureaucratic-professional regime detailed above (Reed, 2001). The current hard, human resource managerialism of HE, typified by the desire to reduce an organisation's human resource costs and of increasing 'flexibility' (Blyton and Morris, 1992) first appeared in the former polytechnic sector (Harvey and Knight, 1999). This form of managerialism signified a much more radical attempt to incorporate the discipline of the market and its entrepreneurial culture into universities (Reed, 2001).

To extend this philosophy into the HE sector, the Conservative administration of the 1980s and 1990s established a series of regulations and methodologies capable of exerting constraints on professions (note the Reports, Papers and Acts mentioned previously and the establishment of funding criteria, through the Higher Education Funding Council, based on outputs). Undoubtedly the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 stands out as a highly significant development in the extension of this philosophy in that it precipitated the constitution of corporations, whereby colleges and universities became responsible for the assets, staff and operational management of their institutions. Interestingly, this same act firmly linked efficiency to quality; it was axiomatic in the plan, suggest Harvey and Knight (1999), that there would be an annual increase in student mass of 5% accompanied by no comparable increase in resourcing.

A wide range of Government agencies including the powerful Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Industry Training Organisations or lead bodies have themselves systematically shaped managerial influences. Further to this, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) are similar examples of agencies that form part of the sub-structure of influence over Human Resource Management (HRM) agendas.

Numerous observers have set down detailed analyses of the impact of hard HRM. Esland et al. (1999) report, for example, that not only has HRM become a powerful instrument for securing organisational compliance, but it has also been deployed as a disciplinary instrument. The same authors suggest that, whilst the political and economic influences provide the sub-structure, HRM provides a 'justificatory superstructure' at the institutional level in the form of mission statements and 'corporate values'. Work by Esland et al., Winter (1995) and, more latterly, Marginson (2000) refer to the displacement of the labour process, whereby power is reallocated away from educational professionals to decision-makers that base strategy on economic imperatives.

Striking observations regarding HRM have been forwarded by Harvey and Knight (1999: p.239) who suggest that hard HRM has established accountability firmly at centre stage in HE:

Accountability was firmly established at centre-stage in higher education policy debates in Britain... Quality improvement, per se, was not on the agenda.

HRM has undoubtedly had a profound effect over HE in general, and the institution under consideration here, in particular. The domination of hard managerialism coupled with the justificatory infrastructure of HRM has changed the face of HE and has an

overriding effect over the institutional influences. The impact of hard managerialism is perhaps best reflected in the nature of the institutional literature regarding the NCM:

Already, as part of the Strategic Transformation of the College, curriculum review has resulted in new content and focus, increased agility and flexibility, to be delivered through the Flexible Learning Framework and supported open learning. (Institutional literature, 2001b)

The main aim of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in the College. It derives its aims from the Corporate plan and is closely inter-related with other key College strategies...(Institutional literature, 2002a)

The emphasis here on 'service improvement' typifies a new emphasis on both performance and *measurement* of performance in HE. Performance models in HE tend to be seen as ideologically driven (as the former section in this review alluded to), especially within new forms of evaluative states (Atkinson-Grosjean and Grosjean, 2000) that increasingly measure performance against criteria. Service improvement, however, serves only as one key element of performance models; the second is accountability.

Accountability is significant here since the concept provides some clues as to *why* institutions and the actors within them may follow political/ideological leads, clearly of importance to this inquiry. Accountability in British higher education is visible on a number of levels: QAA, QCA, HEFCE, RAE all effectively hold institutions accountable on an external level whilst HRM, corporate planning and FTE targets may be seen to internalise this accountability. The former is an indication, suggest

Atkinson-Grosjean and Grosjean (2000) of a shift in the public management paradigm, a paradigm which takes as axiomatic key market principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy. The latter may be regarded as an internalising of the performance model by the institution. Thus, regulation becomes self-regulation, or a form of self-disciplining referred to by Foucault (1978 in Atkinson-Grosjean and Grosjean, 2000) as governmentality.

It would be plausible to conjecture that discourse on the subject of managerialism and institutionalism falls into a wholly deterministic frame of reference. Literature in the field, however, reveals observers and theorists who are split as to the extent, nature and causes of the influence of both policy agendas and their subsequent implementation at the institutional level through managerial processes. For some, mentioned in the previous section, there exists a policy environment that has coerced institutions to face the imperatives of adaptation in the face of new circumstances, especially globalisation. For others, however, policy acts not as a coercive device, but as a mediating device between the meanings of globalisation and the supposed imperatives of institutional adaptation (McIntyre and Solomon, 2002).

In agreement with McIntyre and Solomon, Ball (1994) argues that there is a negotiated and contingent character of policy processes worked out at the institutional level. This is a fairly explicit case for a degree of agency as opposed to structure and determinism at the institutional level and, as they themselves argue, falls broadly into line with Ball's (1994: p. 10-11) interpretation of the balance of power relations:

Policy...is an 'economy of power', a set of technologies and practices which are realised and struggled over in local settings...Policy as practice is created in a trialectic of dominance,



resistance and chaos/freedom. Thus, policy is no simple asymmetry of power.

From the perspective of this study, this suggestion of a 'negotiated' settlement, tinged with traits of agency at the institutional level, is most interesting. Theorists are explicitly arguing here, in line with archetypal cultural studies theory, that institutional responses to policy are balanced between structure and agency when placed in context. Since this argument effectively straddles the Marxist/deterministic and liberal/agency divide, it provides a pertinent and strong case.

And yet, important questions remain; what, for example, does this balance of power actually resemble in context? Are settlements 'negotiated' as they suggest; if there is resistance, what form does it take and, if there is a 'struggle' over the pedagogical transaction, what nature does this take? In the case of this thesis, the question has been acutely focused by integrated institutionalism, asking as it does about the nature of legitimacy of the power exerted by structures.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The objective of this chapter has been to provide an indication of what Collier (1994) terms the 'efficient causes' behind the structures and mechanisms that lay behind the NCM. As such, it has extended the contextual work of the introduction which provided merely a view of the wider HE context. The endeavour to provide a rich, thick description of the context within which the NCM may be placed does not rest here. Rather, the next chapter narrows the focus further from the efficient cause level to the level of structures and mechanisms.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **STRUCTURES, MECHANISMS AND CHRONOLOGY OF CHANGE**

### **Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

This chapter has three objectives; the first element considers the chronology of the legislative tableau against which to place the NCM. This provides the foundation for theorisation as to the set of 'new demands' which the college faced and they reflect the dramatically changed governance in higher education. The depth of this tableau has increased as the thesis moves through the chapters, coming from the general overview of higher education in the UK of chapter 1 to the efforts of chapter 2 to unpick the 'efficient causes' behind the NCM to the legislative chronology of the current chapter. For its part, the role of the initial part of this chapter is to provide a review of the legislative process which precipitated the NCM.

The second element of chapter 3 involves narrowing the focus to a review of how the changes impacted on the college. The final part of this chapter considers the evolution of a key response to these changes: the NCM.

### **The Changing Governance of Higher Education: Central Themes**

A necessary pre-cursor to any explanation of the NCM is to place it on a tableau with depth and background. That is, some exploration of the changing governance of higher education (the background) is required in order to make sense of the NCM (the foreground). The primary objective here is to provide an indication of the legislative circumjacentcies within which the college initiated and developed the NCM; that is, the 'new demands' are examined.

The landscape of HE is one much changed from that of the 1970s. Education in general and HE in particular are seen as central tenets of political and economic policy:

Higher Education has become the new starship in the policy fleet for governments around the world (Peters, 2003: p.153)

Notions of 'crisis' and 'change' may be seen as central and recurring themes in the evolutionary landscape and discourse of higher education throughout the last thirty years. Callaghan's Ruskin speech of October 1976, suggesting the consequence of an education system dominated by the supposed social priorities of the bureaucratic-professional hegemony was an inadequately prepared workforce, is viewed as something of a watershed in change promulgation in educational debate:

There is no virtue in [education] producing socially well adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. (Callaghan, 1976: *Times Educational Supplement*: p.72)

Observers of change and politics in education argue that the Ruskin speech may be seen as a defining moment since, for the first time, the state established a clear connection between education and economic nationalism (Salter and Tapper, 1981; Gordon et al. 1991; Esland, 2000). For their part, Sharp and Dunford (1990) contend that the Ruskin speech represented change in the form of a move away from teacher control in curriculum matters. The dual themes of crisis and change have remained constant features of education in its broad sense and higher education in particular.

With reference to crisis, the work of Scott (*Crisis in the University*, 1984) and Reeves (*The Crisis in Higher Education*,

1988) reveal references to the perceived 'crisis' in higher education in the 1980s. Dominated initially by crises intimately related with funding (note especially the 15% cut executed by the University Grant Committee following the 1981 expenditure White paper), discussion and conceptualisation of this 'crisis' has given rise more latterly to debate concerning globalisation (Brown and Lauder, 1999; McIntyre and Solomon, 2002; Esland, 2000) as well as the ingrained nature of university curricula (Symes and McIntyre, 2002).

With reference to change, reports including Jarratt (1985, concerned with efficiency in higher education), Lindop (1985, concerned with academic validation), Green papers (*The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s*, 1985; *The Learning Age*, 1998), White papers and their subsequent Acts (*Further and Higher Education*, 1992) suggest a high degree of emphasis on 'change' in the sector. Policy of the 1990s reveals the continued 'necessity' for change derived from the wrongs of the past; witness Tony Blair's Romanes lecture at Oxford (1999):

..to grasp the future we need to understand the past and present. As a country, we value continuity as much as change, and we are often right to do so. In education we can be justly proud of parts of our inheritance. A tradition of scholarship, discovery and creativity second to none. Some of the best universities in the world... But when it comes to education for the broad majority of people, we need with honesty and frankness to confront our past, not continue it. We must understand where we went wrong.

Notions of crisis and change remain central themes in government policy as we enter the twenty-first century. The *Future of Higher Education* (2003) warns us of both the

necessity to master change and the 'crisis' that continues to haunt higher education:

So it would be possible to opt for a quiet life. To coast along, bask in previous successes, shirk the need for reform. Though such an approach would be possible, I do believe it would be wrong.....because the world is already changing faster than it has ever done before, and the pace of change will continue to accelerate. Our ability to master that process of change and not to be ground down by it depends critically upon our universities...[from foreword by Charles Clarke, Education Secretary]

The changing governance of HE reflects the growing desire to link education with economic nationalism as suggested by Callaghan's Ruskin speech (1976) and furthered by the Dearing Report (1997), the central positioning of economic agendas (especially following the Jarratt Report, 1985) and the highly competitive nature of the sector post -1992 (Further and Higher Education Act, 1992).

The changing governance is imbued with a series of themes which, when combined, form the bedrock of the 'new demands' facing the College. These themes, apparent through legislation, speeches and publications from Ruskin onwards (and to a certain degree before if one takes the Robbins report of 1963 as a significant pre-cursor) centre on economy, efficiency and effectiveness (laced with managerialism), massification, commodification, consumerism and divisive competition. To explore these, I shall begin with Jarratt, a report the repercussions of which are being acutely felt even now, more than twenty years later.

## The Three Es

The Jarratt Report of 1985 underlined the central positioning of economic considerations in higher education as well as the inter-linking of academic, financial and physical aspects with strategic decision-making:

...[the] crucial issue is how a university achieves the maximum value for money consonant with its objectives (Jarratt Report, 1985: p.12)

Seen by some observers to have had little measurable impact at the time (Trowler, 2003), Jarratt was charged with reviewing and recommending changes to university management.

Effectiveness and efficiency of university management were central themes in the report and, according to Pollitt (1993), it represented the genesis of managerialist persuasions in HE. At the very least it may be regarded as a significant juncture in the sense that it marked a change in attitude and discourse about university management (Trowler, 2003), an attitude to be centred on economy, efficiency and effectiveness encapsulated within a managerialist philosophy. Clearly, the process by which this philosophy was able to permeate HE is of some importance, a process considered earlier (in the latter parts of chapter 2).

Economic priorities pervade the higher education sector, focused acutely by the relative reduction in publicly planned higher education funding per student between 1989-90 (at just below £8000) to a figure of approximately £5000 in 2004 (Universities UK and DFES, 2004). The continuing economic plight of the sector came to prominence through the debate concerning higher education funding and differential fees of 2004 and it is against this background that the NCM necessarily needs to be placed.

## Massification/Serving the Needs of the Economy

If Jarratt was to espouse, and eventually ensconce, the imperatives of the 'three E's' within HE, the Green Paper of the same year was to see significant moves in the direction of massification of HE through a process of widening participation. Published by the Conservative administration, *The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s* effectively continued and expanded the recommendations of the Robbins report of 1963 by suggesting that courses of HE should be available to all those who could benefit from them. Whilst Robbins had recommended the immediate expansion in universities which had precipitated what are now known as the Plate Glass Universities including Kent, Lancaster, Warwick and York, and forwarded the principle that courses of HE should be made available to all those who were qualified by ability, the Green paper of 1985 envisioned a more radical departure from a small élite system of HE.

Massification through widening access was to become a feature of HE polity and practice throughout the 1990s and remains a key feature of the background to the NCM in particular.

The themes of linking HE to economic nationalism, of expansion of HE and of the centrality of economy, efficiency and effectiveness are clearly evident throughout the evolutionary landscape of HE during the 1980s and 90s. The former was firmly established as an objective in 1987 in *Higher Education Meeting the Challenge*; unequivocal in its language, this White paper made the musings of the Ruskin speech of more than ten years earlier a much more closely felt reality:

Meeting the needs of the economy is not the sole purpose of higher education nor can higher education alone achieve what is needed. But this aim, with its implications for the scale and quality of higher education, must be vigorously

pursued...The Government and its central funding agencies will do all they can to encourage and reward approaches by higher education institutions which bring them closer to the world of business. (*Higher Education Meeting the Challenge, 1987* quoted from Trowler, 2003)

On a lesser scale, witness the *Enterprise in HE initiative* of 1987 which, in essence advocated the vocationalisation of HE and the integration of 'enterprise' into degree curricula (Trowler, 2003).

### **Increased Competition**

Reform of HE continued at a relatively vigorous rate throughout the late 1980s. The 1988 Education Act, for example, had three key effects on universities; firstly, the monopolistic, cartel-resembling environment within which universities had traditionally existed was shaken by the freeing of polytechnics from local education authority (LEA) control; this was accompanied by the abolition of the Universities Grant Committee (to be replaced by the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council); at the same time, the protected tenure of academics' jobs was effectively removed. The combined effect, as Trowler (2003) argues, was that the polytechnics began their march towards university status and the managerialist thrust within universities accelerated as the security of academic freedom became more fragile.

### **Commodification: Public to Positional Good**

The 1990s saw no let up in reform of HE. Whilst efficiency, effectiveness and economy, alongside managerialism, may be seen as central pillars of initial HE reform in the 1980s, 1990 saw a sea-change in HE in the form of enterprise and commodification (Marginson, 2000). In requiring students to receive and repay loans through the Student Loans Act of that



year, an important step was taken in terms of shifting the burden of massification from government to 'consumers'. Further student loans legislation was to follow (1996) which deepened this consumerist cycle; importantly, suggests Trowler (1993), the student loans acts served to reinforce the 'positional' rather than 'public' good of HE. That is, HE was seen to be of benefit to the individual rather than to society and, as a consequence, the beneficiaries should legitimately shoulder the burden of cost.

Perhaps the most representative elucidation of this came in *The Learning Age* of 1998; both the foreword by the then Education Secretary, David Blunkett, and the text of chapter 2 place the individual before both the state and employers when it comes to the beneficiaries of education:

Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole.....(*The Learning Age*, 1998: foreword)

Individuals, employers and the state should all contribute, directly or through earnings foregone, to the cost of learning over a lifetime because all gain from this investment. (*The Learning Age*, 1998: Chapter 2, section 1, paragraph 2.2)

Whilst the focus of this thesis does not lie specifically in exploring further the effect of these acts, their legacy in terms of the NCM lies in both the increasing consumerism and positionalism of HE, a background against which the NCM must be seen.

## **Embedding the Three Es, Massification, Competition and Lifelong Learning**

For its part, calls for widening participation and access were perhaps to reach their zenith with the publication by the Royal Society of Arts in 1990 of *More Means Different*. Authored by Sir

Christopher Ball, this work argued that widening access was highly desirable given the competitive international environment (the tinge of globalisation and its influence are apparent here and reiterate the points made in chapter 2). The effects of the calls for widening participation were clear to see in the White Paper of 1991 (*Higher Education: A New Framework*) which argued for 30% of eligible persons to attend university by 2000.

The work of Trow (1993) is interesting here in his suggestion that this document is reflective not merely of the managerialism espoused in the earlier reports, papers and acts, but of 'hard' managerialism where the three Es are not merely important, but are paramount. The background for the NCM, then, is clear; the need to remain efficient is a key backdrop to the development of the NCM as the White Paper makes abundantly clear (*Higher Education: A New Framework*, 1991: p.10):

...the general need to contain public spending,  
the pattern of relative costs in higher education,  
and the demands for capital investment, all  
mean that a continuing drive for greater  
efficiency will need to be secured.

The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) embedded the pre-eminent place of competition and economic agendas in two fundamental respects. In the first instance, the act abolished the division between universities and polytechnics (section 77) and, in the second, allowed for the transfer of further education corporations to the higher education sector (section 74), thereby creating one unified higher education sector. The 1990s, therefore, saw a significant increase in the competitive nature of higher education.

This competitive environment has become increasingly apparent in the new century. Whilst bemoaning the lack of a unified, homogenous voice of universities which the Committee of Vice

Chancellors and Principals (CVCP – now Universities UK) used to provide, Peter Knight (Vice Chancellor, University of Central England) notes that 'universities bicker as competition is king' (Knight, 2005). One may note the fracturing of the homogenous voice into the self-interest groups apparent in the 'Russell' and '94' groups of 'research intensive universities' and the Coalition of Modern Universities and Campaign for Mainstream Universities on the other.

The Dearing report (1997) furthered the link between education and industry espoused in the Ruskin speech; indeed, the report advocated that one of the main purposes of higher education should be to serve the needs of the economy at local, regional and national levels (Dearing Summary Report, 1997: p.5). Perhaps more importantly, however, the *first* conclusion of the Dearing report was that higher education should resume its growth (Summary report p.6, para 27) towards a national full-time higher education participation rate averaging 45 per cent or more (Summary report p.6, para 28). In actuality, a target of 50% has been adopted by the current administration under a widening participation agenda (*The Future Of Higher Education*, 2003); this backdrop of increasing student numbers coupled with reducing per-capita funding within the highly competitive post-1992 HE sector provides a significant environ within which to place both the College and the NCM.

*The Learning Age* of 1998, a White paper forwarding 'lifelong learning' was to enhance and promote both the economic nationalist basis of HE as well as the widening participation agenda. This White paper followed the influential Fryer Report of the previous year, both promoting the concept of lifelong learning, the basic tenets of which were quoted from Jacques Delors in the introduction to the report:

There is a need to re-think and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it

adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings - their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. (Delors, from the introduction to the Fryer Report, 1997)

*The Learning Age* represented a sea-change in attitudes to higher education, most especially in terms of the nature of access to learning:

In future, learners need not be tied to particular locations. They will be able to study at home, at work, or in a local library or shopping centre, as well as in colleges and universities. People will be able to study at a distance using broadcast media and on-line access. Our aim should be to help people to learn wherever they choose and support them in assessing how they are doing and where they want to go next. (*The Learning Age*, 1998: chapter 1, section 1, para 1.2)

The theme of change, and the necessity for change is evident throughout both the Fryer Report and *The Learning Age*, the former using particularly forceful language (Fryer Report, 1997: part 4, section 13, paragraph 13.23):

In our view, the governing authorities, Vice-Chancellors and Principals of universities and other institutions of higher education should review their own strategies and policies to promote and monitor lifelong learning and widening participation. This should include considering their missions, targets, partnerships, the curriculum offer, governance and forms of public accountability.

For its part *The Learning Age* (1998) was to follow the line of the underpinning report (appendix to report section2, paragraph 1.5):

One of our biggest challenges is to get all those who provide learning to make it easier for people to learn. This can be done by: recognising that, over time, institutions and ways of doing things will need to change in response to the needs of learners.

The implications, then, of such a sea-change in thinking with reference to how best to provide learning opportunities is critical. I shall reflect on the specific impact that this had on this college later in the chapter. Reports and White papers, however, do not represent the entire story of how the lifelong learning agenda stepped into the higher education arena. They represented policy direction in the abstract. Policy direction in the concrete was to be achieved largely through the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF).

In 1998 HEFCE produced a series of strategies and funding proposals which were to take the policy ideals of Fryer and *The Learning Age* to the very core of higher education provision. In *Learning and Teaching: Strategy and Funding Proposal*, HEFCE was to link funding directly to the lifelong learning agenda (HEFCE, 98/40: para 8b):

As participation in HE increases and as higher education institutions (HEIs) respond to the lifelong learning agenda, the sector will have to convince a wider range of users of its high quality.

The strategic purposes and priorities laid down included encouragement and reward for the establishment of institutional learning and teaching strategies. Additionally, Paragraph 22

proposed a Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund targeted at three levels: the institution, the subject/discipline and the individual academic. A schematic of the TQEF suggested not just increased student numbers as a reward for learning and teaching strategies supportive of the new lifelong learning agenda, but further measures concerned with development funding for institutional links and the establishment of subject networks (para 44). The antecedents of both the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT) in Higher Education and the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) (which together with the Teaching Quality Enhancement national co-ordination team were to eventually form the HE Academy in 2004) were evident here. QAA was to begin a process of establishing both subject area benchmarking and codes of practice for HEIs in 1998 a process completed and then revised in 2004 (QAA, 2001).

HEFCE 98/40 not only encouraged the development of institutional learning and teaching strategies; further to this, it strove to encourage institutions to recognise the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. By way of example, HEFCE (1999: 99/26 para 18) highlighted support for learning and teaching strategies directed at innovation in learning and teaching, especially in the use of communications and information technology. There is great significance here in that not only do these demands alter what universities are to deliver (through benchmarking), but they also alter the ways in which they are to do it: more 'flexible' courses to meet the lifelong learning agenda taught through pedagogical means increasingly centred on Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

It was in 1999 that the first monies for the TQEF, £26M, were allocated. This was followed up by £31 million in 2000-01 and £32 million in 2001-02 (HEFCE 99/26) The lifelong learning agenda forwarded in Fryer and *The Learning Age* was to have a significant impact at the college via the funding from the TQEF, a

point to which I shall return later in the chapter when I review the effects of the changes at college level. The embedding of further aspects of education policy becomes the focus at this juncture.

The *Teaching and Higher Education Act* of 1998 was to see the extension of the 'positional' rather than 'public' good of universities. The former is aligned with the notion that the education system may be utilised in such a way as to provide positions of social advantage whilst the latter encapsulates the capacity of the system to benefit society as a whole (Hirsch, 1976; Marginson and Considine, 2000); if one takes the former view, the recipients of such advantage may be asked to contribute to the institutions that provide said advantage. By laying down the foundations of a scheme of fees in UK HE institutions the Teaching and Higher Education Act reflected this line of thought. Similarly, the competitive nature of the sector was furthered by new legislation regarding the term 'university', effectively embedding the expansionist and massificationist work inherent in the earlier Acts of 1988 and 1992.

## **Globalisation and Competition**

In setting out the future direction of HE, David Blunkett (Education Secretary) highlighted a further demand on HE, that of globalisation (Greenwich University Speech 2000: paragraph 7)

...higher education policymaking is now subject to new constraints caused by the rapidity of change, a situation unthinkable in the Robbins era. And this change is related to the fundamental socio-economic development of the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: globalisation. It is therefore with the challenge of globalisation that higher education policy now starts.

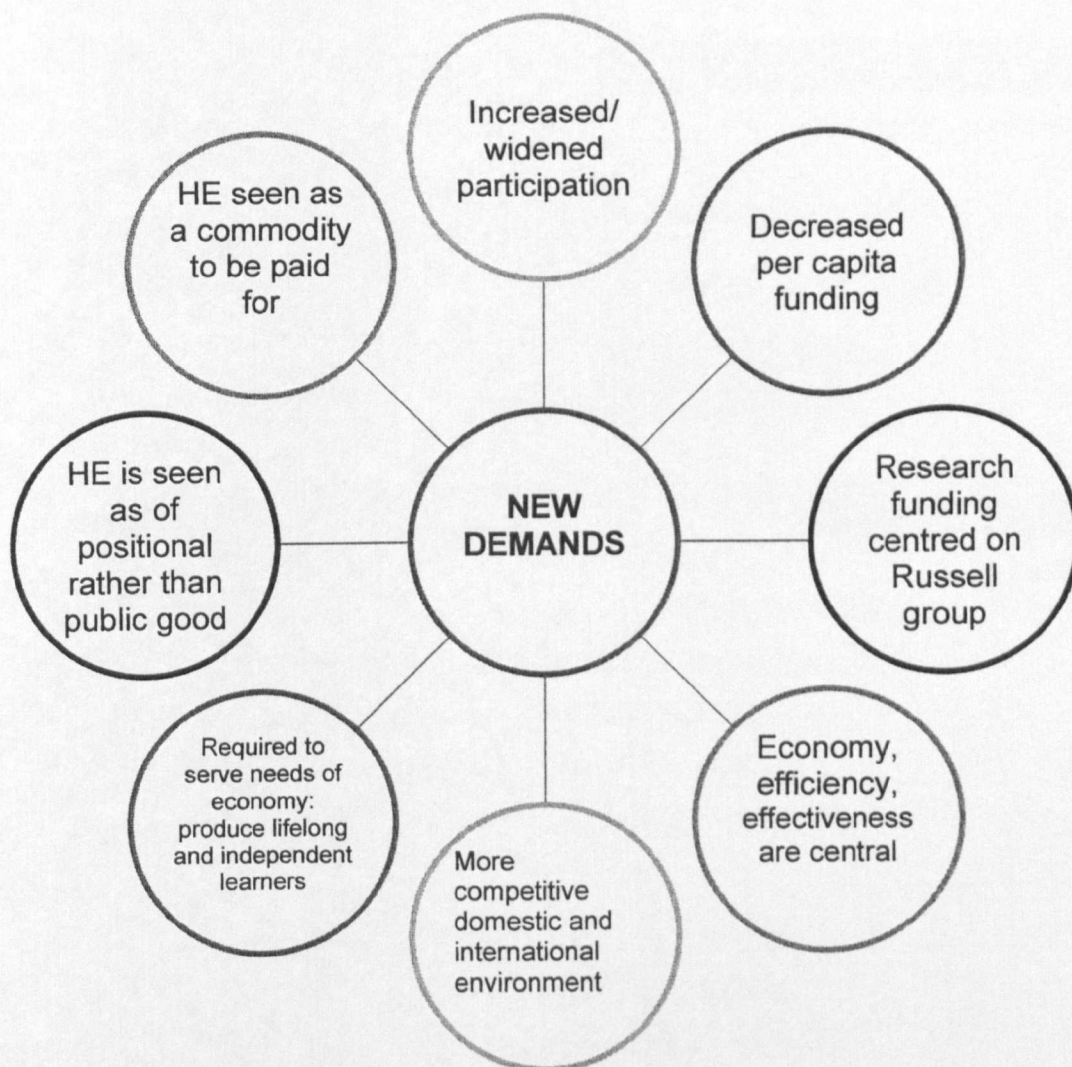
The issue of globalisation, then, and its perceived impact provides a significant backdrop to the NCM; the purpose at this juncture, however, is merely to highlight and re-acknowledge this impact since chapter 2 saw some exploration of this issue. I should like, though, to summarise the key arguments at this stage regarding the intriguing 'demands' to which the quote at the head of the thesis referred, a summary to be achieved through the use of modelling.

## **The NCM: A Model of New Demands**

Modelling, in some respects, may be viewed as synonymous with theory although, as in this instance, it may be viewed at a more general level than that of theory. In endeavouring to simplify the phenomena, to aid in explanation and conceptualisation, the subsequent model represents a system of abstract concepts at a more general level than a theory whilst still engaging with theory.

Chapter 1 considered the wider HE context and alluded to issues of widening participation, decreased per capita funding, the commodification of HE and the centring of research funding on the Russell group of research intensive universities. Chapter 2, for its part, revealed the 'efficient causes' that lay behind the changing nature of governance of HE, a changing nature demonstrated acutely in the current chapter. The theorised essence of the demands laid at the door of HE institutions is modelled below in diagrammatic format:





*Diagram 3.1 A model of 'new demands'*

These demands should be seen as being derived from a multi-faceted discourse. Hitherto, the debate has been relatively simplistic in that it has sought merely to demonstrate what the new demands were. I should now like to narrow the focus to demonstrate how these demands impacted on the college and how the college went about meeting these demands.

### **New Demands: Impact and Response**

Massification of higher education resulted in an increase in the student population from just over 0.8 million in 1987 (HEFCE, 2005) to 1.72 million in 1995 and to 2.19 million in 2001. The increase in student numbers at the college was to reflect this massificationist philosophy, seeing an increase from 3961 in

1995 to 5175 in 2001 (HESA *All Students by Institution*, 1995, 2001a). This represents an increase in student numbers of approximately 30% in less than six years.

Running parallel to the widening participation agenda was a desire to increase economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the HE sector with a reduction in central government funding as a percentage of overall income from 40.7% in 1998 to 39.6% in 2000 (HESA *Finance Tables* 1998, 2001). In a similar vein, publicly planned higher education funding per student saw a steady relative reduction from £8000 per capita to the approximately £4000 per capita in 2004 (Universities UK, DFES, 2004), a decline which was clearly a factor in 2000/01. The college faced, therefore, a dual challenge of substantially increased student numbers whilst at the same time funds for each of those students were in significant decline.

In terms of opening up research income streams, statistics suggest that one third of monies go to just six universities (HEFCE *HE in the UK*, 2005). In 2001, 80% of the college's staff were classed as non-research active; of those that were, none were rated higher than 3a (Higher Education and Research Opportunities, 2001). It is perhaps important to place the impact of low research output in stark perspective by comparing the college with just one of those six universities via the performance indicators for higher education published by HEFCE. In 1997/98 the University of Cambridge received £55.45 million in research funding whilst the college received £24,521 (HEFCE *Performance Indicators*, 1998). By 2001 the former received just over £59 million whilst the college received £19,231 (HEFCE *Performance Indicators*, 2001). The differential in research funding is clearly a substantial one.

These demands may then be placed within the context of a more competitive HE environment, especially following the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. Both further education colleges

and polytechnics entered the competitive frame in a manner not seen previously. Within the context of the college, HE is provided by no less than three providers in the city: one FE college, one university and the college. Interestingly, the Fryer Report of 1997 and *The Learning Age* White paper of 1998 were to see HEFCE (1998: 98/40 paragraph 44) encourage HEIs to form partnerships to enable improvement within and between departments and institutions. In response, the college developed a 'local collaboration agreement' with both the university and FE college that share the same city. The more competitive domestic and international environment saw the college develop new links with both China and Japan in 2000 (Institutional Annual Report, 2000-01).

The Fryer Report, *The Learning Age* and the subsequent HEFCE funding designed to promote lifelong learning were to have a significant impact on the college. In order to attract the funding, the response of the college was to appoint a Director of Learning and Teaching in the Spring of 2000 following the commitment to such a move in a draft learning and teaching strategy submitted to HEFCE in 1999. In terms of monies received for the development of learning and teaching strategies and their implementation the college received £29,816 in 1999-2000, £34,957 in 2000-01 and £37,013 in 2001-02. (Annex G of HEFCE 99/48). The schematic of funding from the TQEF is shown below, the whole funding scheme being supported by innovation in teaching and learning practice:

Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund		
Institution	Subject	Individual
Additional Student numbers	Development fund for high quality provision	Awards for 'sabbaticals' for enhancement and improvement activity
	Development funding for partnerships to enable improvement within and between departments and institutions	
	Development of subject networks	Awards for 'Fellowships/Chairs' in high quality subject teaching
Innovation in teaching and learning practice		

*Table 3.1 Proposed funding from the TQEF (HEFCE, 1998: 98/40 para 44)*

The appointment of a Director of Learning and Teaching was followed up by the appointment of Principal Lecturers in every school in the college: their specific role was that of local interpretation of the college learning and teaching strategy. A series of teaching fellows were also appointed to develop new ways of teaching within the remit of the NCM which, to attract funding, necessarily had to be both flexible and reflective of the desire for increased ICT usage.

The cumulative causation effect of significantly increased student numbers combined with reduced per capita funding coupled to drives for economy was to have a bearing on the campus distribution of the college. This was dramatically rationalised with the complete closure of one of the campuses in a location bearing the college name (the college was located in two

distinctly separate locations until that point). The rationalisation was not to stop there, however; it was followed by the closure of smaller sites within the one remaining city until just one campus remained (Institutional Annual Report, 2000-01). The centralisation to a single campus base was followed by some significant estate development, especially in 2000 when £1 million was spent and in 2001 which saw a £3.7 million spend.

The drive for more flexible learning methods driven by the lifelong learning agenda precipitated the replacement of the combined honours degree format with what was termed the 'integrated flexible learning and joint honours framework', designed to provide a basis for part-time and work-based learners to study (Institutional Annual Report, 2000-01). The on-going effect of the lifelong learning agenda is nowhere more apparent than in the strategic aims of the college, the *first* of which is:

To provide a student-centred curriculum which is underpinned by research and/or scholarship, fosters independent learning, and equips and inspires students for learning throughout their working lives. (Institutional Literature, 2006 Strategic Aims)

The demands, however, were to precipitate change to the core of the college's provision: its curriculum. The range and severity of these new demands were not lost on HEFCE; indeed, they explicitly recognise some of them in their own literature. In listing the components of the learning and teaching strategies, HEFCE (1999: 99/48, para 11) noted that strategies submitted to them were frequently found to include a section termed 'context':

Context: an analysis of the problems or environment the institution finds itself in that produce the pressures for change. Examples

include meeting the needs of more diverse students, overcoming reduced resources, increasing retention and improving QAA outcomes.

In the same paragraph (sub-section f), learning and teaching strategies submitted to HEFCE reveal that institutions envisage that they shall need to make changes to their curricula to meet the new context.

Indeed, a major focus of institutional strategies in response to these demands have been changes to patterns of provision, a point highlighted by Gibbs (2003: para 12):

Externally driven curriculum change, especially in response to QAA initiatives and requirements and initiatives, has emerged as a major focus for many institutional strategies.

The focus of this thesis lies both in context (the deep 'efficient causes' of the previous chapter and the structures/mechanisms of the current one) and nature of the powers exerted by those structures (the coercive, mimetic or normative legitimation of chapter 1). The focus of the thesis now turns to the development process of the NCM at the college.

### **NCM: From Articulation to Implementation**

The education institution that forms the focus of this inquiry is over 150 years old and, at the inception of the NCM, had full college status within a larger university institution. Whilst the college had its own governance infrastructure, it could not award its own degrees: these were awarded by a university. The college staff comprised 8 at 'executive' level, 166 academic staff, 220 members of administrative staff and 168 ancillary staff. The student body comprised some 3,000 full-time, 1,000 part-time and 400 post-graduate students within five academic schools

(Quality Assurance Agency review, 2001). The curricula prior to the development of the NCM was based on the delivery of modules around a norm of 60 teaching hours per 20 credit module, although in some modules contact time could be significantly higher than this (Institutional Literature, 2001b).

The Corporate plan for 2001-2004 reveals that the NCM formed a central element of college strategies: curriculum, learning and teaching, widening participation, human resources and estates (Institutional literature, 2001a). Perceived challenges formed by the external environment and considered extensively in chapter 2 (and the earlier sections of the current chapter) become quite apparent from the same plan:

College is keenly aware of the challenges posed by the competitive external environment in which it operates: the political climate; the economic environment; the social environment and changes in technology. Analysis of these external factors shows that to achieve our aims College must become an open, approachable and responsive institution, firmly placed within the university sector and attractive to a diversity of learners. (Institutional Literature, 2001a: p. unpagued document)

The senior management team of the college judged that the current funding of the college was over-dependent on funded student numbers. This interpretation is not illogical when the actual figures are reviewed: of the total income in 2000-01 of £20.9 million, £16.1 million came from funding council grants and/or tuition fees (Institutional Literature Annual Report 2000-01). It was seen as vital to the achievement of corporate objectives that the college increasingly invest in activity related to research and commercialisation (Institutional Literature, 2001a).

Accordingly, the stated aims of the NCM within a broader learning and teaching strategy were to:

- More closely define student learning hours
- Reduce contact time to allow staff more scope for research and commercial activity
- To foster students' development as independent learners

The first of these was central to the NCM in that student learning hours were to be dramatically cut as subsequent sections shall demonstrate.

Following the aforementioned 'articulation of a vision', the modernisation of the curriculum was agreed in principle by the academic board of the college on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2001 following an earlier meeting of 27 November of the same year (Institutional Literature, 2002). The introduction of a new model for the definition of student learning hours was tabled for the first time at this meeting and recommended close definition of learning activity, the reduction of contact time and the fostering of students as independent learners.

The NCM forms the bedrock of the Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2002/3-2004/5 (Institutional literature, 2002) and was endorsed by the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Board in July 2002. The aims of this strategy were sixfold, the links to both the Fryer Report of 1997 and *The Learning Age of 1998* being absolutely apparent:

- To create a supportive learning environment
- To prepare students for employability
- To support and reward staff in developing learning and teaching
- To create a flexible learning and teaching environment
- To advance evaluation of the College's learning and teaching practices



- To develop new collaborative links in the delivery of learning and teaching

There was to be a key emphasis on both flexibility and ICT as promoted by HEFCE funding attached to the TQEF. Supported open learning (SOL) was to form the bedrock of the ICT strand of the model, making significant use of computer technology.

The Director of Learning and Teaching, responsible for the implementation of the learning and teaching strategy, was supported by an infrastructure comprising Principal Lecturers in every school in the college combined with individuals selected for teaching fellowships.

### **The NCM and Consultation**

Due to be implemented in September 2002 for all level 1 modules, the NCM was to be centred on three models: classroom-based, workshop-based and 'exceptions to the norm' (where the hours were to be specified); the models, showing indicative learning and teaching hours, were distributed for consultation (see table 3.2 below).

The consultation document was considered by each of the five schools, the Students' Union and the lecturers' union NATFHE; the responses (an X indicating potential difficulties with implementation) being shown at table 3.3.

### Model 1: Classroom-Based

Type of Learning Activity	Hours per 20 credit module (200 hours in total)	Number of teaching weeks
Timetabled Contact e.g. lectures/seminars	24	
Supported open learning	*Level 1 – 24 *Level 2 – 12 *Level 3 – 8	
Independent Study/assessment	*Level 1 – 152 *Level 2 – 164 *Level 3 – 168	

### Model 2: Workshop-Based

Type of Learning Activity	Hours per 20 credit module (200 hours in total)	Number of teaching weeks
Timetabled Contact e.g. lectures/seminars	*Level 1 – 36 *Level 2 – 25 *Level 3 – 15	
Supported open learning <i>[please specify SOL strategies]</i>	*Level 1 – 30 *Level 2 – 25 *Level 3 – 15	
Independent Study/assessment	*Level 1 – 134 *Level 2 – 150 *Level 3 – 170	

### Model 3: Exceptions to the Norm

Type of Learning Activity	Hours per 20 credit module (200 hours in total)	Number of teaching weeks
Timetabled Contact e.g. lectures/seminars		
Supported open learning		
Independent Study/assessment		
Exceptions to the Norm – Please specify arguments for a different balance of hours on academic grounds		

*Table 3.2 Indicative learning and teaching strategy consultation document*

Issues	Timescale	Head of School	Student Experience	Nature of Discipline	Infrastructure	Widening Participation	Cost	Student support
School A	X	X	X	X	X X X	X		X
School B	X				X		X	X
Students' Union	X		X		X	X		X
School C				X				
School D	X		X + learning style	X		X		X
School E	X (level 3 first)		X (Chinese students)		X	X		X
NATFHE Union	X					X		X

Table 3.3 Response to consultation

The consultation resulted in a variety of concerns being raised. These were summarised in institutional literature in January 2002; the key areas of concern were deemed to be 'timescale', 'contact hours' and 'practical concerns'. The first of these was highlighted by every respondent group and centred on the difficulty of implementing the NCM for all Level 1 modules in September 2002. A compromise was suggested by the respondents: introduce the model in September 2002 but begin with level 3 modules which already employed a more independent learning style. The main reasons given for deferral were lack of resources, (staff time, staff capability, technical support, and infrastructure) and the demands of revalidation of modules. Whilst these 'timescale' difficulties were recognised, it was felt by College Directors that:

A further year's delay would seriously undermine the achievement of the College's corporate targets. Beginning with level three modules would not achieve the benefits, and would risk destabilising current students. (Institutional Literature, 2002b)

Contact hours were the second major concern and focused on the general opinion that the proposed hours were insufficient. The reduction from the status quo of 60 teaching hours to 24 for classroom based modules was a clear concern. For its part, the students' union proposed that level 1 contact hours should be 48 hours at all levels for workshop modules. School C also highlighted the requirements of professional bodies and school A that modules requiring a 'performance' should have significantly increased contact time.

Additionally, there were concerns expressed about student experience and retention, student ability and widening participation, and feedback to students. The potential impact on

the 'student experience' was seen to be of overwhelming concern:

There was widespread anxiety that a reduction in direct teaching would lead to disaffection and an increase in withdrawals. (Institutional Literature, 2002b)

In a similar vein, the NCM was criticised for its purported failure according to the respondents to recognise the relatively low academic achievement level of the students at the College. The dependence of the NCM on supported open learning (SOL) was seen to be incompatible with the preferred learning styles of the students. This argument was countered by the Director of Learning and Teaching, whom suggested that SOL does not imply a mode of delivery; rather, it can be IT based, print based or practically based. Running parallel to this was a concern of many respondents that feedback to students would be reduced if direct contact hours were reduced. It was felt that additional hours should be allowed for tutorials.

The third significant area of concern noted by respondents centred on 'practical' issues in terms of the capacity of the infrastructure to support the implementation of the model, including:

- Availability and sufficiency of library and computing services
- Availability and sufficiency of learning spaces
- Costs of the move towards SOL
- The need for an extensive programme of staff development in the pedagogic and technical design of SOL materials

With reference to the first two of these, the College has recently opened a learning centre that comprises a new library and resource centre.

## Implementation

With these concerns in mind, the academic board was asked to approve the implementation of the Learning and teaching model on a phased basis between academic year 2002/03 and academic year 2004/05. By September 2002, a high percentage of level 1 modules were transferred to the new model, as the following table suggests:

School	Percentage of level 1 modules transferred
A	82 %
B	52 %
C	100 %
D	100 %
E	39 %

*Table 3.4 Percentage of level 1 modules transferred to the NCM by September 2002*

The timetable of implementation was reviewed in February 2003 as a result of these findings, with a new timetable being approved by academic board advising the following:

Year	Delivery
2002/3	Minimum 50% level 1 modules delivered in the new model
2003/4	Minimum 50% level 2 modules delivered in the new model
2004/5	Minimum 50% level 3 modules delivered in the new model
2005/6	100% undergraduate modules delivered in the new model

*Table 3.5 Revised timetable for implementation of the NCM*

The following further guidelines were given to each school (Institutional Literature, 2003):

The exact timetable for the revalidation of the balance of undergraduate models will be determined by each School. Their individual timetables will be informed by events such as the validation of new programmes and internal review. It is proposed that each School provides a timetable to the Director of Learning and Teaching, who will report to the next meeting of Academic Board.

The college met its objective to incorporate all suitable undergraduate modules within the NCM framework by 2005/6. Only a few modules remain outside, notably in counselling and, partially, in psychology. The necessity for intensive practical work in the former and the requirements of the British Psychological Society (BPS) for the latter were to mean that aspects of provision remain outside the model.

Such seismic transmutation of an entire undergraduate curriculum demands a multi-faceted and complex array of conditions and relational networks and it is to this that I should now like to turn. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 have aimed to provide a picture of the wider HE context, the deep 'efficient causes' as well as the structures and mechanisms that were to precipitate the NCM. Quintessentially, these chapters have attempted to unpick the new demands so tantalisingly mentioned by the college in the quote at the head of the thesis. The objective now becomes one of researching the new demands theory (summarised in diagram 2.1 p. 72) alongside integrated institutionalism. This task is undertaken in the first instance through an in-depth discussion of methodology.

# CHAPTER 4

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter

Epistemological questions promulgated by Descartes (most transparently in *Discourse on Method*, 1637) opened up debate concerning the philosophical theory of knowledge centred on the question of how we can gain absolute knowledge (episteme), as opposed to assumptions or beliefs (doxa), about reality. Efforts to answer this epistemological puzzle have been the site of varied and controversial philosophical debate throughout academic work of every conceivable origin.

Whilst all theses may be seen to engage in epistemological, ontological and methodological reasoning to one degree or another, it is clear that research methodology and method form as much of a central topic as a resource within this thesis. Both methodology and methods may be seen as significantly more than underlabourers whose *raison d'être* lie merely in providing a means to examining and answering queries posed via a literature review. Rather the meta-theory forms the stylobate of the thesis; additionally, analysis of the strengths, drawbacks and logistical research issues of employing a specific meta-theory are central aspects of this thesis itself (see research objective 4 in the introduction, table 1.2 page 17).

Whilst Sayer (1992, 2000) and Danermark et al. (2002), both cited in the introduction, reveal a belief in the capacity of critical realism to provide the underpinnings of a methodology to explain events in the social world, to simplistically accept and read off this capacity as a given would be both naïve and suggestive of a lack of exhaustiveness in terms of investigating alternatives. The critical realist stance necessarily must be disinvolved to reveal its epistemological, ontological, heuristic and methodological foundations, a role to which this chapter has been assigned.



With this objective central, the chapter begins with a wide focus prior to narrowing. In the initial section attention is paid to the efforts of philosophers to untangle the nature of causation. Succeeding this may be found a review of the innate nature of the research questions, the inquiry and its object with a view to establishing the hermeneutic framework within which to place the study. Ontology then takes centre stage prior to an examination of critical realism and its explanatory potential.

## **Causal Explanation**

Perhaps the initial dominant form of explanatory framework was derived from Aristotle's (384-322 B.C) 'Four Causes'. Whilst this is often cited in relation to causes, Aristotle's original work was in fact associated with *aition* (plural *aitia*) which poses a rather more subtle question. An *aition* is whatever one can cite in answer to a 'why' question (Cohen, 2002). What is given in answer to a 'why' question is an explanation.

The traditional picture and terminology of the four causes is portrayed as:

- Material cause: 'that out of which a thing comes to be and persists'. e.g. bronze, silver and the genus of these (metals).
- Formal cause: 'the statement of essence', 'the account of what it is to be and the parts of the account'
- Efficient cause: 'the primary source of change'
- Final cause: 'the end (*telos*), that for the sake of which a thing is done' (Cohen, 2002).

Projected in slightly different, more accessible terminology, the four causes might read:

- What is the object made up of?
- What is it to be the object?
- What produces the object?
- What is the purpose of the object?

Aristotle held that the four causes could be applied to artefacts (tables are often cited as the example) as well as to nature, suggestive of the notion that natural objects (i.e. trees) had a goal, purpose or sake (a suggestion which became the site of considerable criticism – see Cohen, 2002).

More specifically, the potential for application of the four causes to the NCM may be seen to exhibit significant hurdles, not the least of which lies in establishing the material cause. That is, the NCM has no genus in materials. However, the legacy of this work is visible even in modern work; note, for example, the use of 'efficient causes' by Collier (1994) and the traits of formal cause evident in the detailed description of both the NCM itself and its examination within chapter 3 of the current work. A strong critique of Aristotelian polemics, however, was to come from a more mechanical view of cause.

Mechanical explanations, most closely associated with the work of Hobbes (1588 - 1679) and best articulated in his most influential work, *Leviathan*, of 1651, engendered an extension of the science of mechanics. Rejecting the use of the four causes by the universities of Christendom, Hobbes held that cause was intimately related to the effects of minute particles of matter of which humans are composed:

The cause of sense is the external body, or object, which presseth the organ proper to each sense, either immediately, as in the taste and touch; or mediately, as in seeing, hearing, and smelling: which pressure, by the mediation of nerves and other strings and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the brain and heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart to deliver itself: which endeavour, because outward, seemeth to be

some matter without. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*,  
chapter 1)

The four causes, however, were to face further confrontations, notably from empiricism. In becoming the dominant philosophy in scientific inquiry, empiricism saw the rejection of efforts to explain in terms of objects not directly observable or lacking access to experimental determination. The empiricist view of constant conjunctions of events or regular associations is most closely linked with Hume (1711-1776), defining cause in two ways; firstly,

An object, followed by another, and where all objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second. (Hume, in Nidditch, 1974: p. 76)

And, secondly:

An object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other. (Hume, in Nidditch, 1974: p.77)

In a straightforward sense, Hume argued that if events of one form are regularly preceded by events of another then we may identify the former as the cause of the latter. This form of 'covering law', whereby the event to be explained is shown to be covered by a law linking events of one form with events of another, is synonymous with Hume. In terms of epistemology and design, Hume is dismissive of *a priori* reasoning and argument, arguing that:

It is only experience which teaches us the nature and bounds of cause and effect, and enables us to infer the existence of one object from that of another (Hume in Nidditch, 1974: p. 164).

Causal explanation was focussed on this experience or evidence of the senses. This reliance, however, on experience as the focal point of causation was to precipitate the most inextensible problem of this form of induction: how is it possible to infer that covering laws based on and in our experience shall be continued into the future? A further issue arises in relation to making causal laws from the finite evidence of the observable (Bunge, 1979).

Empiricism was to be discursively censured by relativism, a stance implying a rejection of absolute or universal standards. 'Truth' may be regarded as always being relative to relational networks of political and social, historical and cultural dimensions. For proponents of this view, all knowledge is infinitely relative and so to search for general knowledge and general truth is totally meaningless (see Rorty, 1980). The epistemology of relativism is perhaps best summed up by one of its foremost exponents; in *Against Method*, Feyerabend (1978) set out to demonstrate that for each methodological principle of science, a case could be made for an opposing stance. Indeed, Feyerabend was to go as far as suggesting that, in epistemological terms at least, 'anything goes'. In fashioning such claims, however, the stance effectively collapsed inwards since, if no such general truth exists, the relativists cannot make such claims either (Danermark et al. 2002).

Drawing further on this epistemological dialectic in the section to follow, the broad research paradigms of positivism and interpretivism shall be reviewed. Further to this, both the research questions and the object are the subject of deliberation with a view to establishing the innate nature of the inquiry and how this may be seen to impact on methodology.

## **Research Paradigms and the Innate Nature of the Inquiry**

The four causes, mechanical explanations and empirical explanations of cause have informed and influenced

epistemological debate to a significant degree. The result has been a high degree of paradigmatic, dualistic shackling with researchers frequently adopting what Danermark et al. (2002) term an 'either-or' approach with research centring on one of the two classic methodological traditions: positivism or interpretivism.

Quintessentially, positivism (signifying adherence to an empiricist view of the nature of science based on systematic observation and experiment, after Comte's *Course in Positivist Philosophy* 1830-1842 [translated and condensed by Martineau]) relies on the potential of and for falsifiability in research; in other words, theories and subsequent explanations cannot be regarded as being 'scientific' in the true sense unless they are falsifiable (Popper, 1959). In the context of educational research, the positivist hegemony in research of the past has meant the quarantining and rejection of investigations that have not placed this concept at centre stage (Clark, 2000). Critics of the positivist perspective, however, tend to focus on the nature of the educationalist's subject matter as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: p.25) suggest:

...the processes of education, teaching and learning are so complex and multifaceted that to focus only upon cause and effect, products, outcomes and correlations in research ...is of limited value.

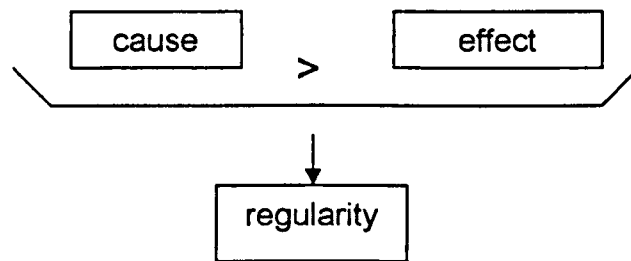
For their part, Borg and Gall (1989) argue that aspects of power relations, discourse, culture and cognitive processes cannot adequately be evaluated through simple verifiability of what can be objectively observed. The suitability of one research methodology over another may be founded on a plethora of factors outside this broad conceptualisation of 'subject matter'. The purpose of any given inquiry, in this instance to provide a causal explanation, coupled with the object of the inquiry may be seen to impact on the choice of methodology.

For their part, Danermark et al., (2002) argue that the object of the inquiry should be seen to exert some considerable influence over methodological considerations. Philosophers have examined this issue of objects, suggesting that science has two dimensions, that of the intransitive and the transitive (Bhaskar, 1997); it is the former that relates to the objects of science, whether that science be natural or, as is the case with the NCM, social; the latter, for its part is constitutive of the theories of science. The objects of natural and social science, it is argued, differ on a number of levels, impacting on the suitability or otherwise of particular forms of methodology.

Whereas the objects of natural science may be 'naturally' produced, the objects of social science are both socially defined and socially produced (Sayer, 1992). The NCM, then, lies within a double as opposed to a single hermeneutic framework; the latter is suggestive of a framework in which the interpretation or understanding of natural phenomena is a one-sided concern of the researcher; the former, for its part, involves a double interpretative framework where the social scientist's work is to interpret other people's interpretations since those notions and understandings are an inseparable part of the object of study (Danermark et al., 2002).

Social scientists frequently operate and investigate within hermeneutic frameworks exhibiting radically different traits from those of their natural scientist counterparts. On the one hand, societies are changeable in a way that nature is not; whereas it may be possible to manipulate an environment in natural science, it is rarely possible to achieve the same in social science settings (Danermark, 2002; Sayer, 2000). For natural scientists, it is plausible to research their objects within closed systems; social scientists rarely have this luxury, tending to operate within open systems since it is beyond the bounds of researchers to manipulate and control influences from all conceivable social factors.

Closed systems require intrinsic and extrinsic conditions of a broadly stable and constant nature (Bhaskar, 1997). A given object possessing powers to bring about specific outcomes is likely to exhibit stable traits within a closed system (intrinsic); similarly, the external conditions (extrinsic) in which the object is situated are likely to be relatively constant within such a system. Under these conditions, consistent regularities are likely to occur and represent the positivist or successionist view of causation:



*Diagram 4.1 The positivist or successionist view of causation  
(from Sayer, 2000: p.14)*

The closed systems and single hermeneutic interpretative framework of the natural scientist do not tend to present themselves spontaneously in the social world. Rather, in the open systems of the social world it is distinctly possible that the same causal mechanism may produce different outcomes, a theme to be reinforced later in this chapter.

A further distinction between natural and social science objects lies in the notion of concept dependency (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 2000; Bhaskar, 1997). Objects in natural science operate within relatively closed systems and the researchers may find it possible to view them through a single hermeneutic lens; meanings and significance need not be attached to those objects since objects shall operate irrespective of what meaning the researcher or others may attach to them. The same cannot be said when researching in a social setting since objects in this environment may exhibit and transmit *meaning*, rendering the object 'concept dependent'. An example may serve to explain,

Danermark et al. (2002: p. 33), using concept dependency associated with money:

If objects (i.e. money) had no concept dependency (i.e. meaning), nobody would perform any actions related to them and they would simply cease to exist. Such is not the case with objects of natural science where mechanisms exist and work independently of what meaning and significance we attach to them.

This notion of concept dependency is a crucial distinction between natural and social science and I should like to return to it later. The critical point at this juncture is that there are significant differences between the objects of natural and social science rendering the use of an experimental design unsuitable for both the object and the purpose of this particular inquiry.

The nature of systems (closed v open) investigated, the hermeneutic (single v double lens) framework and the objects (in terms of concept dependency) of natural and social science differ on a variety of levels, arguably necessitating varying methods of establishing cause. Moreover, whilst the innate nature of the inquiry and the nature of the object have an impact on the debate concerning methodology, so too does the ontological starting point and it is on this issue of the nature of reality that I would now like to focus my attention.

## **Ontology and Critical Realism**

Researchers differ as to their interpretations of reality. Empirical ontology would tend to suggest that what we can observe is all that exists whilst actualism assumes that what actually happens at the level of events exhausts the world. The 1970s and 80s saw a significant development in thought regarding the nature of reality, most especially through the work of Harré (1970),



Bhaskar (1989; 1997; 1998) and Bunge (1979). For his part, Bunge suggested that:

- Reality is arranged in levels.
- That something qualitatively new can emerge from a lower level (emergence).
- That there is a distinction between a real world and a conceptual one, between our descriptions of it and the factual reality.
- Empiricism may be criticised for its reduction to the observable.

(Bunge, 1979)

The first notion is a particularly significant one; as Bhaskar (1997) has argued, reality is arranged in levels consisting of the real, the actual and the empirical. The real may be regarded as whatever exists, be it natural or social; it is the realm of objects whether they be physical (like minerals) or social (like bureaucracies), their structures and powers. As Sayer (2000) argues, they have certain structures, causal powers and capacities to behave in particular ways. The real domain, argues Bhaskar (1997) is that which can produce events in the world, that which metaphorically can be called 'mechanisms'.

The actual refers to what happens if and when those real powers are activated, to what they do and what eventuates when they do (Sayer, 2000). Importantly, the actual domain may remain dormant; alternatively, it may be particularly active and events shall happen whether we experience them or not (Bhaskar, 1997). In other words, there exist a reality independent of our concepts and knowledge of it (Danermark et al., 2002). This is radically different from the empirical domain which consists of that which we can experience, directly or indirectly. The suggestion here is that reality is not transparent; rather reality has powers and mechanisms which we cannot see, but which we may be able to experience indirectly by their ability to cause –

to make things happen in the world (Danermark, 2002). This may be applied to the issue of the thesis. Governance cannot be seen, but it does have the capacity to cause and to make things happen in the world: the NCM.

The explanatory potential of critical realism centres, then, on a different perspective on reality. From this perspective, ontological interpretations precede epistemology and serve as the initiation point for what follows in research. However, this emerging tradition requires a further degree of scrutiny as I examine the critical realist view of causation

### **The Critical Realist View of Causation**

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of a seismic change in interpretivist methodologies; perhaps one of the most significant came in the form of critical realism, a meta-theory explicitly claiming to have the potential to explain society. Most frequently attributed to the work of Bhaskar (1997), this emergent tradition is also closely related to the work of Harré (1970) and Bunge (1979). Later exponents of the tradition include Danermark et al. (2002), Sayer, (2000) and Pawson and Tilley (1997).

For his part, Harré (1970) suggested that there had to be underlying generative mechanisms were it to be at all possible to analyse the world in terms of cause and effect. As such, critical realists argue that the tradition involves a switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology from events to mechanisms (Danermark, et al., 2002). To focus not on events, but rather on the generative mechanisms that produce given outcomes is a particular emphasis of critical realism. The essential traits of critical realism have perhaps best been elucidated by Archer et al., (1998: p. xi):

...critical realism claims to be able to combine  
and reconcile ontological realism,

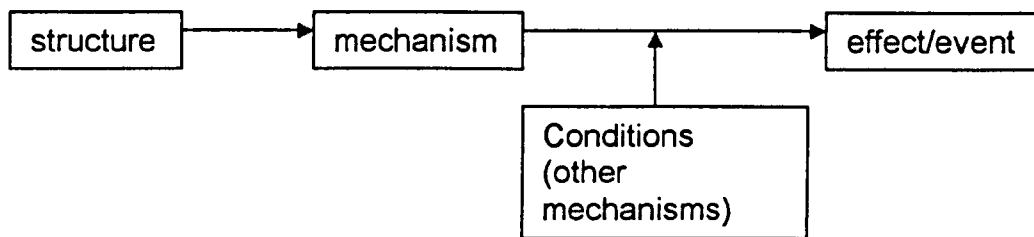
Ontological realism espouses the conceptualisation of the stratified reality considered above: the real, the actual and the empirical. Epistemological relativism is suggestive of the notion that our knowledge of this reality is always fallible whilst judgemental rationality implies that, despite this fallibility, there exist methodological means to fruitfully investigate mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2002).

Critical realists have provided a critique of positivist objectivism in the sense that facts, the empirical observation and scientific data, are rarely objective or neutral in any definitive sense. For his part, Bhaskar (1997) argues that empiricist work is always theory impregnated and that data is always mediated by theoretical conceptions. The 'empirical world' for Bhaskar represents an epistemological fallacy since it reduces reality down to the empirical; that is, it reduces what is to what we can know about it. On the other side of the epistemological pendulum, idealistic/cognitive relativism with its arguments regarding the total meaninglessness of the search for general knowledge and truth (see, for example, Rorty, 1980) is criticised for its innate self contradiction (the 'inward collapse of relativism' noted earlier; Danermark et al., [2002]).

The work of Bhaskar (1997), Harré (1970) and Bunge (1979) forwarded a set of key philosophical questions; firstly, Bhaskar asked 'what must reality be like to make the existence of science possible?'. From this question stemmed the key switch from episteme to ontology; Bhaskar questioned the nature of reality itself and suggested that it is from our understanding of reality that all other assumptions are made. The stratified nature of reality in terms of the empirical (what we can experience), the actual (the occurrence of events whether we experience them or otherwise) and the real (that which can produce events in the

world and may metaphorically be referred to as mechanisms) was how Bhaskar viewed reality. It is in this third domain of reality that one may seek out the generative mechanisms that may produce specific outcomes.

The critical realist view of causation is suggestive of the capacity of structures to bring about mechanisms which, under specific conditions or contexts, shall bring about specific effects or events:



*Diagram 4.2 Critical Realist view of causation (from Sayer, 2000: p. 15)*

A significant implication of this stratified view of reality is that powers may a) exist unexercised and b) that subsequent events or outcomes may differ given differing contexts or conditions (Sayer, 2000). Structures, however, must have degrees of concept dependency for this generative mechanism to bring about effects or events as Danermark et al., (2002: p. 32) imply:

... concepts of reality that people, including researchers, have formed and are forming – ‘science’, ‘everyday knowledge’, ‘common sense’, and so on – are not only concepts ‘about’ or ‘within’ society. They are constitutive for the social phenomena making up the field of research as such.

The notion of concept dependency mentioned earlier in this chapter is an expression of the inherent meaning of objects; its importance lies in the argument that, should structures have no concept dependency, they would cease to have meaning and

therefore cease to have functionality in reality. It is, therefore, these structures that constitute the deep dimension of social reality and it is where mechanisms are located which ultimately generate events and effects (Danermark et al., 2002). Exploring the generation of the NCM requires, then, that a) these structures are identified and b) there is some attempt made to investigate the mechanisms through which they are able to generate the particular events that gave rise to the NCM. The first may be regarded as a relational networks or, as Sayer (2000) may suggest, causal groups: groups or networks of specific people, institutions, discourse and things with which they interact.

Critical realism, then, appears to provide a meta-theoretical framework with a degree of suitability to investigate the causal group associated with the NCM; this, indeed, formed the substantive part of the chapters 2 and 3. The task now becomes one of moving from the philosophical, ontological foundations of the meta-theory to the explanatory potential it may be seen to possess.

### **The Explanatory Potential of Critical Realism**

This study seeks a causal explanation of the NCM; as such, the thesis is asking what determined, created, produced or made it happen (Sayer, 1992). Further elaboration as to the nature of critical realist thought regarding causal explanation is a stage of some import and I should like to attend to it at this juncture. This endeavour requires examination of the pivotal conceptual superstructure behind its explanatory potential, including realist causal analysis, emergent powers and generalisation.

As the introduction suggested, from a critical realist perspective, cause is intimately related to *natural necessity*; the components of which are structures, powers, generative mechanisms and events or, more specifically, tendencies (Danermark et al., 2002). The generation of any given event stems from an

interaction of efficient causes, structures, powers and mechanisms as Sayer (1992) and Collier (1994) suggested.

<b>Abstraction</b>	<b>Causal sequence</b>
Concrete	Events (dependent on context)
	Mechanisms
	Structures
Abstract	Efficient causes

*Table 4.1 Theorised causal sequence in critical realism*

It is mechanisms that have the potential to generate an event, a mechanism being that which can cause something in the world to happen (Danermark et al., 2002). In relation to critical realist ontology, mechanisms are quintessentially the realm of the real, whilst the actual is the realm of what occurs when those mechanisms are activated. It is notable from the diagrammatic representation of this relationship between the real (mechanisms) and the actual (what occurs when these mechanisms are activated) that any given mechanism may result in one or more of a set of feasible outcomes. That is, mechanisms are suggestive of tendencies rather than causal laws (Bhaskar, 1997).

The NCM, then, may be regarded as one of a possible set of outcomes from the political, economic, managerial and institutional structures within its relational network. The relational network, then, merely tended to produce an outcome in the form of the NCM; as Pawson and Tilley (1997) would argue, the tendency to produce one of a range of feasible outcomes is tempered by the context within which the mechanisms are set.

Suggestive of a link between structures and events based on tendency rather than law, critical realism postulates that structures are working independently of the factual outcome. That is, in critical realist thought, there is no simplistic

assumption that A leads to B, as Hume, Comte and Popper might argue. In this sense, tendencies are seen to be transfactual, requiring the generation of transfactual questions and arguments which look beyond the factual event by postulating and identifying the generative mechanisms which made the event possible (Danermark et al., 2002: p.58). Critical realism advocates accomplishing this task through retroduction, a task which sets out to establish the necessary conditions for something to be what it is and not something else.

By way of explanation, Danermark et al. refer to a piece of research immeasurably different from that which is of concern here, but which reveals the nature of retroduction particularly well. Reviewing the work of Bauman (1989) concerned with the holocaust, they note that the analysis of the events precipitating the holocaust was distinct in that it discarded both explanations based simply on the economic and political situation on the one hand as well as those based simply on anti-semitism on the other. Rather, the fundamental condition of the holocaust was seen to lie in the structure of rational modern society, a structure marked by strategies to control and create perfect order, what Bauman terms a 'gardening culture'. Traits of this culture are elaborate bureaucratic hierarchies and intricate social control.

In answering the question 'how is the NCM possible', there are two crucial points here. Firstly, instead of merely regarding the NCM as a by-product of the political, economic, managerial and institutional agendas considered in the previous two chapters, retroductive thinking perceives of the NCM as the result of something more; it may, if we were to adopt Bauman's hypothesis, be seen to represent a desire to control and create perfect order in rational modern society (I shall not be adopting this hypothesis, but it is interesting nonetheless); secondly, critical realism regards objects of science as relational; that is, their nature is related to the internal relations they have to other objects. Retroduction attempts to attain knowledge about what

internal relations make up the NCM. The review of the political, economic, managerial and institutional relational network represents, in a retroductive sense, an attempt to perceive of what these internal relations may be.

Accusations of a top-down analysis are difficult to ignore here until the concept of emergence and emergent powers is considered (Bunge, 1979). Critical realism rejects top-down analysis, suggesting instead that events are characterised by emergence (Sayer, 2000: p.12):

Critical realism argues that the world is characterized by emergence, that is situations in which the conjunction of two or more features or aspects give rise to new phenomena, which have properties which are irreducible to those of their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence.

The essence of Bunge's (1979) and Sayer's (2000) concept of emergence is that something qualitatively new may emerge from lower levels. Rather than a top-down relationship, critical realism forwards a view of the world based on dependency, a concept well elucidated by Lawson (1997: p.64) who argued that social systems commonly involve:

...dependencies or combinations [which] causally affect the elements or aspects, and the form and structure of the elements causally influence each other and so also the whole.

Retroduction, then, involves a form of conceptual abstraction which seeks out the necessary as opposed to the contingent. It is perhaps important to note at this juncture that the efficient causes, structures and mechanisms theorised in chapters 2 and



3 represent necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the NCM to exist. It would perhaps not be possible to exemplify all the conditions behind the NCM. Furthermore, with reference to dependency what may also be of significance is that, whilst universities and colleges are legally independent, the degree of dependency on the intricate funding mechanisms detailed in the introduction significantly impacts on that independence.

Transfactual thought operations, however, go beyond retroduction in critical realist meta-theory to include the concept of abduction. Originally the work of Peirce (in Hartshorne and Weiss, 1931-35), abduction involves a process of redescription or recontextualisation; that is, one explains, observes, interprets or describes something within the frame of a new context (Jensen, 1995). In social science this process may be seen to place original ideas about a phenomenon within the frame of a new set of ideas; the shape of this set of ideas may have the form of a conceptual framework or theory (Danermark et al. 2002).

The capacity of abduction to lead to 'definitive' truths is rather limited, especially when related to other forms of scientific inference (most notably deduction). And yet, abduction may be viewed as a powerful mode of inference in the sense that it may provide new meanings, as Danermark et al. 2002: p.91) argue:

The revolution of recontextualizations is that they give new meaning to already known phenomena... What is discovered is connections and relations, not directly observable, by which we can understand and explain already known occurrences in a novel way.

Abduction, then, allows the researcher to veer away from merely descriptive discourse to view something as something else. In this sense, the thesis has sought to recontextualise the NCM in

two ways. Firstly, the NCM has been seen to be a part of a relational network comprising political, economic, managerial and institutional relations (after Esland, 1998). Secondly, the expressions of power by the structures resulting from the efficient causes have been recontextualised as a form of institutionalism and, within institutionalism, to a form or forms of legitimation (coercive, mimetic, normative). By recontextualising the NCM in these ways, the NCM takes on new meaning and it may be possible to discover connections not directly observable.

Critical realist meta-theory provided the potential to explore the issue of governance in HE through the instance of the NCM. Via Collier's (1994) notion of efficient cause and Sayer's (1992, 2000) mapping of the components of natural necessity (structures, mechanisms, events), detailed exploration of the issue and the object became plausible, a plausibility perhaps not offered through the alternative, positivist view of causation. Having disinvolved critical realist meta-theory, the task now becomes one of integrating the meta-theory to method.

## **From Methodology to Methods**

Whilst critical realism is fastidious in terms of ontology, rather less sensitivity is evident when issues of epistemology come to the fore:

There is no such thing as the method of critical realism. On the other hand, critical realism offers guidelines for social science research and starting points for the evaluation of already established methods. (Danermark et al., 2002: p.73)

Critical realists have presented guidance regarding stages in explanatory research based on critical realist ontology. Prominent among these have been Bhaskar (1989; 1997) and

Collier (1994); more latterly, Sayer (1992, 2000), Pawson and Tilley (1997) and Danermark et al. (2002) have made significant contributions to the emergence of critical realist methodology. Common within this guidance is that the dualism of positivism versus interpretivism is unhelpful; rather, there has been a clear argument that the methods must suit the purpose and the object of the research through empirical procedures of an *intensive* and/or *extensive* kind. Find below Sayer's (1992: p.243) (modified) explanation of these procedures:

Task: Identify generative mechanisms and describe how they are manifested in real events and processes		
<b>Empirical procedures</b>		
	<b>Intensive</b>	<b>Extensive</b>
Research question	How does a process work in a particular case? What produces a certain change?	How widely are certain characteristics or processes distributed?
Relations	Substantial relations of connections	Formal relations of similarity
Type of group studied	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Typical methods	Study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive interviews, qualitative analysis	Large scale survey, formal questionnaires, standardized interviews, statistical analysis
Type of account	Causal explanation of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily a representative one	Descriptive 'representative' generalizations, lacking in explanatory penetration

*Table 4.2 Intensive and extensive empirical procedures (adapted from Sayer, 1992: p.243)*

For their part, Danermark et al. (2002: p.109-110) provide an excellent template for critical realist methodologies whilst remaining suitably vague as to what actual methods a researcher may use.

**Stage 1: description**

An explanatory social science usually starts in the concrete. We describe the often complex and composite event or situation we intend to study. In this we make use of everyday concepts. An important part of this description is the interpretation of the persons involved and their way of describing the current situation

**Stage 2: analytical resolution**

In this phase we separate or dissolve the composite and the complex by distinguishing the various components, aspects or dimensions. The concept of scientific analysis usually alludes to just this (analysis = a separating or dissolving examination). It is never possible to study anything in all its different components. Therefore we must in practice confine ourselves to studying certain components but not others.

**Stage 3: abduction/theoretical redescription**

Here we interpret and redescribe the different components /aspects from hypothetical conceptual frameworks and theories about structures and relations. The original ideas of the objects of study are developed when we place them in new contexts of ideas. Here several different theoretical interpretations can and should be presented, compared and possibly integrated with one another.

**Stage 4: retrodution**

The purpose is for each one of the different components/aspects we have decided to focus on, to try to answer questions like: What is fundamentally constitutive for the structures and relations? How is X possible? What properties must exist for X to be what X is? What causal mechanisms are related to X? In the concrete research process we have of course in many cases access to already established concepts supplying satisfactory answers to questions of this type.

**Stage 5: comparison between different theories and abstractions**

In this stage one elaborates and estimates the relative explanatory power of the mechanisms and structures which have been described by means of abduction and retroduction. In some cases one might conclude that one theory – unlike competitive theories – describes the necessary conditions for what is to be explained, and therefore has greater explanatory power. In other cases the theories are rather complementary, as they focus on partly different but nevertheless necessary conditions.

**Stage 6: concretization and contextualization**

Concretization involves examining how different structures and mechanisms manifest themselves in concrete situations. Here one stresses the importance of studying the manner in which mechanisms interact with other mechanisms at different levels, under specific conditions.

*Table 4.3. Stages in Explanatory Research (Danermark et al., 2002: p.109-110)*

At first glance, the impression provided by Danermark et al's. (2002) template is one of simplicity – the suggestion is that critical realist work may be seen to follow a logical stepping-stone approach involving abduction (stepping back from a situation and viewing it as something else) and retroduction (structural analysis aiming to discover the necessary conditions for an object to be what it is and not something else). Whilst the former has been tackled through the use of institutionalism within this thesis, the latter is significantly more complex than it first appears. The real hurdle however, in terms of critical realist research, lies in neither of these. Rather, it lies in the central differentiating pillar of critical realist method: *testing* rather than *generating* theory. This, in an intensive, quintessentially qualitative, piece of research is significantly more difficult than initial musings on the subject may suggest and I shall reflect on

how I endeavoured to overcome this, alongside other, hurdles in the chapter to follow.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore and explain how the research questions were investigated. With this in mind, the chapter has five inter-related objectives. Initially, the research questions shall be re-visited in the light of critical realist meta-theory. There then follows a review of the research methods including data collection methods and rationale. Subsequent to this are to be found details pertaining to analysis of the data, issues of validity and, finally, issues centred on ethics.

### **Research Design: Re-visiting the Research Questions**

The research questions were laid out in the introduction and I should like to re-visit them at this juncture (see table 5.1 below): In the opening sequence of the thesis, I alluded to the fact that the college had articulated a vision for the modernisation of the curriculum in response to a set of 'new demands'. The identity of these 'new demands' remained illusive in the college literature. Nowhere were they defined or divulged. In critical realist language it is efficient causes, structures, powers and mechanisms that have a tendency to bring about events in the world. In this respect, efficient causes form the deepest, 'unexperienced' (and possibly unknown) demands. The structures that these efficient causes give rise to may be seen to represent the next layer of demands whilst the mechanisms put in place by the structures represent the final level. It is theorised that the combination of the efficient causes, structures and mechanisms precipitated the 'new demands' as the college experienced them.

Research Issue	Nature of governance in HE
Research questions	What caused the NCM? How are powers exercised by structures?
Research objective 1 <b>Theorise as to the new demands</b> This leads to questions guided by critical realist meta-theory:	i. What comprised the 'efficient causes' underpinning the structures? ii. What comprised the structures and how were their powers expressed? iii. What were the mechanisms behind the NCM?
Research objective 2 <b>Generate theory</b>	From the analysis of efficient causes, structures and mechanisms generate a testable theory of 'new demands'. Generate a testable theory of how powers were exercised.
Research objective 3 <b>Testing theory</b>	Test the theory of new demands through research of those that experienced the NCM directly.
Research objective 4 <b>Reflection</b> on critical realism's explanatory potential	Reflect on the experience of employing critical realism, including issues associated with transposing critical realism into research.

*Table 5.1 Research Questions and Objectives*

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 assist in theorising as to the nature of the deep efficient causes as well as the structures and mechanisms that these precipitated. Notably, it is only questions ii and iii that are the subject of data gathering and testing. Asking respondents to reflect and assess deep causal forces beyond their realm of experience was not something that was seen as realistic or possible.

The primary adhesive force behind the research design has been a desire to remain faithful to the key drivers of critical realism: the centrality of ontology and the testing of theory.



The design follows the intensive format forwarded by Sayer (1992, see table 4.2 page 106 ). The research questions centre on what produced a certain change and the account to be produced is a causal explanation of the production of that change, both archetypal of intensive research design.

The design, however, exhibits a much greater degree of adhesion to critical realism than Sayer's intensive design may suggest. It is clear that adopting an intensive design does not *necessitate* the use of critical realism as the underpinning meta-theory. Indeed, an intensive design may make use of multiple meta-theories and methodologies, some true to the essence of critical realism, others not. By embracing elements of Danermark et al.'s (2002) stages in explanatory research based on critical realism and applying this to Sayer's (1992) intensive research design suggestions, a more clear picture of the thesis becomes apparent and is explored below.

The thesis has been designed with critical realism as its central facet. In many respects, therefore, the term 'research design' does not truly apply to this thesis in that the thesis and design cannot be seen to represent separate entities, with the design and methods being some form of tool or underlabourer used merely to test or generate theory. Indeed, the term 'research design' may be seen to be something of a misnomer; in this instance, the term 'thesis design' may be both more appropriate and reflective of how the work as a whole was undertaken.

Taking critical realism as the central pillar of the thesis means the starting point is to be found not in epistemology but in ontology: the real (mechanisms), the actual (what happens if and when those mechanisms are activated) and the empirical (what we experience either directly or indirectly) domains of reality. It is from and in the real domain that critical realists believe underlying causal mechanisms exist, as Morén and Blom argue (2003: p.43):

Our argument is based on the ontological assumption, within critical realism, that there is a reality independent of our knowledge about it, but this reality is not immediately and empirically accessible. The mechanisms that generate the events that we can empirically observe are situated in the domain of the real....and only accessible by theory.

The efficient causes, structures and mechanisms that were to precipitate the NCM are, in critical realist terminology, to be found in the real domain. To revert back to the issue, this exists in the real domain. This ontological view has a significant impact on epistemology in that, in order to discover the underlying mechanisms, the real becomes the starting point. Additionally, this real domain may only reasonably be accessed through the generation of theory.

Taking the real as the starting point was suggestive of a need to examine the efficient causes, the structures and the mechanisms that precipitated the NCM; that is, in order to explain the NCM, successively focussed causal levels had to be unpicked leading, eventually, to that which can produce events in the world (Bhaskar, 1997), namely mechanisms. The thesis utilised the college literature as the starting point here; the college alluded to 'new demands', the curriculum being changed as a direct consequence of these (please refer to the quote at the head of the thesis); a set of 'new demands' had produced an event (in fact, a set of events as elucidated in chapter 3, diagram 3.1 page 72) in response, one of which was the NCM. A major task then became one of unpicking these elements of critical realist causal explanation.

To undertake this task I made use of Esland's (1998) policy framework. Conceiving of a set of inter-related agendas (political, economic, managerial and institutional) which, when

combined and infused with one another, define and shape the frameworks of policy, Esland's framework provided a useful basis from which to start to unpick the efficient causes, its usefulness lying in its conceptualisation of a set of relationships: political, economic, managerial and institutional. Chapter 2 targeted this area, to be substantiated by the work of chapter 3. The key aspects of the two chapters were combined with a very deliberate purpose: to generate a *testable* theory as to what the mechanisms were. Note that, since critical realism tends to advocate the testing of theory, the theory developed had to be of relevance and have meaning to the respondents in the study, whichever methods were adopted to achieve that task. The result of this process was the new demands diagram (3.1 page 72). At this juncture, the problem of leading the respondents in subsequent tests of this theory arose; how I attempted to alleviate this tricky problem shall be considered in the method.

Unpicking the mechanisms behind the NCM via the policy framework served to produce a testable theory. This, however, was but one of the research questions; the thesis sought to explain the mechanisms that lay behind the event, but also to examine the nature of the processes behind that event. That is, it sought to examine the nature of legitimacy that the structures employed.

To achieve this task, abduction of the form suggested by Danermark et al. (2002) was employed. That is, the thesis made use of institutionalism to examine the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM: could the processes be seen to be coercive, mimetic or normative or, indeed, any combination of these?

Institutionalism aims to ask provocative questions of organisations; as the introduction suggested, a wide variety of institutionalist theories exist and it became important to avoid partisan affiliation to one of these stances. Why? Since the thesis involved the testing of theory, it was desirable to have a

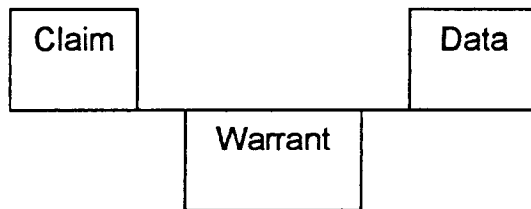
degree of distance and independence from the theory generated to avoid accusations of leading the respondents in the research process itself. This is essentially the same problem as that arising from the testing of the mechanisms theory, but the efforts made to alleviate the problem were to be somewhat different. The integrated institutionalism of the form laid out by Scott (1995) provided an avenue through which to examine the nature of legitimacy whilst presenting alternatives from which the respondents could pick.

The design depicts how I went about formatting the thesis. This was to produce a set of challenges to the methods section, a section to which I shall now progress.

### **Research Methods: Issues of Warrant**

The intensive research design forwarded by Sayer (1992) suggests the study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive interviews, ethnography and qualitative analysis. This provides innumerable opportunities; the key to the choice of method centred on a desire to be faithful to critical realist methodology: the testing of theory was therefore central. Questions concerning the mechanisms behind the NCM and the nature of legitimacy necessarily had to be asked, but a further and significant caveat to this was that this had to be achieved through the testing of theory.

Additionally, however, there was a concern for what Toulmin (1958) termed the *warrant*. By way of explanation, Toulmin identified three essential parts of any argument: the claim, the data (evidence offered to support the claim) and the warrant. The warrant may be regarded as the assumption on which the claim and the data depend:



*Diagram 5.1 Toulmin's (1958) Analysis*

In terms of research methods, the warrant may be put in a slightly different way. That is, the warrant links the data and the claim and asks 'why will this data support this claim?' or 'what makes this data acceptable as evidence?'. The claim of the thesis is that it provides a casual explanation of the NCM. In order to achieve this, matters of method were impacted on by a desire to develop a sound warrant by ensuring that relevant data was collected in ways that reflect current canons of validity. To this end, the thesis strove to ensure that:

- key personnel in the development of the NCM be included in sampling. For the claim to be warranted, the methods would necessarily have to engage respondents with knowledge of the object, namely the NCM. The claim could only be warranted should those with a responsibility for the implementation of the NCM be included in the research.
- a variety of respondents at different levels be considered to obtain different opinions and viewpoints. The nature of governance occupies the real domain of reality and may be experienced and felt in different ways by different respondents within the organisation. Any claims made from the data would only be warranted should the issue be viewed from the different angles supplied by these different respondents. This, in essence, is the form of triangulation across data sources identified by Denzin (1978).
- the sources had direct experience of the development of the NCM and had prolonged engagement in the field. In order for the data to warrant the claim, sources must have experience of the object and, in this instance, its origins. That is, they

had to have been at the college to view and experience the NCM from the point of articulation of the vision to the point of implementation.

- the methods employed to obtain the data allowed for perceptions and views to be explored in depth. No true understanding of the new demands could be gleaned if the methods failed to allow for full, frank and in-depth research
- those methods avoided leading the respondents and allowed for full and frank discussions of the issues
- the data collection and analysis exhibited due process in terms of validity and ethics.

Only if each of these were achieved would it be possible to have a sound warrant on which to support the data and the claim. It is with this in mind that subsequent discussion of possible methods necessarily needs to be seen.

## **Consideration of Methods**

A variety of methods were considered in the light of Toulmin's (1958) analysis. In the first instance, thought was given to a method centred on a questionnaire, the primary advantage being that this would allow for a larger sample size than alternative methods. The stumbling block came in terms of the testing of theory, a theory concerned with both new demands and with rather conceptually difficult notions of coercive, mimetic and normative institutionalism. It was clear that this theory would require some degree of explanation. A questionnaire, if conducted, would require researcher presence at each completion to ensure understanding of the theory, in many respects negating the advantages of the method itself. Perhaps of greater significance was the threat to the warrant. A questionnaire would not have permitted in-depth, full and frank discussions to warrant the claim. Similarly, there would be no opportunity to follow-up answers and there would be no indication of who had completed the questionnaire.

Serious consideration was given to both e mail and telephone 'interviews', the benefits of which are numerous. One or both would allow for considerable extension of the scope of the sample whilst minimising travel (some two and a half hours each way) with the occupation of valuable time that this entails (Robson, 2002). However, the lack of visual cues may, as Robson also recognises, cause problems in interpretation, a key weakness when considering the requirement herein to test theory. It soon became clear that, if theory was to be tested, that theory would require explanation and discussion on a personal level, rendering the use of such a method inappropriate.

This impression was substantiated through review of Czaja and Blair's (1996) comparison of approaches. The data collection was to involve relatively complex questions and, after piloting (see below), the employment of visual aids through the diagram of new demands. Face-to-face interviews were uniquely rated as offering both the potential for the use of complex questions alongside what the authors termed a 'very good' rating in terms of the use of visual aids. The use of complex, probing questions allows the claim to be warranted rather more successfully.

On turning to Sayer's (1992) work, it became clear that interactive interviews and qualitative analysis were regarded as suitable methods within an intensive design. 'Interactive interviews', however, seems a relatively loose term: is it possible to have a 'non-interactive interview'? I needed to refine and focus this to something much tighter, to something which aided in answering the research questions and allowed for the testing of theory through interviews.

## **Data Collection: The Challenges**

Designing an interview schedule with a view to testing theory is a task of some magnitude in that it raises a series of significant challenges including:

Which theory or theories are to be tested and why? Chapter 1, inclusive of Scott's (1995) integrated institutionalism, effectively views the legitimisation mechanisms behind the NCM as one or more of coercive, mimetic or normative. For their part, chapters 2 and 3, when combined, pertain to theory regarding new demands, but underlying this may be found Jessop's (1994, 1995, 2003) theory regarding a shift in the nature of the welfare state (from KWS to SWS) as well as movements towards new managerialism (Clarke and Newman, 1997) and globalisation. The theory underpinning the thesis shows scope, depth and conceptual complexity; questions of what and how to test are particularly pertinent.

How does one present the theory? This presents two challenges for the critical realist. The first is one mainly of logistics in that the theory must be sufficiently detailed to allow for a reasonable debate concerning its merits; secondly, how might a researcher present and test these theories without excessively leading the respondents? It is well recognised in the literature pertaining to interviews that questions involving either jargon or leading questions, (suggestive or assuming) are both to be avoided (Hoinville and Jowell, 1985; Robson, 2002). The thesis design had placed the methods on a potential collision course with both.

Where does the critical realist researcher turn to view exemplars of theory testing through interviews and, to compound this difficulty, how should the data be analysed (especially given that the 'grounding' of said data lies not in the data, but in the theory being tested)?

### **Data Collection: Meeting the Challenges**

To effectively meet these challenges, the interviews underwent an evolutionary process through piloting. Two pilots were conducted, the first viewable at appendix A, the second at appendix B. Initial decisions centred on the format of the



interviews and recording of the data from those interviews. These decisions were impacted upon by the research questions.

The purpose of the interview relative to the research questions was twofold: firstly: gather data pertaining to the mechanisms precipitating the NCM and, secondly, to establish the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM. Three potential modes of interview were considered: structured, unstructured and semi-structured. The rigid structure of the former was rejected since it lacked the necessary flexibility to allow for exploration of perceptions, a point expanded upon by Pawson and Tilley (1997: p. 156) when arguing that such interviews impose in a wholesale fashion the researcher's conceptual system whilst not allowing sufficient questioning and/or understanding of the researcher's theoretical framework.

Unstructured interviews, for their part would fail to reflect the desire for a tight focus on the research questions. Arguably more critical, however, researchers may be accused of selecting from the mass of information and fitting together small fragments of the respondents' utterances into their own, preferred, explanatory framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: p.158).

Semi-structured interviews appeared to offer a viable option which would allow for exploration of perceptions whilst permitting both questioning, debate and understanding of theory. In a similar vein, semi-structured interviews provided a degree of control over the process of obtaining information whilst allowing for exploration of new avenues as they arose (Bernard, 1988; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). On reviewing critical realist research, notably Morén and Blom (2003), I was unsurprised to find that similar conclusions had been drawn and that semi-structured interviews had been designed, the format following a sequence based on Robson (2002: p.277):

- Introduction: during this phase I introduced myself to the respondent, explained the purpose and nature of the interview and what my thesis was about, assured the respondent of confidentiality, asked the respondent to complete an informed consent form and asked permission to tape and make notes of the interview.
- Warm up: here was to be found a series of introductory questions to lead into the interview. (please see appendices A, B, C for examples)
- Main body: covering the main purpose of the interview. Here questions centred on the new demands and the basis of legitimation.
- Cool off: an opportunity to discuss some straightforward questions and to further elaborate on any key points.
- Closure and thank the respondent.

With semi-structured interviews being selected, two pilot interviews were conducted. Pilot 1 (appendix A, conducted with two respondents) suffered from a series of fundamental weaknesses. In the first instance, the focus of the interview lacked an exact application to the research questions. In other words, not enough emphasis was placed on establishing the mechanisms that lay behind the NCM. Indeed, only question 7 demonstrably tackled this. Additionally, having been drawn in by Pawson and Tilley's (1997) influential critical realist work, the interview had swayed significantly towards an evaluative side (refer especially to appendix A, question 9). Perhaps most importantly, however, the interview lacked any form of theory testing.

Pilot 2 (appendix B), also conducted with two respondents, began to address these issues and, notably, introduced 'perceptions' alongside theory testing for the first time. The former was an attempt to offset the issue of leading the respondents through the theory testing. That is, the respondents were asked to give their perceptions as to why the NCM was

introduced *prior* to being introduced to the new demands diagram. It is notable that, at this stage, the perceptions were not related to the new demands in the way in which they were in the final interview schedule.

There were three main issues that were to arise from the second pilot. Firstly, it was significantly too long with interviews lasting in excess of an hour. Secondly, the degree of emphasis on institutionalism, especially the logic of appropriateness (after March and Olsen, 2004), was rather too great and not sufficiently aligned with the research questions. Thirdly, in an effort to further align the interview with critical realist methodology, pilot 2 made an attempt to have the respondents identify necessary conditions. That is, the respondents were asked questions pertaining to the deep causal mechanisms that were absolutely necessary for the NCM. The suggestion by Danermark et al. (2002), and demonstrated by Baumann (1989) in his work on the holocaust, that critical realist methodology incorporate retrodution lay behind this question. The respondents fed back that they struggled to understand the meaning of this.

The semi-structured interview used for the data collection may be found at appendix C. The focus on the research questions is significantly tighter here, the main body of the interview being comprised of three sections: perceptions (related to new demands), testing the adequacy of the theorised new demands from chapter 3, and testing integrated institutionalism to explain the nature of legitimacy. The first section was an attempt to view the perceptions of the respondents reference the new demands prior to viewing the theorised new demands (the reader may note that it was for this reason that the interview schedule was not supplied to the respondents in advance). This meant that I would be able to compare the two at a later date. The second section allowed for the testing of theorised new demands, but with the respondents perceptions already divulged. In a further attempt to off-set the issue of leading, the testing of legitimacy

made use of Scott's (1995) integrated institutionalism rather than, on the one hand, any partisan institutional theory or, on the other, any theory I had unilaterally devised. Integrated institutionalism allows for the portrayal of alternative theories and bases for legitimacy, alternatives which had a degree of distance from the researcher. In other words, this was not *my* theory being tested.

## Data Collection: The Interviews

In an effort to review how critical realists had conducted theory - laden interviews, I turned to literature in the area. To my surprise, the greater majority of the published work centred on debate and discussion centred on critical realist meta-theory and its ontological starting point rather than practical research. Two pieces of work, however, stood out as potential exemplars of critical realist research in action: Morén and Blom's (2003) investigation into generative mechanisms in social work practice and Pawson and Tilley's (1997) book *Realistic Evaluation*. Both were to prove influential in the format and conduct of the interviews. *Realistic Evaluation* promotes a basic structure of what Pawson and Tilley (1997) term the 'realist interview':

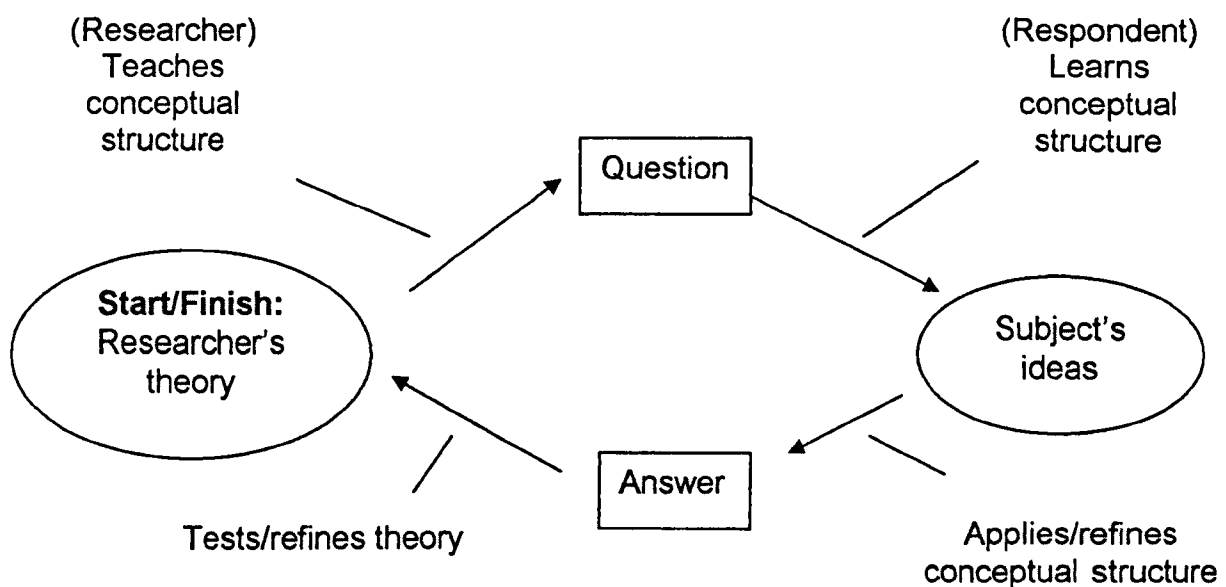


Diagram 5.2 The realist interview (adapted from Pawson and Tilley, 1997: p.165)

The realist interview has two primary objectives, the first centring on teaching the respondent about the overall conceptual structure of the investigation to provide understanding of the general theoretical ground being explored; the second objective centres on the refinement of that theory, as Pawson and Tilley explain (1997: p.155):

Using the realistic model, the researcher's theory is the subject matter of the interview, and the subject (stakeholder) is there to confirm, to falsify and, above all to refine that theory.

Both of these objectives are apparent in the methods herein, the teaching element appearing clearly in the interview schedule and the confirmatory, falsification and refinement elements evident in the data analysis sections. However, there are important differences between evaluation of the form undertaken by Pawson and Tilley and the explanatory research of this thesis.

The first of these lies in the manner of the presentation of researcher theory. Pawson and Tilley, with a view to explanation, employ what is termed C-M-O configurations, or context-mechanism-outcome configurations. These are tabulated representations demonstrating how particular mechanisms may work given particular contexts to provide particular outcomes. Put another way, outcomes are a function of a mechanism working in context.

A theory presentation based on C-M-O configurations tends to be the start and finish point with a view to identifying what works for whom and in what circumstances. This form of evaluation was not something that the thesis focused on, interesting as that might have been. A further challenge was revealed through the pilot interviews which, when following the realist interview above, revealed the issue of leading the respondents whilst providing little scope for their perceptions in advance of the presentation of

theory. To meet this challenge, subsequent interview schedules considered respondent perceptions prior to presenting the theory and only moved to the testing of theory *after* these perceptions had been aired.

In order to test the theory of new demands, I turned to Morén and Blom's (2003) study with a view to assessing the methods by which they achieved this. No interview schedule was available, yet it was clear that modelling was a key element of their work. The researchers developed a 'conceptual model', by which is meant (Morén and Blom, 2003: p. 55):

a set of theoretical concepts which, by virtue of its meanings and internal relationships, offers an explanatory frame of reference regarding the studied phenomenon.

This form of modelling, designed to provide explanatory frames of reference, was to become central to the theory testing element of the interviews. Two key explanatory models were devised, the first being a conceptual model of new demands (diagram 3.1) and the second a table detailing integrated institutionalism (see appendix C). The shape of the semi-structured interview schedule now took on its final form to be found at appendix C.

## **Data Collection: The Respondents**

Nine respondents were interviewed, seven in the college and two in their homes. The sample of the interviewees represents approximately 5% of college academic staff and was a purposive sample. Purposive sampling, for its part, enables the researcher to satisfy specific needs in a project (Robson, 2002: p.265), these being the uncovering of the mechanisms from which the NCM emerged as well as the mode of legitimacy by which this was achieved. The sample purposively sought out information-rich respondents with a view to learning as much as possible

about these two research questions, a central heuristic principle (Patton, 1987).

The detailed unpicking of government policy alongside HEFCE literature and reports was to guide the initial purposive sampling. This work revealed the link between the Fryer report (1997), *The Learning Age* (1998) and the subsequent HEFCE documents of 1998, notably HEFCE 98/40, encouraging the development of institutional learning and teaching strategies (considered extensively in chapter 2). It was in response to this document and the further encouragement supplied by the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) that the college established a director of learning and teaching post in the Spring of 2000. The person occupying this post was critical to the inquiry since it was their job to develop the new learning and teaching strategy, an integral part of which was the NCM. In terms of purposive sampling they represented the key respondent with the greatest knowledge of the mechanisms and how it was legitimated to the academic staff.

However, examination of the TQEF had revealed a deeper layer of posts that were to be established within the college. In terms of implementation, the appointment of the new director of learning and teaching was followed by the appointment of principal lecturers to every school in the college as well as the appointment of teaching fellows. The specific role of the former was that of local interpretation of the college learning and teaching strategy whilst the latter were to develop new ways of teaching within the remit of the NCM. It became clear that discussions with at least some of these PLs and teaching fellows was to be critically important to the study.

Interviewing the person most directly responsible for the development of the NCM as well as those responsible for its more localised interpretation in each school was accompanied by interviews of persons at a range of levels within the college.

This range of levels would reveal more rich data and more perspectives on the mechanisms and modes of legitimacy. Accordingly, purposive sampling was extended to include members of the executive (or Senior Management Team members), departmental heads, and senior lecturers.

The sample was further influenced by five further considerations: length of service at the college, department, currency or otherwise of employment, knowledge of the researcher and access. The nature of the research questions meant that only staff in service at the college for a minimum of five years could be included in the sample since the origins of the NCM date back to 2000-2001. It was felt that different departments may have felt and experienced differing interpretations to the NCM, this being the rationale behind efforts to interview members of staff from different departments. I interviewed two members of staff who had retired in 2005 whilst the remaining seven were still in employment. The rationale behind this was that, since the staff had left the service of the college, they may be more open to discuss and debate the issues.

Putting distance between myself and the respondents had been a concern throughout the sampling process. In discussing the credibility of the researcher who does research in their own organisation, Smyth and Holian (1999) highlight both the potential perils and possible remedies when conducting this form of work. Insider research brings a personal dynamic into the research equation, a dynamic which requires, first of all, recognition (Smyth and Holian, 1999: extract from qualitative research conference, July 6-10):

The insider researcher has a past, current and expected future role in the organisation, which bring aspects of the organisational history, working relationships and personal alliances into play in the research process. These



considerations and influences shape the perception and behaviour of the researcher and organisational members involved in the research. This impacts on the nature and extent of the content of data and how this is interpreted.

The 'perils' of a lack of recognition of this danger centre on a lack of validity, reliability and, ultimately credibility. To counter this, the thesis has made significant efforts to reduce this effect since (Smyth and Holian, 1999: extract from qualitative research conference, July 6-10):

The ability to conduct credible insider-research involves an explicit awareness of the possible effects of perceived bias on data collection and analysis as well as ethical issues related to the anonymity of the organisation and individual participants.

With these concerns at the forefront of my mind, I was able to purposively sample whilst systematically avoiding any respondent with whom I had worked with directly on modules whilst at the college. The exception was the PL appointed to interpret the NCM at the local level. Issues of access meant that I interviewed a PL with whom I had shared a module whilst at college. The further layers of estrangement from the data collection: testing perceptions first and testing institutional theory rather than purely my theory were especially important here. The time gap between my leaving the college in 2003 and the interviews (some two and a half years) further enhanced this desired estrangement from the respondents. The sample was finally to show the following traits:

Position	Years service	Dept	Employment status
Director of learning and Teaching	6	N/A	Current
Head of programme	5	A	Current
Executive	10	A	Current
Executive	>10	B	Retired
Teaching fellow	>10	C	Retired
PL (Learning and teaching)	7	A	Current
SL	>10	A	Current
Head of Programme	>10	B	Current
PL	>10	B	Current

*Table 5.2 Interview sample showing position and attributes*

## **Data Collection: Matters of Access**

Aspects of the above table are notable; firstly, for the most part, staff from only two departments have been interviewed, with the exception of the teaching fellow; secondly, whilst three members of the executive were interviewed (the director of learning and teaching and two further members), neither the Principal nor the Deputy Principal were interviewed. I made attempts to contact and interview both, but these attempts were to be unsuccessful, a disappointment given the richness of data they may have yielded. No specific reasons were forthcoming as to the lack of response; one can appreciate the time constraints and pressures that all members of college staff are under. The consequence of this represent an effect on the warrant; whilst not the persons directly in day-to-day operational charge of the development of the NCM, their insights and knowledge of aspects of the development could only have added to the study.

The teaching fellow interview was very much based on an opportunity presented to me. I was interviewing one of the executive and the opportunity arose to interview a teaching

fellow; this was purely opportunistic and certainly not planned in the way in which I had always believed research would be undertaken. Opportunistic traits, however, are common to much research and necessarily so, a point highlighted by Buchanan et al. (1998).

The fact that only three departments (A, B and C) were involved and that I was unable to gain access to either the Principal or the Deputy Principal was somewhat discouraging. It was not until later that I found that research, in reality, is rarely a smooth, completely structured and linear process. Indeed, whilst there was a degree of structure and direction to what I was endeavouring to accomplish, this was impacted on by a series of factors, precipitating a feeling similar to that of Deem (1996: p.6) that:

What has occurred has frequently been  
contingent, rarely linear, sometimes accidental  
and often serendipitous.

In answering the question, 'why were two departments the focus of the interviews?', the answer lies not in some form of rigorous scientific sampling method, but, rather, in matters of access. There were two significant logistical hurdles to negotiate with reference to this; the first was the distance/time to the college and the second the passage of time between my leaving the college and the main interviews taking place. Both have an impact, yet it was the latter that had the greater impact on access. In an effort to retain distance between myself and the respondents, my research 'wish list' included interviewing respondents from schools and departments with which I had had no contact. Efforts to do this came to nought. There is a dimension here associated with what is socially acceptable in terms of requesting of already busy staff to give of their 'free' time for interviews. This task, if this thesis is anything to go by, is rendered doubly difficult if you have no connections within the

departments you are wishing to visit. Gaining access to my former school was significantly more practical.

Research in the 'real world', as Robson (2002: p.377) so pertinently points out, is very much the 'art of the possible'. This is a point to which Buchanan et al. (1988) add the notion that in the contest between what is theoretically desirable and practically possible, it is the practical which wins. This research experience has perhaps borne this out. Further, Buchanan et al. (1988) advocate the need to be both flexible and opportunistic, recommending the use of friends, relatives and contacts. This is acceptable to a degree, but I was ever-conscious of the need to distance myself from the theory being tested. In gaining access to my former school, I endeavoured to interview members of staff with whom I had not worked with on any modules; I was able to achieve this on all but one occasion, but I redoubled my efforts to estrange myself from the theory nonetheless.

In gaining access, I made initial contact by telephone with the Director of Learning and Teaching, convening a meeting to formally request permission to carry out the study. An outline of the study was presented and permission granted given specific conditions:

I could access the following:

- minutes of meetings concerned with the NCM,
- internal consultation documents concerned with the NCM
- college annual reports and statistics
- staff for the purposes of interviews

under the following conditions:

- that both the college and the respondents were anonymised in the report
- that I ask further permission from the head of school to access staff within the school

- that the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (1992) were adhered to
- that the director was furnished with a copy of the completed thesis.

### **Data Collection: The Interview Process**

I contacted the head of school by telephone and requested permission to interview staff within the school. Permission was given subject to the conditions spelt out by the director of learning and teaching. The plan of the purposive sampling was put into effect and I made initial contact with the respondents by telephone.

The interviews themselves were conducted in pre-booked 'quiet' rooms within the college, with the exception of two respondents who were interviewed in their own homes. Both environments, it was felt, were conducive to effective interviewing since the respondents were in familiar and/or supportive territory (Burgess, 1988). The shortest interview was 30 minutes whilst the longest was 70 minutes.

The introductory, 'warm up' phase of the interview served to both establish some degree of rapport with the respondents, but also to establish the role of the interviewer, an important step suggested by Keats (1993). In establishing this role, I informed the respondent of the title of the thesis and that the interview would be made up of two discrete main phases: their perceptions and testing of theory. Additionally, I went through, and asked each respondent to sign, an informed consent form, the format of which followed that set out by Robson (2002) and is available to view at appendix D. Two further issues were dealt with here: permissions, both to record the interview and to take notes (with a view to the process of restatement detailed below) and the affirmation that neither the college nor the respondents would be

identified at any stage of the write up. No transcripts or quotations would be directly attributable to any respondent.

Recording the interview provides a more accurate account than field notes alone and, as Partington (2001) argues, may help reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. Furthermore, recording was crucial to allow for transcription of the interviews and subsequent data analysis. Interview notes can be particularly useful, but they cannot reflect tone of voice, do not include non-verbal interjections (i.e. laughter) and may fail to reflect the meaning behind words. That is, the meaning of sentences is often to be found in subtle nuances only detectable through the sound, something I was to learn as I undertook a complete transcription of each interview.

During responses to questions, I endeavoured to minimise interruptions and to allow full, frank and exhaustive responses. I did, though, provide supportive nods and acknowledgements during responses, but was consciously endeavouring to avoid excess verbalisation which may have distracted the respondent or lead the respondent in unproductive directions (Keats, 1993).

As Partington (2001) suggests, I endeavoured not only to allow full and frank answers, but also to listen attentively to each answer. Accuracy of interpretation of respondent answers, especially when applied to an interview centred on testing theory, is crucial. With this in mind, I employed a technique known as restatement, a process of restating the respondent's answer with a view to ensuring that I had interpreted and understood what they had said correctly, a process necessitating the taking of field notes. In some cases, this desire for correct interpretation meant persistence and precipitated a process of initial restatement, correction, clarification from the respondent and a further restatement.

The realist interview represents something of a departure from standard interview processes. The initial element was perhaps a form of interviewing which the interviewees had experienced before, focusing as it did on their perceptions. However, the second and third sections moved markedly from this format with a model of new demands shown in the former and a table of integrated institutionalism in the latter. A number of observations may be made about this process.

Arguably the most striking was the interesting response from the interviewees. In the first instance, none had experienced an interview similar in nature to this one. Indeed, during the pilot interviews one of the professors was especially keen to have Pawson and Tilley's (1997) reference. This first experience precipitated a knock-on effect: a desire to evaluate the NCM. That is, every interviewee at one stage or another drifted towards evaluation of the NCM; they were keen to express opinions as to the efficacy of the NCM and appeared surprised that my work did not set out to do this. There had been an evaluation of the NCM some two years after its inception; the interviewees saw the interview as something similar until guided away from evaluation.

In introducing the interviews, the diagram and table, I prepared a script within the interview which I read through with each interviewee (viewable at appendix C). The interviewees were invariably interested to have it suggested to them that such wide-ranging and complex demands might be seen to have impacted on them so directly in the form of the NCM. The model was to be revelatory in many respects, to the extent that some staff were surprised to view their role within a larger set of agendas.

There was another element here, one which was to surprise not the interviewees, but me. During an informal discussion subsequent to one interview one of the interviewees was rather upset and distressed to view their job-role from a very different perspective. The reason for their distress lay in the fact that they

had never before been asked to step back from their situation to view their role within a significantly larger frame of reference. This represents perhaps the greatest benefit of the realist interview: the capacity it has to allow interviewees to express not just their perceptions, but to express opinions as to the merits or otherwise of theories which may take them outside those perceptions.

## **Data Analysis: Transcription**

The interviews were transcribed in full as dramatic scripts (Ochs, 1979) (that which occurs above and to the left occurs before that written below and to the right, just as one reads a drama or play) rather than the columnar and partiture formats (speech commentary divided into columns) forwarded by Edwards (1993). I undertook this task myself, transcribing the interviews into *NVivo7* data analysis software (of which much more later in this chapter); whilst this software was columnar and partiture capable, it is significantly more aligned to operate on dramatic scripts.

Each interview script represents a dramatic script of the conversation between myself and the respondent, clarity being maintained between the two for coding purposes by altering both the colour (to navy blue) and the text (to italics) of the interviewer's words. Each subsection of the interview was marked in significantly larger font and emboldened to provide a clear divide between each discrete element of the interview. Each question and answer contained a double reference point: to the tape side and the tape count; this meant I was able to re-check answers speedily when returning to any tapes.

Care was taken throughout the transcription process to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. That is, exact positions in the college were not transcribed and any information which meant identification may have been possible was replaced with dashes.



Where respondents have named other members of staff directly, the same action was taken.

On completion of the full transcription of each interview into an initial *NVivo7* file, the transcriptions were then sub-divided into three discrete file directories. By way of explanation: this particular form of interview suffers from the potential for cross-contamination of data between the perceptions and the theory-testing sections of the interview. Separate coding would be necessary to analyse each discrete section to avoid cross-contamination. Accordingly, the 'warm up' and 'perceptions' sections of each interview were pasted into a 'perceptions' directory (hitherto referred to as *NVivo7 Perceptions*) while the theory testing of 'new demands' and 'institutionalism' were placed into two further directories (hitherto referred to as *NVivo7 Demands* and *NVivo7 Institutionalism*). An example of a complete transcription and of its subsequent sub-division is available to view at appendix E.

### **Data Analysis: Consideration of Data Handling**

I gave considerable thought to the data analysis. Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) is to be found in innumerable theses and I was immediately drawn to this to provide a degree of mimetic legitimacy. However, this desire for legitimacy was overshadowed by the sense that grounded theory represented a form of coding inconsistent with this thesis, a sense reinforced when reviewing a particularly detailed examination of grounded theory coding by Hulme (2004: p.1), an examination revealing that grounded theory:

.... is fundamentally emergent, claiming that the research problem emerges out of the data with only an abstract prior enquiry of the area of interest necessary rather than being concerned with the verification of a particular theory.

Therefore for Glaser and Strauss the aim is to

find the theory implicit in the data rather than testing a prepared hypothesis.

No aspect of the key elements of grounded theory appeared to share alignment with this thesis, a view substantiated by further reading from Robson (2002: p.493). In discussing grounded theory, Robson highlights the aim: to *generate* a theory to explain what is central in the data. The author goes further (Robson, 2002: p.493):

Using pre-determined coding strategies and seeking to fit data into such categories is against the spirit of grounded theory.

With grounded theory considered and found to be incompatible, further data analysis systems were reviewed and tested. Notable amongst these was negative case analysis, originally utilised by Cressey (1953) in an analysis of embezzlement. The attraction of this form of analysis lay in its most explicit aim: to test theory. Negative case analysis has been systematised by Kidder (1981) and aims to develop, test and re-formulate theory until such theory exhibits zero exceptions. In applying this to my work, the primary issue lay in the fact that the object at the centre of this thesis differs from embezzlement. All the respondents in Cressey's work shared the 'attribute' of having embezzled; this form of shared attribute was not evident in my work, nor was the desire to develop a theory of the mechanisms behind the NCM which exhibited zero exceptions. Furthermore, the possibility of developing theory with zero exceptions has been questioned by, amongst others, Lincoln and Guba (1985). It was only after having considered these methods of data analysis that I turned my attention to *NVivo7*.

The study generated a significant quantity of data. Indeed, some 73,000 words were transcribed. File folders, markers and highlighters have been and remain tried and tested methods of

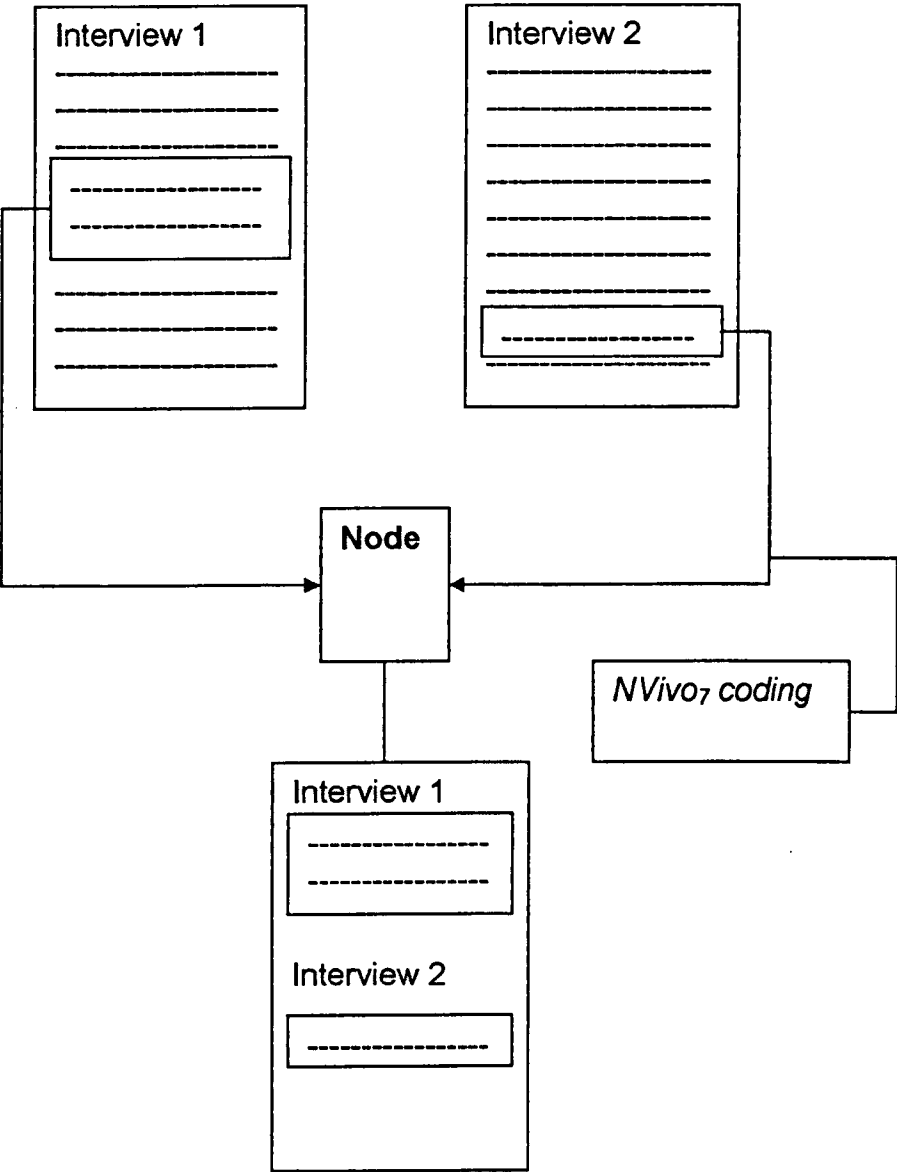
manipulating and making sense of this quantity of data, but as Robson (2002) suggests, the ease with which one can relate to and interact with the data make the use of a computer near to essential. Yet, the use of data analysis software was considered very carefully since a) the software can be rather complex to master b) the autocoding functions may easily be abused and misunderstood and c) there is a cost element.

The decision to purchase and utilise *NVivo7* was based not merely on its capacity to manage the data, but also on its capacity to code and, crucially, to test theory. *NVivo7* was released in 2006 and represents an advanced data analysis software system, significantly more so than its predecessor, the 'Non-Numerical, Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising' or NUD\*IST software. *NVivo7* had the capacity to manipulate data in a manner which would enable me to make sense of my data, an impression sustained after trialling the software over a month-long period. It was only following this trial that I was satisfied that, to use Weitzman and Miles' (1995) typology, this modern software was capable of everything that I wanted it to do: text retrieval, text management, coding and retrieval systems, code-based theory building and conceptual network building. Additionally, the software had an extensive reporting capability, rendering it extremely useful.

Arguably the greatest potential problem with data analysis software of this kind lies in its capacity to allow for easy shortcuts. I shall not deny that I endeavoured to use the autocoding functions and to make them work for me. The trial taught me a good deal about the software: the autocoding was an excellent tool, but only for particularly structured interviews. There was certainly no option but to use the manual coding system; indeed, I was to learn that *NVivo7*, whilst allowing for significant benefits in the manipulation of data, does not necessarily decrease the 'manual' side of coding if the research design includes semi or unstructured interviews.

**Data Analysis: The Essentials of Coding in NVivo7**

Prior to detailing the process of coding used herein, a degree of explanation of the coding systems in NVivo7 might prove beneficial, a system comprised of a series of stages. Coding provides a way to manage qualitative data, a process undertaken in NVivo7 through the creation of 'nodes', the essentials of the process being shown below:



*Diagram 5.3 Coding in NVivo7 (adapted from NVivo7 'Help')*

Nodes, of which there could be many within any one interview or set of interviews, represent (NVivo7, 2006):

a collection of references about a specific theme, place person or other area of interest. You gather the references by reading through sources such as interview transcripts, and categorizing information into the relevant nodes.

The process of categorising information into the relevant nodes represents the coding process. In *NVivo7*, the two primary coding nodes are known as 'Free nodes' and 'Tree Nodes'. A key feature here is that nodes may be created from the data (as they were for the *NVivo7 Perceptions* directory), created in advance, or a combination of the two (as they were for the *NVivo7 New demands and Institutionalism* directories).

Free nodes are defined in *NVivo7* as stand alone nodes that have no clear logical connection with other nodes: they do not have a clear hierarchical structure and are useful for stand-alone themes. They are used in the initial phases of coding and are often referred to as 'early perception nodes.' That is, the interviews are read and sections coded as free nodes, providing the means by which specific themes are drawn out of the data. Tree nodes represent a greater refinement of the early perception nodes, being organised in a hierarchical structure from a 'general' at the top of the node to 'specific' categories within that node.

### **Data Analysis: Coding the Interviews (*NVivo7 Perceptions*)**

The coding in *NVivo7* initially was to be rather more complex than the simple derivation of free nodes and tree nodes might suggest. The classification of the free nodes as having 'no clear logical connection with other nodes and no clear hierarchical structure' I found to be especially confusing since, if they have no clear logical connection, how was it going to be possible at a later date to place them into tree nodes with that very trait? The

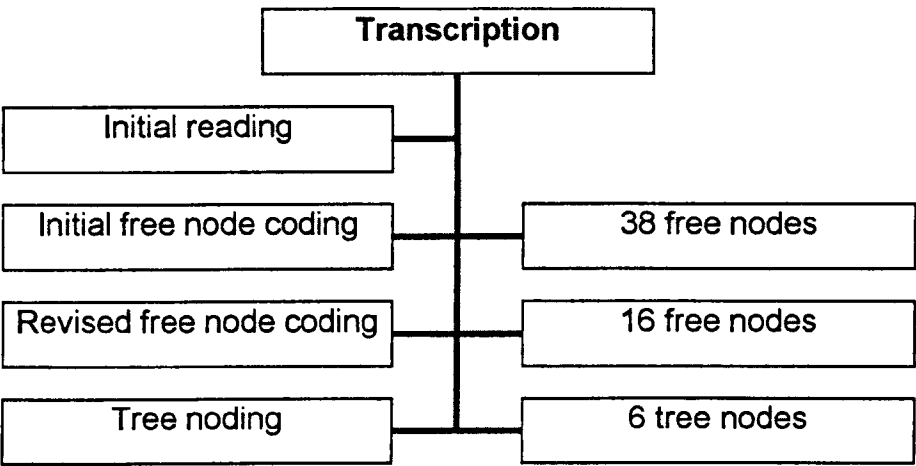
notion of 'early perception' nodes to be grouped and refined into tree nodes at a later stage proved to be a significantly more logical interpretation of the meaning of free nodes.

The interviews were initially transcribed in full into one directory, then sub-divided into the sub-directories detailed earlier for analysis purposes. Each interview in the directory was then read through twice, the first occasion to re-acquaint myself with the data and, as Stroh (2000) suggests, gain an overall feel for the respondent and what they were saying. On the second reading, I set about devising a list of free node 'early perceptions'. I then addressed the directory again and began the coding process. The list of my early perceptions reflected my relative lack of experience in the use of analytical software; I had made two errors, the first being the rather extensive listing of the free nodes, the second being the slight lack of application and focus on the research question.

There were 38 nodes in the initial free node coding of the *NVivo7 Perceptions* directory, the initial list of codes to be found at appendix F. I went back into the software and found this to be a common error: rationalising of the coding was the recommended course of action. I therefore went through each of the words, sentences and paragraphs coded at each node to see how the initial perceptions might be rationalised. This involved a dual process of revising nodes and subsuming them into others as well as renaming of nodes. The action taken on each node is viewable at appendix F. This process significantly reduced the number of free nodes, bringing the list to sixteen. They are viewable at appendix G in descending order according to number of references within the interview transcripts.

The free nodes were then refined further for ease of access and classification. In *NVivo7* this process is undertaken by copying and pasting free nodes into tree nodes which exhibit a hierarchical structure with a general classification made up of a

series of more specific classifications. The process of coding *NVivo7 Perceptions* is shown diagrammatically below:



*Diagram 5.4 The process of coding NVivo7 Perceptions*

A summary of the 38 initial free nodes is to be found at appendix F together with how these were refined. The sixteen refined free nodes are detailed below together with the cataloguing into tree nodes.

Refined free node	Tree Node
Independent and lifelong learning	Changing mission
Vocationalism of degrees	
Closure of sites	College demands
Internal demands	
Proactivity	
Coercion	Enforcement and monitoring
QAA RAE HEFCE	
Normative	Legitimacy
Mimesis	
Economic factors	Nature of the world
Global Dimension	
Increased competition	
No perceptions	
Tension between demands	
Changing nature of students	Student population
Widening participation	

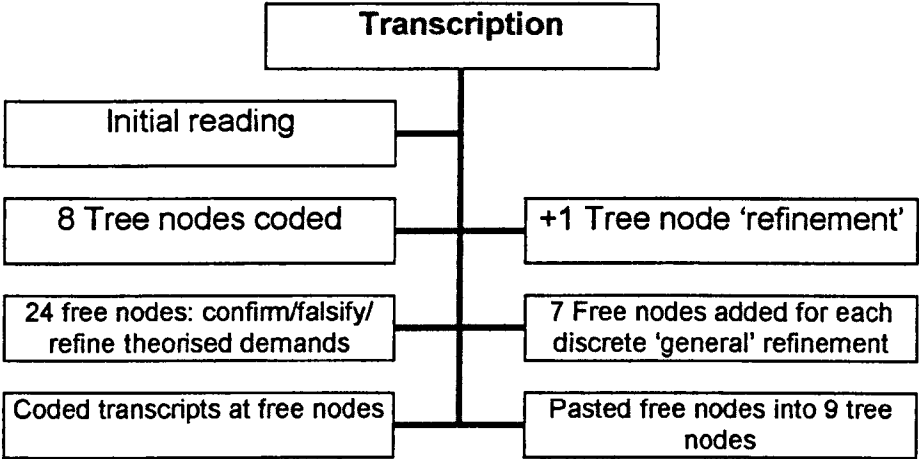
*Table 5.3 From free to tree nodes in NVivo<sub>7</sub> Perceptions*

### **Data Analysis: Coding the Interviews (NVivo<sub>7</sub> Demands and NVivo<sub>7</sub> Institutionalism)**

The process of coding NVivo<sub>7</sub> Demands and NVivo<sub>7</sub> Institutionalism involved a rather different process of coding in that these directories contained those sections of the interviews specifically designed to test rather than generate theory. In a significant departure from the coding of the initial section of the interview, which had begun with initial reading, progressed through free nodes, then to tree nodes, the two subsequent sections involved a reversing of this process. That is, the theorising of the new demands and mechanisms that had prompted the development of the NCM had suggested eight 'new demands'; these were to become the tree nodes. The free nodes were then derived from these, each tree node having three distinct free nodes linked to it: 'confirm', 'falsify' and/or 'refine', as Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realist interview suggests.



The sequencing, effectively the opposite of that used in *NVivo7 Perceptions*, is shown below and demonstrates how the theory lead the analysis:



*Diagram 5.5 The process of coding NVivo7 Demands*

The tree and free node development for *NVivo7 Demands* is shown below:

<b>Tree Node</b>	<b>Free node</b>
Increased/Widened participation	Confirm Falsify Refine
Decreased per capita funding	Confirm Falsify Refine
Research funding centred on Russell Group	Confirm Falsify Refine
Economy, efficiency, effectiveness are central	Confirm Falsify Refine
More competitive domestic and international environment	Confirm Falsify Refine
Required to serve needs of economy and produce lifelong/independent learners	Confirm Falsify Refine
HE seen as of positional rather than public good	Confirm Falsify Refine
HE seen as a commodity to be paid for	Confirm Falsify Refine
Refinements to theory	Increasing sophistication Different impacts of demands Internal demands Audit culture Relative weighting Tension between demands Terminology

*Table5.4 From Tree to Free nodes in Nvivo<sub>7</sub> Demands*

*Nvivo7 Institutionalism* was perhaps the most complex of the directories to code. A number of the respondents had wanted to evaluate the NCM and this is reflected in the transcriptions. In the initial coding I was drawn in by this, beginning to evaluate the NCM. As with the coding for the other directories, the coding involves a process of gradual refinement. As I went back through the coding I became conscious of the fact that I had been drawn in by the empirical domain. There was a need to re-focus the coding on the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM, that is, to focus on the real domain of reality. This stage of the analysis, extracting pertinent nodes and choosing the thematic focus of the analysis is acknowledged by researchers as key (Stroh, 2000). It is in the real domain that critical realists believe the mechanisms that make things happen in the world may be found (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992, 2000). Interesting though the evaluations of the NCM were, they were not a focus of this thesis.

The coding, then, of *NVivo7 Institutionalism* saw a tightening of the focus of coding on the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM. The coding sought to achieve three primary objectives: i) uncover examples of coercive, normative or mimetic legitimacy ii) discover evidence in the transcriptions to show a weighting by the respondents in terms of one or more of the forms of legitimacy and iii) to provide refinements to the institutionalist theory.

These being the objectives, the tree nodes were then entered first and aligned directly with these objectives. The transcriptions were then read through and coded, the following representing the tree and free nodes:

Tree Node	Free node
Institutionalism examples	Coercive examples Normative examples Mimetic examples
Institutionalism extent of impact	Degree of influence Weighting
Refinements to theory	Changing nature of legitimacy Critiques of model

*Table 5.5 Tree to Free Nodes in NVivo, Institutionalism*

## Issues of Validity

Consideration of the strength of the adhesive between the data and the claim or, to use Toulmin's (1958) terminology, the warrant, was central in the choice of methods. Each step was designed in an effort to ensure that the data generated would support the claims derived from it. Critical realists tend to be of the opinion that knowledge is always fallible (see Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992; 2000); gathering 'perfect' data to warrant a claim is perhaps an impossible task, yet the researcher must endeavour to achieve this and to do whatever is reasonable and practical to do so. Triangulation is amongst the most recognised of these and it is to these endeavours that I turn at this juncture.

Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Cresswell et al., 2000). The objective is to enhance the degree of 'fix' (Robson, 2002) on a position or, in this instance, to underpin with a greater degree of certainty the claims made in the thesis.

Distinguishing between different forms of triangulation, Denzin (1978) identified four forms of this procedure: across data sources (i.e respondents), theories (using multiple theories or perspectives), methods and among different investigators. This thesis utilised elements of the first three. In terms of data

sources, nine interviews were conducted to provide a wealth of rich data from which to gather a firm convergence on a particular position, reflecting the form of data triangulation defined by Arksey and Knight (1999: p. 23) as:

...the use of designs involving diverse data sources to explore the same phenomenon. The data sources can be varied, or triangulated, in terms of person, time or space.

The data sources were from a variety of positions and reflected key personnel in the college responsible for the development of the NCM (director of learning and teaching, PLs responsible for the local interpretation of the NCM, teaching fellows to develop teaching within the NCM as well as heads of school and senior lecturers).

The use of multiple theories was critical to this study. Integrated institutionalism of the form forwarded by Scott (1995) represents perhaps the best example of the use of multiple theory, crucial in the sense that I wished to avoid leading the respondents during the interviews. I set out to provide a 'multiple theory' to avoid just such a scenario. Institutionalism is an immense an extremely complex area (see work by Brint and Karabel, [1991]; DiMaggio and Powell, [1991]; Meyer and Rowan, [1977]). The integrated institutionalism of Scott (1995) represents the representation of multiple theories derived from a spectrum of institutionalist theorists. This multiple theory enabled the respondents to review the legitimization of the NCM through a tri-nocular rather than a bi-nocular or even a single telescopic lens.

Arguably the greatest contribution to triangulation, however, was derived from the methods employed. The desire to avoid leading the respondents precipitated a preliminary section to the interview: the *NVivo7 Demands* directory. This directory aimed primarily to establish the perceptions of the respondents in

advance of the theory testing inherent in subsequent sections of the interview. The process of analysing the data in the initial section of the interview reflected the immersion of the findings in the data, a process in *NVivo7* that went from free to tree nodes.

Further measures to enhance validity include researcher reflexivity and thick, rich description, both identified by Cresswell et al. (2000) as significant validity measures. The former, for its part involves the form of self-disclosure to be found in the introduction to the thesis. As Cresswell et al. (2000: p.127) note:

It is particularly important for researchers to acknowledge and describe their entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds.

The openness displayed early in the thesis represents an attempt to avoid the form of method-report deficit identified by Conostas (1992) as well as the form of distrust identified by Webb (2000).

The thesis has sought to provide a thick, rich description of the context of setting and themes of the work. Accordingly, the context and relational network of the NCM is explored in great detail as is the process by which the data was generated prior to providing the claims to be found in the next chapter.

## **Ethical Issues**

The data collected in this thesis may result in not merely claims derived from the data, but what may be termed 'sensitive claims'. The data shall only support that claim if it can be demonstrated that proper ethical procedures were followed; therefore, I put in place a set of ethical procedures designed to achieve this. In the first instance, I consulted with and negotiated access with the

director of learning and gained permission from them to conduct the study. This included a discussion as to the aims of the study. I also gained permission from the head of school from which I was undertaking my sample. I asked for and gained permission to access and copy the documents described earlier in this chapter.

Each respondent was asked to read and then sign an informed consent form, an example of which is viewable at appendix D. The format of the form followed that suggested by Robson (2002); in so doing it provided contact details, stated that the respondent's participation was entirely voluntary, that they were free to withdraw at any time, that they were free to refuse to answer any question and that their anonymity was guaranteed.

In terms of the transcription, personal details were deleted as were any references to specific persons. Any aspects of a transcription which I believed could be used to identify either the college or individuals within the college were removed. The order interviewee number has also been scrambled from that on table 5.2 (page 129). Local universities, local colleges and events particular to either the college or the city in which the college is situated were all deleted. The same procedure has been used throughout the thesis. At no stage has the college been named; although it would be possible for a determined individual to ascertain the name of the college, the measures taken would render it near to impossible for them to attribute any phrases to any given respondent. I was asked on occasion to divulge names of other respondents during interviews; at no stage were such names given.

The methods were to precipitate a significant quantity of rich data, the analysis of which was to provide complex and interesting findings.

# CHAPTER 6

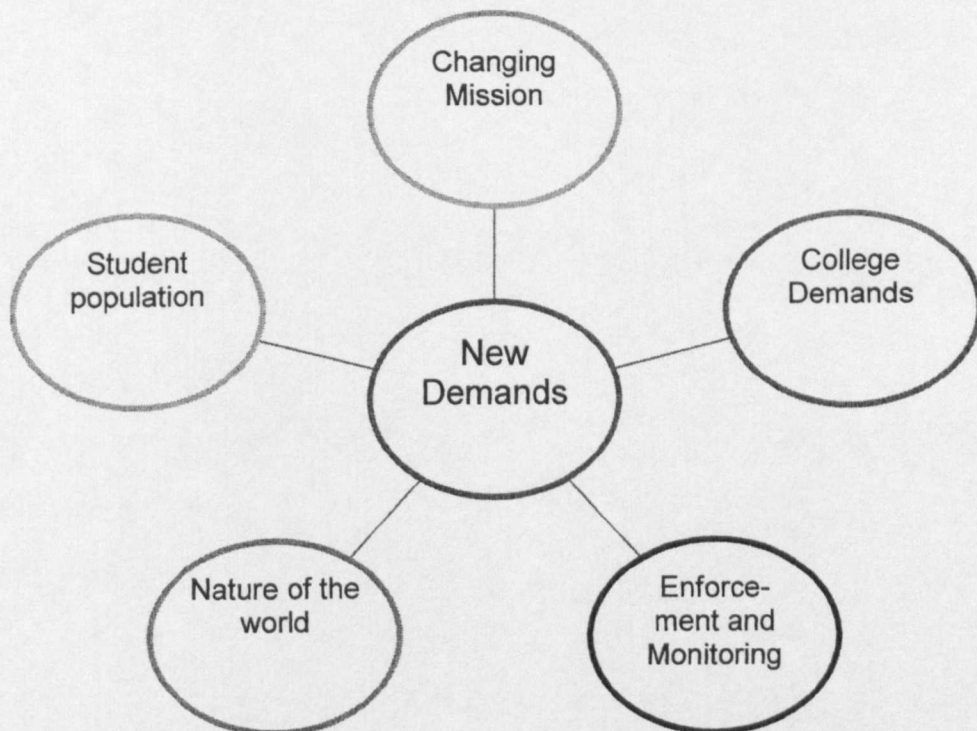
## FINDINGS

### Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter

The first purpose of this chapter is to reveal the findings from the three sub-directories analysed in *Nvivo7*. Accordingly, the initial element of the chapter shall consider the findings of *Nvivo7 Perceptions* whilst the second and third sections shall respectively review *Nvivo7 Demands* and *Nvivo7 Institutionalism*. The second purpose is to provide a causal analysis of the NCM, to be found towards the latter part of the chapter.

### ***NVIVO7 Perceptions***

The objective of *Nvivo7 Perceptions* was to establish the perceptions of the respondents as to the nature of the new demands confronting the college. Analysis of the transcripts revealed 5 key tree nodes referring to demands and a sixth node focussing on institutionalism. The new demands as the respondents perceived them were:



*Diagram 6.1 Perceived New demands from NVivo7 Perceptions*



Each of these demands comprised 2 or more sub-classifications noted at them. The demands, their sub-classifications and the number of sources and references for each are shown in rank order, with the most frequently occurring demands towards the top:

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>No.sources</b>	<b>Refs</b>
<b>Enforcement and monitoring</b>	Compliance	6	12
	QAA, HEFCE, RAE	7	14
<b>Total</b>			<b>26</b>

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>No.sources</b>	<b>Refs</b>
<b>Student Population</b>	Changing nature	5	6
	Widening participation	9	16
<b>Total</b>			<b>22</b>

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>No.sources</b>	<b>Refs</b>
<b>Changing Mission</b>	Independent and lifelong learning	7	15
	Vocationalism of degrees	3	5
<b>Total</b>			<b>20</b>

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>No.sources</b>	<b>Refs</b>
<b>Nature of the world</b>	Economic factors	4	12
	Global dimension	2	3
	Increased competition	1	1
	No perceptions	2	2
	Tension between demands	1	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>19</b>

Demand	Sub-category	No.sources	Refs
College Demands	Closure of sites	2	2
	Internal demands	3	3
	Proactivity	2	7
Total			12

*Table 6.1: The rank ordering of perceived demands by reference totals*

Some degree of elaboration shall perhaps be beneficial at this stage. Below may be found a development of the rank order noted above.

## Enforcement and Monitoring

The degree to which the college has been monitored and strategies enforced stood out as a new demand. There were some 26 separate references to enforcement and monitoring during the interviews, HEFCE, QAA and RAE all mentioned within them as reflecting this greater degree of monitoring. Of the external relationships, it was perhaps HEFCE that was seen to have the greatest impact:

...like HEFCE's requirement that we complied in order to get the money and also that we had to report back to HEFCE every year on how we were implementing our learning and teaching strategies. (*NVivo7 Perceptions* interviewee 01)

The demands and pressures from HEFCE are, arguably, archetypal of compliance requirements, as the following quotes reveal:

And the reason we have to meet those benchmark statements is because there's money attached to them, so if you don't meet your

widening participation targets, you don't get the widening participation supplement money.

There are certainly penalties for non-retention, because if you lose student numbers you lose the funding that goes with the student.....

(NVivo7 Perceptions Interviewee 01)

Similar penalties are revealed by interview 05:

...so if the college didn't respond to government pressures to take more students then we wouldn't get the finance and there's always been in our establishment a sort of dark cloud hanging over that's used by management to say: 'well, if we don't respond in this way then, you know, we won't survive, so we have to change to survive'.

(NVivo7 Perceptions Interviewee 05)

Interviewees were demonstrating rather more knowledge of the underpinning structures and mechanisms than I had anticipated. There was a particularly direct demand here. As the review of structures and mechanisms of chapter 3 suggested, the Fryer Report of 1997 had strongly influenced the *Learning and Teaching Age* of the following year. Both had a significant impact on the new lifelong learning agenda, subsequently actioned through HEFCE 98/40 and, more directly, by the TQEF. What became apparent during the interviews was that the monies attached to the development of learning and teaching strategies clearly came with a set of very clear requirements: to fulfil the new widening participation agenda alongside the lifelong learning agenda espoused in Fryer.

## **Student Population**

The nature of the 'student population' demand may be broken down into two discrete areas; on the one hand, the respondents revealed that widening participation was a new demand simply

based on the fact that there were more students in the college. Alongside this, however, lay an associated demand: not only was the student population increasing, but its nature was changing.

In many respects it could be argued that the student population tree node should be ranked number 1 since, unlike enforcement and monitoring, every interviewee noted this as a new demand. Just three examples may serve to show the extent to which this new demand was being felt:

Well, the new demands were more students.

So, the government wanting 50% of young people to go into higher education put pressures on higher education to, ehh, take more students in, that put pressures on buildings, it put pressures on staff in all sorts of different ways, umm, and so the response really was to handle this. (*NVivo7 Perceptions Interviewee 05*)

Well, I think one of the main demands is that we now have many more people coming into higher education. (*NVivo7 Perceptions Interviewee 08*)

The demands, however, of the student population were seen to extend beyond the mere increase in numbers. It was the associated change in the nature of those students which added to the demand. With reference to the students' nature, interviewees pointed to the notion that they faced a greater demand in the sense that widening participation had brought to the college students who required much more in the way of assistance and help. Interviewee 05 articulates this demand rather well:

There's another thing and I don't know whether it's answering this question, but of course, the

more students that come into higher education, there are going to be more students who need special help. And I think that is a side of all this that I would like to mention, I don't know whether it's answering this question or it would answer another, but I think the different types, students have changed over the time and the curriculum needs to take account of the student needs.

It was to become clear that widening participation precipitates not simply the new demand of increased student numbers, but the nature of those students results in another demand, that of an increase in the requirement for special help.

### **Changing Mission**

In terms of the lifelong learning agenda, the strength of this node is both wide and deep. That is, the majority (7) of the interviewees had nodes corresponding to lifelong learning and there were 15 references in total. Perhaps the most demonstrative of the examples of this node come from interviewee 05:

I don't want to call it a new pedagogy, but there has been a shift generally from being teacher-centred to student-centred and the way of achieving that, umm, would be to shift the curriculum away from being, you know, dependent and, if at the same time you've got this kind of co-existence of new demands, umm, but I guess the things that's running through the pedagogical is how do you enable a student to become a lifelong learner. How, umm, do you enable people to pitch into education, access education at any point in their lives, not just those between 18 to 21 and whether in

On a less strong note, but associated with the node of 'changing mission', three interviewees noted the impact of the vocationalism of degrees.

### **Further Perceived Demands and Undertones of Institutionalism**

The final perceived demands concerned the changing nature of the world and college demands. For their part, the former included economic factors, the global dimension, increased competition, 'no perceptions' and tension between demands. Of these, the economic factors were seen to be of significance, with four interviewees noting them as demands whilst the remainder had two or less interviewees mention them and three or less references.

There are two key points to be made at this juncture. Firstly, what is perhaps interesting is that the perceived demands show little reference to increased competition, to the commodification of HE or to the positional orientation of HE. These factors were written into the theorised demands, but no mention of these was made by the interviewees. Secondly, two interviewees had no perceptions as to what the new demands might be. This I found interesting in the sense that, without any theory to review, they were left with an inability to perceive of what the new demands were, a point I shall return to.

It soon became clear within the analysis of the transcriptions of *NVivo7 Perceptions* that coercive, normative and mimetic legitimation featured in the development of the NCM. I have not placed these facets of legitimation within the perceived new demands diagram above, yet they are worthy of mention here. Both normative and mimetic legitimation were noded on six occasions each, but examples were only found in three sources.

In terms of the mimetic and normative influence revealed at this relatively early stage in the interview, this is perhaps best shown with reference to interviewee 03, although interviewees 01 and 02 also made reference to such forces:

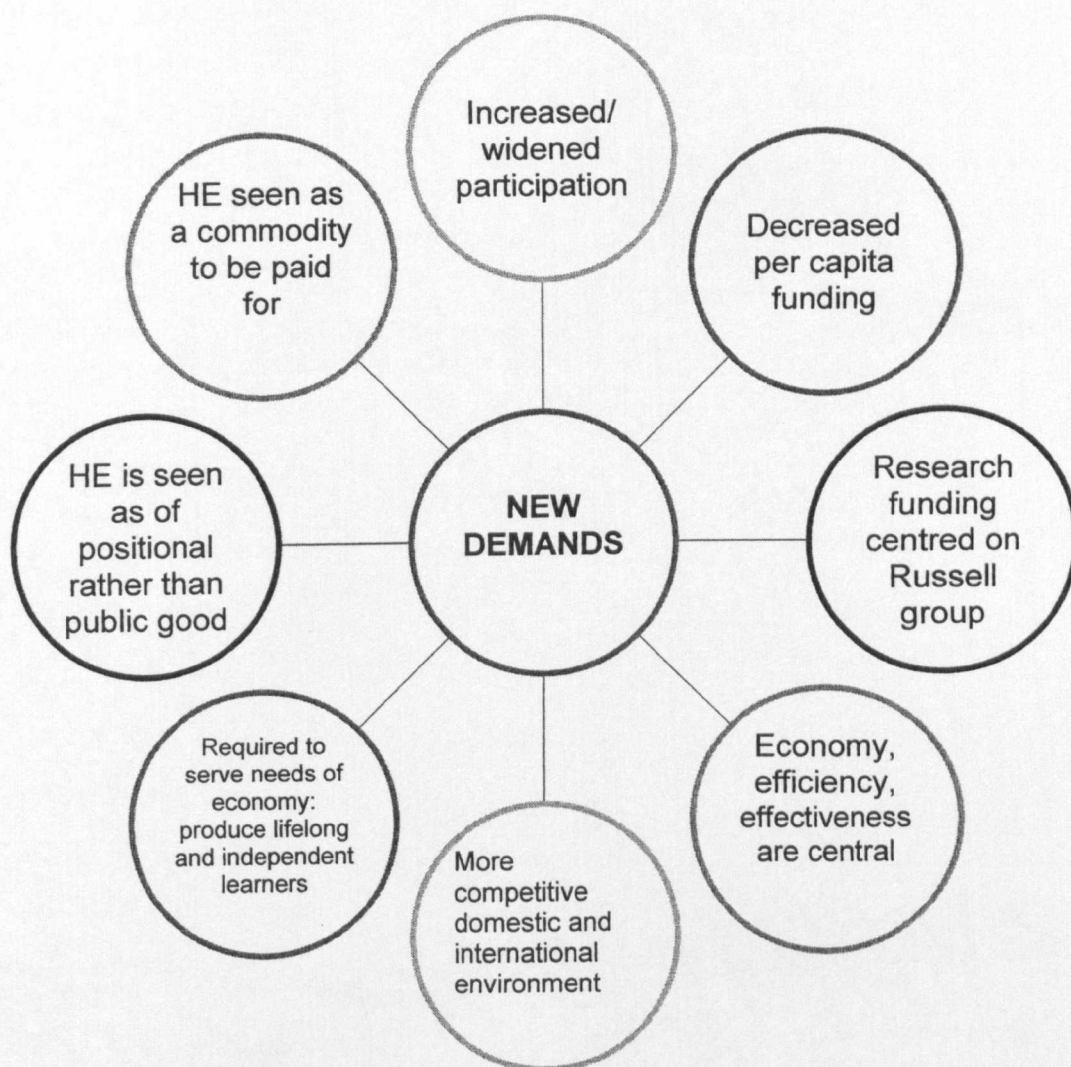
I'm hesitating not to use the word benchmarking because that's making the softer point I'm trying to make much more firmly. Yeah, so sector benchmarking, so I think if we'd, and I'm not saying that we did this, Mark, right, but if we'd done a formal benchmarking exercise where we compared ourselves with other competitor institutions, I think we would have found that we were beginning to lag behind some of our major competitors. Chester, for example; Chichester, Canterbury and then if you go into different types of HE providers, Leeds Metropolitan University, Manchester Metropolitan University and I think, you know, there was a sense in which our informal benchmarking of our knowledge of those institutions were beginning to signal that we had to make a change.

The clarity of normative (benchmarking) and mimetic (comparisons with other institutions) is striking here, at a stage when the interview had not yet begun to formally investigate the nature of legitimation behind the NCM. In terms of coercive forces, the enforcement and monitoring of the form noted above is arguably archetypal of coercive legitimation, a point of note at this stage. At this juncture, I shall progress to NVivo7 Demands to demonstrate the results found from testing theory.

### ***NVIVO<sub>7</sub> Demands***

Based on an extensive analysis involving the political, economic, managerial and institutional relational network of the NCM in

addition to the subsequent legislative process, the new demands faced by the college were summarised in a model:



*Diagram 6.2 Theorised new demands faced by the college*

The findings from *NVivo7 Demands* centre on Pawson and Tilley's (1997) conceptualisation of the realist interview in that falsificatory, confirmatory and refinement statements are sought out.

The precise nodding and number of references at each node is shown below, ordered from those reflecting the greatest degree of confirmatory responses to the least:



Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>Economy, efficiency, effectiveness are central</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	8	17
	Refine	1	1

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>Increased/ Widening participation</b>	Falsify	1	2
	Confirm	8	12
	Refine	3	5

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>HE seen as a commodity to be paid for</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	7	8
	Refine	2	2

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>Required to serve needs of economy – lifelong learners</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	6	10
	Refine	2	2

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>Decreased per capita funding</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	6	6
	Refine	3	3

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>Research Funding centred on Russell group</b>	Falsify	2	3
	Confirm	6	6
	Refine	1	2

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>More competitive domestic and international environment</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	5	7
	Refine	2	2

Tree node	Free node	No.sources	Refs
<b>HE is seen as positional rather than public good</b>	Falsify	0	0
	Confirm	4	5
	Refine	4	4

*Table 6.2 Rank ordered tree nodes for NVivo<sub>7</sub> Demands by degree of confirmatory responses*

## **The Centrality of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness**

The suggestion that economy, efficiency and effectiveness are central features represented the most confirmed of the theorised demands, a point transmitted lucidly by interviewee 09:

...the things that they draw to your attention, are inevitably based around student numbers, umm, income and, ehh, fear of loss, fear of failure in some sense, that in some way it's all going to go wrong if we don't get these numbers up. If we can't, if we can't make the most of funding opportunities that follow things like widening

participation and, ehh, so the whole thing is driven, seems to me underpinned, shored up, the whole infrastructure is actually economics. (NVivo7 Demands, interviewee 09)

Three further and interesting points were raised by the staff during discussions of this demand. Firstly, interviewee 05 argued that the interests of students were secondary to financial demands:

I think the changes have been lead by finance as well as not necessarily what's best for the students. (NVivo7 Demands, interviewee 05)

This degree of emphasis on the centrality of economic factors is notable in the sense that, within college literature pertaining to the NCM and its inception, the drivers were seen to be pedagogical, referring to lifelong learning, to independence and the necessity for flexibility in curricula presentation. An interesting point here lies in the difference between the responses in the interviews and the rationale given for the development of the NCM.

Secondly, something of a conceptual shift has been seen to have taken place with a more business-like model enveloping the institution, a point made by interviewee 08 and vividly by interviewee 09:

Yeah, I mean I think, I think the college does, and always has, worked on an economic model and I think that's, it's an inevitable, umm, consequence of an institution like this. And I think there was a stage even, uhh, I mean, some of these things perhaps don't deserve the symbolism that they get, but I think there was a stage when, I read something that the Principal was either referred to, or referred to herself, as

the 'CEO' of the institution and that I think's a very interesting sort of conceptual shift away from being a principal of an educational system. (NVivo7 *Demands*, interviewee 09)

The third point here focuses on the economic context within which the interviewees believed the NCM should be placed. This was tempered by 'financial difficulties' (interviewee 06) encountered at the time, difficulties which were to be transposed into pressures (interviewee 08):

Well, in the sense of, umm, you know we are being made aware as staff that, you know, unless we have lots of students, then, you know, our jobs are at risk. Students bring in money, because most of what we teach is funded by the higher education funding council and, you know, staff cost money, so the more students we have, the better the balance. (NVivo7 *Demands*, interviewee 08)

In accepting that economy, efficiency and effectiveness may be regarded as a 'demand', interviewee 02 was less of the opinion that these factors were anything 'new'. Rather, this interviewee suggested that these were central some time in advance of the NCM.

## **Widening Participation**

As with NVivo7 *Perceptions*, widening participation was to feature prominently in NVivo7 *Demands*. Eight of the nine interviewees regarded this as a new demand, interviewee 02 suggesting it to be a 'big push' for the college, interviewee 05 stating that it had placed a 'great demand' on the college and interviewee 09 that the main emphasis of the college would have been around increased and widening participation.

It is, however, in infusing *NVivo7 Demands* with *NVivo7 Perceptions* that the picture of the demand becomes most clear. The former suggests the strength of the demand whilst the latter provides an indication as to its impact: widening participation has meant not simply the demand of greater student numbers, but the nature of those students had also altered. They themselves are a new demand in terms of the degree of support required to see them through courses of study.

There was an interesting point raised by interviewee 06; whilst discussing widening participation, this interviewee argued that the learning and teaching model would have been the same irrespective of numbers of students:

.....our numbers haven't increased sufficiently to consider changing the curriculum. The curriculum model was changed outwith our numbers. If we had 50 students or 5000 students, the learning and teaching model would be the same in terms of hourage. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 06)

This argument is interesting on two counts; in the first instance, the numbers increased by some 1214 students between 1995 and 2001, representing an increase approaching 30%. Secondly, and to compound this first challenge, the rationalisation and centralisation of the college teaching resource through institutional estate policy had meant a reduction in physical teaching space. To use Toulmin's (1958) analysis, the claim made by this interviewee appears difficult to warrant given existing data. And, yet, this interviewee raises an interesting point, going on to state that it was economic factors that had an overarching influence over all others.

## **HE: A Commodity to be Paid For**

The commodification of HE, in the view of these interviewees at least, represented a new demand. There are two dimensions to this section. The first lies in recognition of the demand, the second lies in the suggestion that the demand is the source of 'problems'. Interviewee 01 sums up the first:

My perception is that that is the way it is; I'm not saying that that can't be changed, but those are the facts of life; whether you like them or not, I think the idea of HE being a commodity and its instrumental role are fairly anathema to many of us given our age and background. But that is the fact and unless you respond to that fact you're going to come badly unstuck, so some of these may be things that you'd need to redress the effects of, but you cannot ignore them.

*(NVivo7 Demands, interviewee 01)*

The interpretation of this demand as the source of problems runs as a theme in a number of the responses. For their part, interviewee 03 is satisfied that it is a new demand 'with great reluctance' and interviewee 04 suggested that the issue represented a 'big problem'. The problems themselves, however, were perhaps best expressed by others, interviewee 06 stating that commodification had made the college 'more accountable for what we say and do' and that 'potentially, the number of appeals across the college may have risen'. In a similar vein, interviewee 09 stated that the students 'behave like customers' and that, in expecting a service, they (the students) 'don't see any problems as their limitations'. Rather, it is something that the 'staff have failed to deliver'.

Arguably the greatest aspect of this new demand lies in the expectation and critical consumerism of students, a view expressed by interviewee 07:

It certainly changes the nature of the students because, umm, you asked something before about this independent learning; because they're paying for it, or they perceive they're paying for it, they expect things to be produced for them. So, they expect now, because they're paying for it, they expect, ehh, lecture notes, they expect, umm, the research to be provided for them, they expect it on a plate because they're paying for it. That's being simplistic, but there is a different attitude now amongst students, there really is umm so, yes, it has changed and they are, because they are now far more consumer, they're far more critical as consumers of the product that they're getting. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 07)

As a slight refinement to the theorised demand, however, both interviewee 02 and 06 suggested that the demand was not truly new, but it had been something which had 'already been happening'.

## **Serving the Needs of the Economy and Lifelong Learning**

Six of the nine interviewees confirmed this as a demand; however, the confirmation varied between somewhat benign acceptance of the demand (interviewee 03) to rather more recognition of the forcefulness of this demand (interviewees 01 and 05):

There's a strong movement at the moment, it's related to lifelong and independent learners.  
(*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 01)

...the biggest impact that I see in all this is producing lifelong independent learners is what higher education has been all about and should be all about. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 05)

Some especially interesting discussions were conducted at this stage of the interviews, with two points perhaps warranting particular attention. The first concerns the *use* of lifelong learning; in interviewee 05's opinion, the NCM was sold on the notion that it was to make students more independent (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 05). That is, the NCM was at least partially legitimated through a lifelong learning agenda. This is an interesting point given the centrality of economy, efficiency and effectiveness mentioned earlier.

The second point of interest lies in the wrestling away of curricula matters from the old bureaucratic-professional regime (Clarke and Newman, 1997). In the words of interviewee 08:

Well, I think the independent learner section is quite demanding in terms of, umm, the new style of learning and teaching and I'm not sure that we do that, yet, as well as we used to perhaps with the old model where we were more in charge of student learning. Well, we were, let's put it like this: we were in charge of teaching, umm, now we're expected to control learning which is rather different. So, in fact the rooms in this building, they're no longer labelled as teaching rooms, they're labelled as learning rooms. Yes, we had control when we were teaching, got so much control over them then. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 08)

For their part, interviewees 02 and 09 suggest that moves



towards a lifelong learning agenda had been a factor 'way before' the NCM was developed, reiterating the conceptualisation of demands as evolving and changing rather than 'new'.

### **Decreased Per Capita Funding**

Six of the nine interviewees confirmed that decreased per capita funding would represent a new demand or, at least, a demand as described in the previous section. What is perhaps interesting here is that none of the interviewees gave any figures.

Awareness of just how much per capita funding had declined appeared to be extremely limited, with interviewee 08 providing a suitable summary of both the desire to refine this element of the theory and the paucity of knowledge pertaining to the degree of change:

Well, as I say, I'm not sure that it suddenly changed. I think maybe there's just been a sort of creep factor so that, you know, we perhaps teach more people and there's less per capita funding as it suggests here. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 08)

### **Research Funding Centred on the Russell Group**

This represented perhaps the most polarised of all the theorised new demands with six interviewees giving confirmatory responses, two falsificatory and one refining. The nature of the demand was seen to be complex in the sense that it represented a double-edged demand, the first being an expectancy to engage in research:

Well, as the college has moved and repositioned itself, umm, to be a university then there's an underlying expectation that the institution or certain members of the institution will be

involved in research. So, there's a need to get funding. If, in fact, it's very difficult to get funding then it would be very difficult for staff to engage in that research. And there's certainly now more pressure for staff to be involved in research.

(*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 08)

The desire to access the funding resources afforded to the Russell group has precipitated a pressure on staff to produce publications for RAE. Indeed, the college was explicit in its desire to free up staff time for research through the NCM. However, this desire has been hampered by the other edge of the sword: a lack of infrastructural support for research (interviewee 05) and a lack of background and history in research, a point stated unequivocally by interviewee 07:

Umm, the college, the college 'super management' if you like, executive management, see it as lost opportunities because they think that we should have our finger in every pie and attract funding from every possible source. Therefore, we should have a percentage of that, but the reality is that we have no history; you cannot make people give us funding because we have no track record. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 07)

There appears to be something of a classic catch 22 situation here. It is clear that the college would like to access the tens of millions of pounds available for research in the UK, yet to do so would require an investment and a history that they do not have. Any investment in facilitating research would necessitate the stretching of finite financial resources, placing even greater strain on the demand for economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Refinements to the demands of research funding took two forms. The first, cited by interviewee 05, was that the monies available for research had increased in the years leading up to the NCM (although, as chapter 3 made clear, these monies represent a tiny percentage of the monies received by the Russell group). For their part, interviewee 06 suggested that to map the broad learning and teaching model in general, and the NCM in particular, to this demand exclusively was not something they could do. This hints at one of the significant general refinements to the theory to be explored slightly later.

### **More Competitive Domestic and International Environment**

Confirmatory evidence declines at this stage from six to five interviewees. The nature, moreover, of this confirmation is somewhat lacklustre, with interviewee 01, for example, simply saying that they would not disagree with it and interviewee 04 giving a cursory 'yeah' in acknowledgment of it as a demand. Only interviewee 08 was significantly more forthcoming on the subject, suggesting that the HE environment was 'very competitive'.

Interviewees 07 and 08, whilst acknowledging that the sector represents a competitive environment, conveyed the notion that the college had a niche within this environment and that the issue of competition was not something that may be regarded as entirely new.

### **HE: Positional Rather than Public Good**

The extent of support for this was less than for any of the preceding theorised demands, with only four interviewees confirming it as a factor. In the first instance, I should say that few of the staff interviewed had any perception of this in any meaningful sense. Indeed, I was asked to explain the meaning of this in seven of the nine interviews.

The nature of responses varied from the rather blasé acknowledgements common to the preceding theorised demand to some significantly deeper responses. Interviewee 08, by way of example, argued that the positional nature of HE is now more explicit and that the use of HE as a stepping stone to higher salaries and positions is indeed a factor:

I think it's just made it more explicit perhaps. I mean, people are driven by what they are personally going to get out of this... I should think the main driver of most of our students is to get a better paid job at the end of it rather than spending three years outside in employment. They think they will somehow leapfrog other people; and it does, in fact, it does open doors for further training. Being a graduate is the starting point for, for many professions. (NVivo7 *Demands*, interviewee 08)

Others were prepared to go even further, suggesting that HE has undergone a significant philosophical change:

...there is now a perception that HE isn't a public good, that it has a utilitarian value, but I don't think we've really unpacked what that means. But, I still think that's been the biggest philosophical thing, you know. (NVivo7 *Demands*, interviewee 03).

The final element of the findings relative to this directory lay in the 'general refinements' to the theory.

## **General Refinements**

The interviewees gave a range of general as opposed to specific refinements to the theorised demands. These have been summarised below with those sourced the most towards the top:

Refinement	Sources	References
Different impacts	6	16
Increasing sophistication	6	16
Tension between demands	5	10
Terminology	3	4
Further demands	2	5
Relative weighting	1	4

*Table 6.3 General refinements: sources and references*

## Different Impacts

The critical realist notion of tendencies suggests that outcomes are critically affected by the context within which mechanisms are placed (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The interviewees appeared especially aware of this, six of them highlighting how the demands tended to be felt and experienced differently across the rather diverse HE sector. It became clear that the HE sector was not seen as homogenous; rather, a particularly clear distinction between the effects on ‘teaching universities’ as opposed to ‘research universities’ was observed, a case put by interviewees 01 and 02, and more especially by interviewee 03:

I think they affect different institutions differently, but what I also think they've done unintentionally is that they've created different types of sectors and different types of institutions. In other words, by responding to these demands, it's helped shape the sector.....(NVivo7 Demands, interviewee 03)

Each institution faces, it would seem, the same broad demands. However, the response to those demands should be placed very much within the context of each individual institution, a case most effectively summed up by interviewee 09:

I think every institution has to interpret policy and make of it what it can. Umm, there's an expectation of all, all institutions to deliver ehh, something, but each institution is going through its own processes at any time that you look at it and, ehh, and this institution's no different.

*(NVivo7 Demands, interviewee 09)*

What this perhaps means is that it may be possible to generalise as to demands; it is much less possible to do the same in terms of subsequent outcomes or events. Generalising as to events may be possible to a certain degree within sub-sections of the sector ('colleges' as opposed to Russell group, for example.) This is perhaps reflected in the high degree of isomorphism within sub-sections of the HE environ, a point not lost on institutionalist researchers.

## **Increasing Sophistication**

A number of the interviewees were able to perceive of the deeper structures, mechanisms and efficient causes behind the development of the NCM. Amongst the interesting comments, one from interviewee 03 suggested that it is always harder to see the omissions than agree with what is there. For their part, interviewee 05 suggested that the new demands, as portrayed, could not be seen in isolation. As noted in the sections above, numerous comments were focused on the term 'new', with the interviewees preferring 'evolving' or 'changing' as rather more apt terminology.

On a broader level, perhaps the most perceptive comments were to come from interviewee 05. In showing a keen awareness of

the impact of these demands, this interviewee alludes to the idea that the NCM is but one of a series of responses to these demands, a point raised in chapter 3:

Umm, I'm interested to know and understand a little bit more about how these new demands are actually tied exclusively or not to the learning and teaching model. I wouldn't map this to the very existence of the learning and teaching model, because these are much, much bigger in a sense, collectively. You know, the sum of these is much greater in relation to the learning and teaching model. I think the learning and teaching model can in part address some of these, but there are so many other things that college has done and is doing to address these.  
(*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 05)

What is interesting here is that the interviewee wanted to know more. In my view this raises a crucial question for the critical realist. In testing their theory, how much of the theory do they show to the interviewees? A possible scenario would have been for the interviewees to read chapters 1, 2, and 3 prior to the interviews to provide an indication of the origins of the 'new demands' model. Each one of the new demands on the diagram finds its origins in legislation, Green or White papers, based on significant research and investigation in its own right. Perhaps giving the interviewees access to this information may be a positive step since they would be evaluating the theory from its origins rather than from a model. This has important implications, not the least of which is the time-consuming nature of the request of the interviewees. Similarly, there are issues of leading the interviewees. Despite these reservations, this is something I would recommend followers of this work to consider seriously.

## Tension Between Demands

In interviewee 03's words, there was a sense in which tensions existed between the new demands since there was a degree to which they lacked 'joined-up thinking'. This idea of contradictions and/or tensions between the demands was expressed by a number of interviewees, 01 suggesting that interest in learning and teaching initiatives wanes as RAE deadlines grow nearer since the monies available for the former in no way match that available for the latter. This interviewee goes further, arguing that 'you've got a lot of conflicting initiatives'; more than this, however, tension exists at the front between academic freedom and the requirements for economy, efficiency and effectiveness expressed through accountability and audit:

There's a lot of tension between academic freedom and accountability under audit. I think in terms of the culture and the way in which academics have traditionally operated, that probably is the biggest change. (*NVivo7 Demands*, interviewee 03)

This theme of conflict is extended by comments from interviewees 02 and 05: massification is seen as an issue for the former in that this occurred with no associated increase in academic staff numbers and for the latter in that it has been achieved simultaneously with a decline in per capita funding. The final area of conflict was seen to come from the business-like traits of HE and what the interviewee sees as the essence of HE:

...I think, umm, I think education has been driving an economy model for some time now and I think that necessarily flies in the face of, you know, what HE is all about, you know, you inevitably have HE as a business, HE as some kind of liberating mechanism to enhance



people's lives and they don't always sit, umm,  
terribly well together.....(*NVivo7 Demands*,  
interviewee 06)

## **Final Refinements**

Final developments to the theory were forwarded. Terminology in terms of 'evolving' or 'changing' (as opposed to the term 'new') was a recurring theme. 'Further demands' were seen to include the 'audit culture' (interviewee 01), a significant increase in paperwork (interviewee 05) and the demands of coping with technological changes (interviewee 05). Whilst it is possible that these may be readily subsumed within economy, efficiency effectiveness for the first and second and the lifelong learning agenda for the third, this connection would not be immediately apparent. One interviewee made reference to the relative weighting that may be applied to each of the demands, a point perhaps covered in consideration of the different impacts above.

The mapping of *NVivo7 Demands* and *NVivo7 Perceptions* shall occur in the final section of this chapter, a causal explanation of the NCM. For now I shall be moving to an examination of the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM from *NVivo7 Institutionalism*.

## ***NVivo7 Institutionalism***

The objective of *NVivo7 Institutionalism* was to test integrated institutionalism (Scott, 1995) with a view to exploring the nature of legitimacy behind the NCM. The results here comprise three themes: forms of legitimacy (coercive, normative and mimetic), the 'extent of impact' of each and refinements to theory. The three forms of legitimacy in source and reference order are shown below:

<b>Legitimacy Mechanism</b>	<b>Sources</b>	<b>References</b>
Coercive	9	59
Normative	8	17
Mimetic	8	15

*Table 6.4 Source and reference order for the three forms of legitimacy*

The meaning and characteristics of each form of legitimization provide the basis for a further breakdown of each. For its part, references to coercive legitimization were further analysed to reveal the external and internal bodies viewed by the interviewees as forming the background to the NCM as well as the characteristics of the operations of those bodies (enforcement through sanctions, constraining behaviour, monitoring systems).

### **Coercive Legitimation of the NCM: External and Internal Pressures**

The external pressures exerted were seen to come from a variety of sources, the references and sources shown below:

<b>External source</b>	<b>Sources</b>	<b>References</b>
Central government	7	7
HEFCE	4	6
QAA	2	2
ILT/HEA	1	1
DFES	1	1

*Table 6.5 Sources of external pressure*

The extent to which central government is seen to exert pressure on the institution is portrayed in the first instance by interviewee 01 and in the second by interviewee 08:

Oh, it's much more coercive. Central government now interfere, there's a loaded term, see higher education, they have an instrumentalist is my word (sic). The government sees higher education as a means to an end. It is a means of enhancing the economy, it's an agent of social; this government see higher education as being, its main role is social equity.....(*NVivo7 Institutionalism*, interviewee 01)

....these external pressures which I perceive as being government directive that we will teach in a particular way in terms of the number of hours we spend with students. That's been the biggest impact. (*NVivo7 Institutionalism*, interviewee 08)

HEFCE, QAA, HEA and the DFES were all mentioned within the interviews as external agencies exerting pressure on the college. However, on a broad internal basis, the college 'hierarchy' (interviewee 05) the college 'management' (interviewee 07), academic board, the validation board and the quality assurance panels (interviewee 01) all served to exert pressure to bring about the change. Indeed, the quality assurance 'rule book' was re-written to permit the introduction of the NCM (interviewee 01). On a more local level, 'school management' as well as the PLs comprising that structure were similarly seen to have exerted pressure (interviewee 07).

## **Coercive Legitimation: Constrained Behaviour and Rule-Setting**

The degree of behaviour constraint came across as an especially strong theme during the interviews. The precise nature of this constraint may be broken down into four categories: the sense in which there was 'no choice', the

requirement that the rules of the NCM would be followed, the sense in which the consultation process was subsequent rather than prior to decision-making and, finally, restraints on what staff activity should involve.

Interviewees 02, 04 and 05 suggested that there was no choice associated with the NCM. This had two dimensions; on the one hand there was a feeling that *the college* had no choice (interviewee 02) given the external pressures and demands noted above and, on the other, *the academics* were given no choice in terms of accepting or rejecting the model (interviewees 04 and 05). This double helix pertaining to choice is best summed up by interviewee 05:

Well,...you know, coming through from the college hierarchy was that we had to change as a result of government expectations. So, that was, that's always been .....over the institution. Umm, so definitely coercive. It seemed to me like the underlying reasoning behind everything we did, so that's the basis of it. We have to change because it's enforced. We don't have any choice... (NVivo7 *Institutionalism*, interviewee 05)

The NCM was laden with rule-setting, a point substantiated by interviewees 01, 02 and 05. Again, however, the rule-setting had both an external and internal dimension with interviewee 05 noting the prominent role played by HEA rules in drafting learning outcomes and 01 and 02 highlighting the *requirement* to work within the parameters of the NCM.

The consultation process mentioned in chapter 3 was attacked somewhat forcefully by the interviewees. There was a clear feeling that this process was something which took place subsequent rather than prior to decisions concerning the

implementation of the NCM (interviewee 01, 02, 04).

Interviewees 07 and 09 record that the NCM was not legitimated to them. Rather, it was something of a fait accompli, the decision-making processes in the college having changed from informed debate within the college council to a simple statement of position and action by the executive. For their part, interviewee 05 suggested that academics became 'apathetic' about the consultation since 'nobody was listening'. Others were to go somewhat further, suggesting a degree of cynicism behind the consultation process:

Umm, we have consultation meetings, and I once said in a meeting that consultation is the cynical attempts by management to, ehh, mimic the democratic process. Umm, and that's exactly what happens. That is, that the school management decided this is what they were going to do and then wrote the programme accordingly, because they were the heads of programme, they were the PLs. So, that's what happened. And the consultation was simply, 'well, this is it'. This is a model, you will write it in this way. (*NVivo7 Institutionalism*, interviewee 07)

The final area of perceived coercion came in the sense, noted by interviewees 05 and 07, that both 'individual attention' for students was constrained by the new model and that 'teaching of small groups' and/or 'repeat sessions' was discouraged.

### **Coercive Legitimation: Enforcement Through Sanctions and Monitoring**

Reference was made on a number of occasions to the sanctions faced by the college if external targets were left unmet or desired outcomes not achieved; witness interviewee 03's observation that the failure to meet widening participation targets can render

the relationship with QAA and HEFCE 'quite difficult'.

Interviewee 09 is very much more explicit as to the nature of these enforcement strategies:

...it is following this, is it a coercive line, yes this coercive line about 'if you don't do this, if you don't take on board increased participation, if you don't, umm, become competitive and international and so forth, the, umm, you're not going to be able to function, we won't give you the money that you require to, to make those changes or to be the organisation that you think you want to be. (NVivo7 Institutionalism, interviewee 09)

Alongside sanctions it was possible to detect a greater degree of internal monitoring to be added to the audit culture mentioned in the previous section. In particular, interviewee 05 noted the increased culture of monitoring:

Umm, well, you've got sort of characteristics of monitoring. I suppose, you know, however creative you want to be with it, you know, you're still under a system that is perhaps more heavily monitored than it was before. (NVivo7 Institutionalism, interviewee 05)

Interviewee 08, on the other hand, reflected on the monitoring of research output specifically and the accounting of academic time. Each year, submissions (known as 'transparency reviews') are made by every member of academic staff to provide a review of the hours spent in defined areas of work activity. Coercion was noted by every interviewee with more than twice the number of references given over to this form of legitimation than to the subject of the next section: normative legitimation.

## Normative Legitimation

The meaning and characteristics of normative institutionalism meant two tasks had to be fulfilled by the analysis: identify examples of the influence of professional communities on the NCM and demonstrate the role of 'appropriateness' in its inception.

Three primary sets of professional standards were seen to have impacted on the NCM: ILT/HEA, chartered and accredited bodies and the post-graduate certificate in academic practice. For its part, the ILT/HEA was identified as a normative legitimation factor by two interviewees (interviewees 01 and 05), the first in terms of increasing the number of registered practitioners and the second in that their role was to teach the lecturers about 'appropriate' lecturing behaviour. To a certain extent, however, both of these were factors after the inception of the NCM rather than before. The same might be said for the post-graduate certificate in academic practice activated by the college through the teaching fellows put in place through the TQEF.

Perhaps of greater significance was the role played by professional communities (the British Psychological Society and Occupational Therapy were mentioned as examples). These were employed, it would seem, as normative legitimation by those schools which had professional body links to provide *exemption* from the NCM (interviewees 03, 06, 08, 09).

Normative legitimation through the adoption of appropriate behaviour was noted by a number of interviewees. The moves by the college towards TDAP required 'acceptable' learning and teaching models (interviewee 05). Academic staff coming from other institutions 'didn't see seventy hours of contact as an appropriate way of encouraging students to learn' argued interviewee 01 and, finally, interviewee 07 suggested that what is

'appropriate' now is research and post-graduate study rather than teaching skills.

## **Mimetic Legitimation**

Analysis of mimetic legitimation sought out pressures to copy and emulate other organisations as well as examples of references to such organisations. In terms of the former, two pressures were identified: being 'out of step' (interviewee 01) and 'falling behind' other institutions in the sector (interviewee 09). The academic staff body was informed that 'other institutions had a system that mirrored the learning and teaching model in terms of reducing the amount of face-to-face time' (interviewee 06).

The latter, for its part, showed extensive use of references to other organisations in legitimating the model, especially from within the executive. Examples of mimesis ranged from a broad 'copying the others' (interviewee 02) or 'talking about our sister colleges' (interviewee 03) to direct comparisons with specific colleges (Chester, Chichester, St Martins; interviewee 04).

These extensive results have moved from the perceptions of the new demands through the testing of theorised demands to the nature of legitimacy lying behind the NCM. The task now becomes one of forming a causal model of the NCM from the vast array of data, a task to which the thesis moves at this stage.

## **A Causal Explanation of the NCM**

Critical realist causal explanation involves the identification of efficient causes, structures and mechanisms behind an event. The second and third of these have been subject to empirical investigation through the realist interviews whilst the first remains at such a deep causal level that only theorised connections have been forwarded within chapter 2. The causal explanation begins, then, with a process of identifying the structures behind



the NCM; from here, the mechanisms are examined. The final element of the causal explanation aims to show how the mechanisms were legitimated.

**Structures**

The explanatory model outlined by Sayer (1992) linking structures, mechanisms and events linearly is rather simplistic in that it perceives of each as rather unidimensional. Using Lub’s (2002) model of interacting global, European, national and organisational agendas as a basis for presentation, the causal explanation has sought out each of the structures seen to have a degree of impact at each level. Those substantiated by empirical testing are italicised:

LEVEL	STRUCTURES
Institutional	<i>The Executive, Academic Board, Validation panels; Quality Assurance systems</i>
Sector	<i>HEFCE, QAA, RAE, QCA, ILT/HEA, LTSN, TQE national co-ordination team, Royal Society of Arts, Russell Group, 94 Group, Campaign For Mainstream Universities, Coalition of Mainstream Universities; Industry Training Organisations</i>
National	<i>UK Govt, DFES, Chancellory, Home Office, Department for Trade and Industry</i>
European	<i>European Community, European parliament</i>
Global	<i>Theorised examples from chapter 2: OPEC, Trading Blocs, OECD, General Agreement on trade and services</i>

*Table 6.6 Causal Explanation of the NCM: structures by level*

**Mechanisms**

The Mechanisms these structures were to precipitate were wide ranging and deeply felt within all aspects of society in general and HE in particular. The European- level structures have

produced the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations of 1998 and 1999 respectively, the aims of which are to produce a 'Europe of Knowledge'. The filtering of this effect into the national level with the Learning Age of 1998 is quite apparent.

On a national level, the series of mechanisms that eventually precipitated the 'new demands' and subsequently the NCM are extensive. Accordingly, with a view to increasing clarity, I have used a sub-sectioning system:

- Sub-Legislative and Legislative mechanisms.
- Miscellaneous mechanisms: these include speeches, literature, initiatives and discourse.
- Funding mechanisms
- Legitimation mechanisms

Prior to this, a note about globalisation. This issue overshadows the majority of these mechanisms; to a degree, its analysis has already been undertaken in chapter 2 with consideration of the crisis of the KWS and the emergence of the SWS (Jessop, 1994, 1995). It may be noted that there is a sense in which globalisation may be seen as both a mechanism and an event. Whilst its influence is recognised, the thesis is not about globalisation per se and so I leave analysis of it within the confines of chapter 2.

### **Sub-Legislative and Legislative Mechanisms**

The mechanisms listed below state the year of publication, the title and the broad 'demand' of every such mechanism noted in the thesis with the exception of the Robbins report of 1963.

These mechanisms are derived from the UK Government, the most frequently referenced of the agencies regarded as factors in the development of the NCM by the interviewees. As with the structures, only those showing evidence from the empirical side of the work are shown in italics.

**1980s**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Broad effect</b>
1985	Jarratt Report	Espoused economy, efficiency, effectiveness in HE (3 Es)
1985	Lindop Report	Concerned with validation in HE
1985	The Development of HE into the 1990s	Expansion of HE
1987	Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge	Meeting the needs of the economy
1988	Education Act	Increased competition; university funding council set up; increased managerial thrust.

*Table 6.7 Sub-legislative and legislative mechanisms 1980s*

**1990s**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Broad Effect</b>
1990	Student Loans Act	Increased commodification of and positional good of HE
1991	Higher Education: A New Framework	Expansion, 3 Es, 'hard' managerialism
1992	Further and Higher Education Act	Embedded 3 Es, increased competition, Meeting the needs of the economy
1996	Student Loans legislation	Increased commodification of and positional good of HE
1997	Fryer Report	Lifelong learning agenda; advocated increased IT usage
1997	<i>Dearing Report</i>	Expansion, serve the needs of the economy
1998	The Learning Age	Lifelong Learning agenda; positional good of HE.
1998	Teaching and Higher Education Act	Increased commodification of and positional good of HE.

*Table 6.8 Sub-legislative and legislative mechanisms 1990s*

It is notable that the only one of these mentioned in the interviews was the Dearing report. What is perhaps interesting is that, had I relied on theory generating, the final causal analysis may well have been significantly weakened.

### Miscellaneous Mechanisms

Date	Mechanism/Title	Broad effect/desired effect
1976	<i>Ruskin speech</i> , Oxford	Linked HE to needs of the economy
1987	Enterprise in HE initiative	Vocationalism of HE
N/A	'Upskilling thesis' (derived from OECD)	Vocationalism of HE
N/A	Weiner thesis	Vocationalism of HE
N/A	'New Right' and 'Managerial discourse'	The three Es and 'hard' managerialism
1990	'More Means different' RSA publication	Expansion of HE

Table 6.9 Miscellaneous mechanisms

### Funding Mechanisms

Mechanism/Title
<i>Reduction in per capita funding</i>
<i>RAE funding centred on the Russell group</i>
<i>Targeted funding for widening participation</i>
<i>HEFCE 98/40 meant the establishment of the TQEF support for learning and teaching strategies putting IT at centre stage.</i>

Table 6.10 Funding mechanisms

### Legitimation Mechanisms

The mechanisms above have reflected changing governance in HE. There exists now a highly *coercive* atmosphere within which academics operate. Whilst normative and mimetic legitimation is evident, the manner in which targets are reached and agendas achieved reflects a 'hard managerialist', coercive line.

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **FINAL REMARKS**

### **Introduction, Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

The objectives of this chapter are fivefold. In the first instance, I should like to recall the research questions and the aim of the study. I shall then suggest the reasons as to why I believe I have a plausible explanation for the NCM and what the contribution to knowledge is. Running parallel to this may be found considerations as to the limits of the work whilst the last section provides guidance as to future practice.

### **The Research Questions and Contribution to Knowledge**

This work essentially strove to provide a causal explanation of the NCM. In so doing, the work was guided at every stage by critical realist meta-theory, a stance which encompassed a desire to test theory. In generating and testing this theory the thesis has reviewed the evolution of the relational network behind both the HE sector in general and the NCM in particular. The 'efficient causes', whilst not empirically tested, reflect theorised changes to the nature of the world from esteemed researchers in the field; note the references to Jessop (1994, 1995, 2003) as well as Clarke and Newman (1997).

The bedrock and foundation of the theorised demands lies not, however, in the work of esteemed authors, but in published legislative documents; these are primary sources with explicitly stated objectives in the empirical world. Each element of the theorised new demands finds its genesis in these primary sources as does the entire thesis itself. The college itself stated the NCM was a response to a set of 'new demands', the spark in many respects for the work that is this thesis.

In expressing my own views and judgements at the outset, the subsequent process of research has been especially mindful to mediate these out. To what extent this is possible shall always be a matter of debate. For critical realists, knowledge is always fallible (Danermark, 2002) and I am happy to acknowledge that this work is no exception. The fallibility lies in a number of possible areas: the limited scope of the inquiry (one college and nine respondents), the relationship between the researcher and the institution (which may be regarded as both a strength and a site of some potential weakness) and in the difficulty of complete immunisation against any form of bias on the researcher's (or, indeed, respondents') behalf.

The contribution of this work lies not simply in the provision of a causal explanation of the NCM, but also in its revelations as to the changed nature of governance in HE. This is characterised by a hard managerialist streak actioned through coercive legitimation. I do not shy away from this statement nor do I make it lightly. This is, in many respects, a rather damning indictment of our HE system. My suspicion is, however, that for many academics reading this work they shall find an appreciation and resonance with what it says. This form of work is complex, difficult and, in many respects, controversial; and yet it is crucial. I had great difficulty writing up the results even though the case for coercive legitimation was, to all intents and purposes, overwhelming. I was fearful; however, I was reassured by the distance I had from the theory of integrated institutionalism (Scott, 1995). This was not *my* theory being tested.

The contribution of this work lies in its willingness to explore and extend evolving methods. This has meant the operationalisation of critical realism in a way never previously attempted. The thesis has also conducted 'realist interviews' in a manner as faithful to Pawson and Tilley's (1997) suggested method as practicable. Even in critical realist work it is rare for research to

so faithfully follow the desire to test theory. The reflections on testing theory noted in the methods and findings chapters are suggestive of potential ways forward. Perhaps the use of grounded theory in conjunction with critical realism may prove an especially fruitful method.

A little further consideration of realist interviews is perhaps warranted at this juncture. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) would themselves undoubtedly accept, the outcome (successful methodological employment) of this form of interview is significantly affected by the context within which the interviews are placed. For explanatory research of the form attempted herein, this form of interview has been especially fruitful and engaging. The same degree of success may be achieved by those researchers conducting evaluative research. However, the suitability of the realist interviews is acutely impacted upon by the nature of the research question and by the meta-theory underpinning the interviews: critical realism.

The nature of the research question has an all-pervasive influence over epistemology; in the search for knowledge, realist interviews have significant contextual limitations in the sense that one has to be able to generate, convey and then test a theory. Clearly, social science research projects, by their very nature, present the researcher with extremely complex webs of interconnectivity between a wide variety of forces, persons and mechanisms. Theorising with a view to testing is both a complex and laborious task which necessarily must be simplified in a manner which allows for fruitful exploration with respondents.

It is not merely the front-end loading of research (in terms of theory development) that realist interviews demand which presents a challenge here; the presentation of the theories to respondents requires considerable thought, especially in terms of avoidance of leading. My efforts to avoid this took up some

considerable time and energy and precipitated the coupling up of realist interviews with a separate 'perceptions' interview section.

Despite the contextual limitations of realist interviews (which, it should be said, any method might be said to suffer from) they remain a potent weapon in the social scientist's armoury due to potential for, or tendencies towards, 'misrecognition' by respondents. By way of explanation, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) referred to a phenomenon whereby agents in a particular field share a 'misrecognition' of the true relations of the structure of that field and the relations of economic and political power. Misrecognition represents the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder. The potential capacity to see beyond this mask of misrecognition represents arguably the greatest asset of realist interviews and I would advance the argument that this has been the most significant contribution of this most complex of interview methods to this thesis.

The work reveals also the complex causal nature of events. It would be difficult for an academic to view the NCM as the result of such a vast relational network. This work has revealed previously unseen and unexplored causal mechanisms. These mechanisms are there, normally discretely camouflaged in the background. This thesis has bought them into the foreground.

And yet, the work has significant limitations. It was conducted in one college by one researcher with nine interviewees. Critical realism accepts that mechanisms only tend to produce events, those tendencies being affected acutely by the context within which they are placed. It is plausible that the same mechanisms would bring about a rather different set of outcomes even within a broadly homogenous sub-group of the sector. The potential of and for generalisability derived from this form of intensive research tends towards an explanatory potential applicable to a



relatively narrow band of isomorphic HE colleges. And, yet, whilst not generalisable across the diverse spectrum of the HE landscape, the thesis shall likely carry credibility with those engaged in education at a variety of levels. This thesis, after all, considers actors' opinions from a context in the empirical domain yet it has delved significantly into the real and actual domains in forms rarely seen.

As for future practice, I would advocate that critical realists explore the testing of theory further. The most difficult aspect of this work has been going into the unknown and unexplored. Significant questions arose at every stage of theory testing: how to distance myself? How to test the theory? Which parts of the theory should be tested and why? One possible avenue for future work is that interviewees see the theory in its entirety prior to the interview. There are implications here, but full disclosure of the theory rather than a model of aspects of the theory may be something that could be explored. The implications, though, are many: interviewee time, interviewee understanding, the front-end pattern of the workload represent but three. I do not pretend to have the answers to these issues, but suggest that others follow where this work has lead.

On another level, I would advocate the further exploration of governance in the United Kingdom. Perhaps teachers may like to take up the mantle within the school system; or a practitioner in the health service or (a very difficult one) a law enforcement officer? Immigration officers have, I believe, potential lines of inquiry within their work, as do social and support workers. The issue of governance affects key areas of our lives.

For educationalists, this thesis raises key questions as to the basis of practice. A pause to reflect on governance reveals some profound implications; governance impacts on every facet of educational practice: learning and teaching, the nature and selection of students, the economic parameters within which

institutions operate, the conditions of service, the nature and extent of sectoral competition, selection and managerial policies. This is by no means an exhaustive list. No aspect of practice is immune from the impact of governance. Investigating the nature and basis of governance behind that practice is a critically important task if the practice itself is to evolve in ways that promote development of each individual that the educational system has a responsibility to and for.

The *raison d'être* of HE is the endeavour to understand, to explore and, above all, question. This work suggests that the pursuit of those endeavours is being hampered by forces alien and counter-intuitive to the essence of seats of higher learning. This, at least to this author, is a worrying development and one which has happened rather quietly. I would urge teachers, lecturers and academic staff to look at their learning and teaching and question every aspect of it. This is not meant to be a challenge to the 'system'; it is a challenge to the educationalists within it.

It may also be possible to encompass the critical realist notion of evaluation. Making use of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realistic evaluation methods, probing questions may be asked of the key issues of the moment: alleged 'debasing' of qualifications, selection policies in education, 'naming and shaming' of schools, the setting of targets and the use of league tables, to name but a few. For this author, however, the desire to explain why and how the NCM was established is now at an end.

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# Appendices

## CONTENTS

Appendix	Contents
A Page 208-209	Interview Schedule (Pilot 1)
B Page 210-214	EdD interview pilot 2
C Page 215-218	EdD interview
D Page 219	EdD interview informed consent form
E Page 220-230	Interview transcription interviewee 09
F Page 231-232	<i>NVivo7 Perceptions</i> directory Initial Free Node Coding and Actions
G Page 233	<i>NVivo7 Perceptions</i> Directory Free Node codes after revision (in descending order of dominant references within the interview scripts)



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Schedule (Pilot 1)**

#### **Introduction**

- Introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the study and how the interview fits in with the study
- Assure the interviewee that they shall remain anonymous
- Ask permission to record the interview and to take notes.

#### **'Warm up'**

A series of easy, non-threatening questions at the beginning to settle down into the main body later, including:

Can I ask you to state your name for the tape?

Can I ask you what your current or past job role was at the college?

How long have you been/were you at the college?

#### **Main Body**

1. Could you tell me when you first heard about the NCM? (purpose here is to establish a time line between the SMT formulation of the NCM and the beginning of consultation with the staff. This question shall also help to place the initiation of the NCM within the framework of legislation and demands to which the college was responding).
2. What opportunity were you given to discuss and debate the NCM?
3. Could you tell me about the nature of these discussions? (purpose of these questions is to attempt to establish whether the NCM was devised for mimetic, coercive or normative reasons)
4. What was your response to the concept of the NCM?
5. Can you tell me why you had this response?
6. Was there any one person or group of people who were particularly associated with forwarding the positive aspects of the NCM? (purpose here is to establish whether, in institutionalist language, there was a 'champion' of the NCM)
7. The college has made clear that the NCM was a response to changing demands in HE. In your view, what were the new demands? (purpose here is to develop knowledge about the demands facing the college and how these are interpreted by individuals)
8. As a response to these demands, what alternatives were given to the NCM? (In Critical realist terms, it is distinctly

possible that the same mechanisms may result in different outcomes; this is acutely affected by context. This question is designed to establish what alternative strategies, if any, were considered)

9. How well do you feel the NCM deals with the 'new demands'? (In institutionalist theory, there is the notion that a good deal of what we do is done for the purpose of myth and ceremony, to give the illusion of efficiency and effectiveness and to provide isomorphism with other, similar, institutions; this may also be referred to as the logic of appropriateness rather than rationality. This question is designed to explore this area by asking how well the respondent feels the NCM actually helps the college to deal with the new demands).

10. In your view, why was the NCM instigated? (In critical realist methodology, a key aspect is retrodution i.e. attempting to establish the absolute necessary conditions for something to be what it is and not something else. This question aims to seek out the views of the respondents in terms of exactly why they think the NCM was instigated).

### **Cool off**

Some straightforward questions at the end of the interview.

### **Closure**

Thank the respondent for their participation and say goodbyes.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **EdD Interview (pilot 2)**

#### **Introduction**

- Introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the study and how the interview fits in with the study. Inform the interviewee that I shall be telling them about theory and asking for their views on it.
- Assure the interviewee that they shall remain anonymous
- Complete an informed consent form
- Ask permission to record the interview and to take notes.

#### **‘Warm up’**

- A series of easy, non-threatening questions at the beginning to settle down into the main body later, including:
- Can I ask you to state your name for the tape?
- Can I ask you what your current or past job role was at the college?
- How long have you been/were you at the college?

#### **Main Body**

##### **Part 1 ‘Perceptions’**

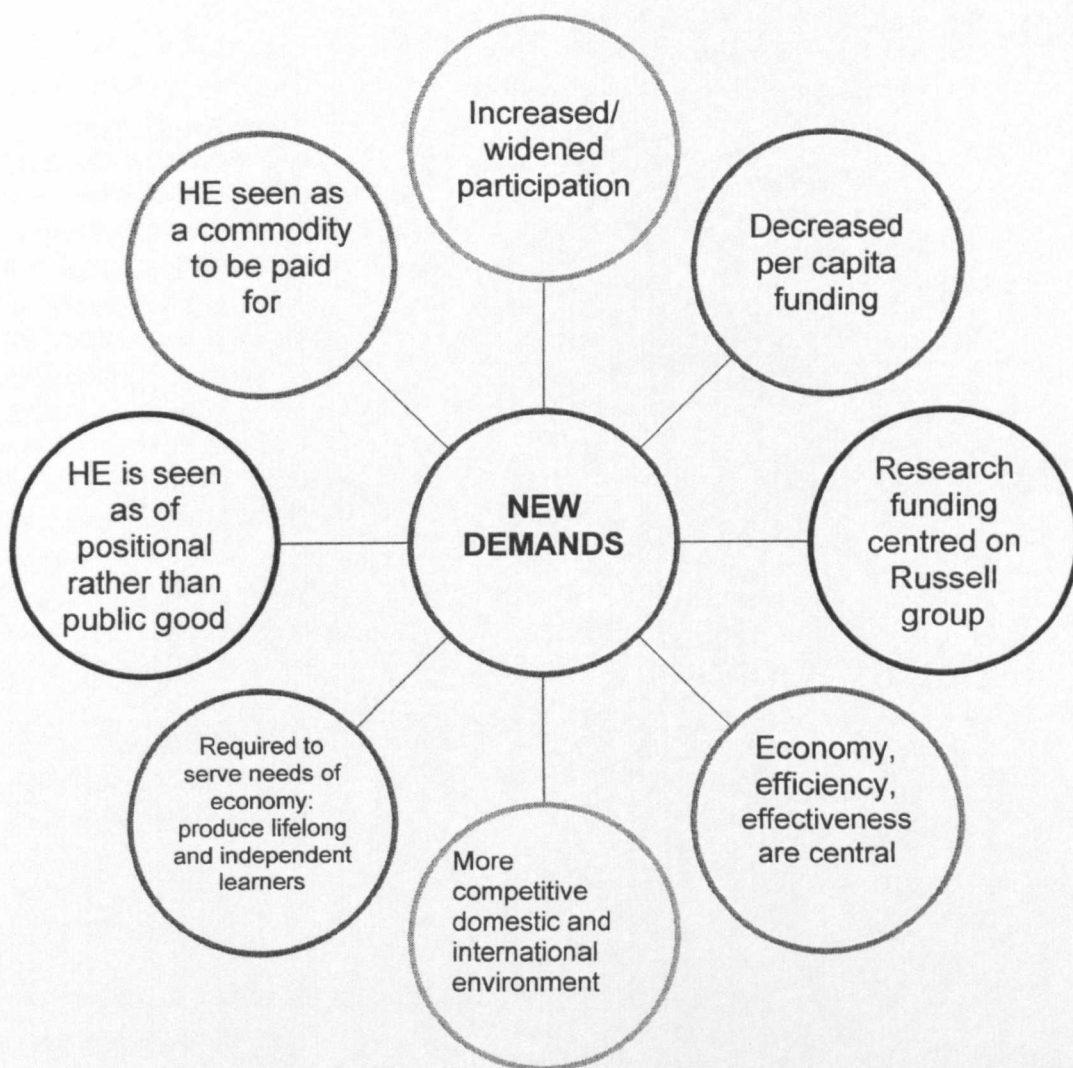
This section is concerned with the interviewee's perceptions; there is therefore no testing of theory at this stage.

- When did you first learn about the New Curriculum Model?
- Why do you think it was introduced?
- How did the model affect you in your work?

##### **Part 2 ‘New Demands’**

This section is concerned with the realist notion of retrodution (necessary/contingent conditions). Whilst the new demands can't be absolutely confirmed through interview, the views of the interviewees are important since they may contribute to the development of the retroductive element of the thesis.

- There's a widely shared understanding the NCM had to be bought in as a response to new demands. I've drawn up this diagram. Could you take a bit of time to look at the new demands I've identified.



- I may have been taken in by the jargon, would you like me to explain any?
- Are there any of those that you don't think were new demands?
- Could you give me examples of how some of these related to the NCM?
- Which do you think had the biggest influence on the shape taken by the NCM?
- Do you think it could have been otherwise; if so, how?
- How did it have that effect? Was that inevitable?
- How is it perceived now?
- How was it justified to you/legitimated to you?
- Why were you told it was necessary?

### **Part 3a 'Institutionalism': the logic of appropriateness**

Now I'm coming onto a different theory called institutionalism which I'd like to discuss with you. The basis of this is that organisations operate according to a logic of appropriateness and not rationality and that it is more important to them that their activities are seen as legitimate than that they are seen as successful in their own terms. To quote from March and Olsen,

The logic of appropriateness is a perspective on how human action is to be interpreted. Action, policy making included, is seen as driven by rules of exemplary or appropriate behaviour, organised into institutions...Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos practices, and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a particular situation.

Interestingly, this 'logic of appropriateness' may be compared with a logic of rationality which would suggest that actions follow a rational line rather than an appropriate line. The first thing that influences course of action is that it fits in line with the way others do it rather than that those actions achieve the results set out for them.

- Was this idea of 'appropriateness' ever raised i.e. that your college should adopt the NCM since other institutions were doing similar things?
- Does the NCM represent a rational way of dealing with the new demands?
- Within the NCM there are guidelines as to supported open learning and contact hours. Do you/did you ever do informal hours or additional hours ?
- Do you think the NCM can be viewed as successful in its own terms?

### Part 3b Institutionalism: Mimetic, normative and coercive forces

A further element of institutionalist theory suggests that organizations within a field face pressures to conform to forms and processes deemed legitimate. These pressures are described as mimetic, coercive and normative forces.

Type of pressure	Meaning
Mimetic	Pressures to copy and emulate other organizations' activities, systems or structures. Innovations that are deemed to enhance legitimacy are seen as desirable.
Coercive	External pressures exerted by government, regulatory or other agencies to adopt the structures or systems which they favour.
Normative	The effect of professional standards and the influence of professional communities on organisations

The three forms of pressure are not mutually exclusive; rather, they may co-operate. Whilst it is likely that a combination of mimetic, coercive and normative factors led to the NCM, the thesis forwards the notion that coercive factors and mimetic factors were the most significant.

- Could you tell me about your views on this hypothesis?
- Could you tell me what opportunity you were given to discuss the NCM?
- What was the nature of these discussions?
- If you had concerns about the NCM, how were these received?
- What alternative strategies were given for dealing with the new demands?
- Institutional theory would suggest that a 'champion' or 'champions' would be necessary within the college to drive the change. In your view, was there such a champion or champions?

### **Part 3b Institutionalism: Myth and Ceremony**

The final element of institutional theory that I should like to discuss is the notion of myth and ceremony. This element of the theory suggests that institutions frequently adopt policies and procedures which involve a degree of myth and ceremony. That is, policies or procedures are adopted which are frequently ignored, not acted upon in the ways in which the institution intended or are conducted only to portray that an action has been taken. The thesis suggests that meetings held to discuss the NCM fall into this category of myth and ceremony. That is, the decision to instigate the NCM was prior to the meetings; the meetings were held merely to give the impression of a consultation process.

- What is your view on this hypothesis?
- Do you/did you follow the guidelines of the NCM exactly as they were portrayed?
- Did you do any informal hours outside of the NCM guidelines?
- If yes, why did you do these hours?
- How well do you feel the NCM deals with the new demands?

**Part 4 Open debate/cool off**

- In your view, do you think these theories represent real alternatives?
- I'm offering you these as theoretical models, but what do you think?
- Do you think there's anything else?

**Closure**

Thank the respondent for their participation and say goodbyes.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **EdD Interview**

#### **Introduction**

- Introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the study and how the interview fits in with the study. Inform the interviewee that I shall be telling them about theory and asking for their views on it.
- Assure the interviewee that they shall remain anonymous
- Complete an informed consent form
- Ask permission to record the interview and to take notes.

#### **'Warm up'**

- A series of easy, non-threatening questions at the beginning to settle down into the main body later, including:
- Can I ask you to state your name for the tape?
- Can I ask you what your current or past job role was at the college?
- How long have you been/were you at the college?

#### **Main Body**

##### **Part 1 'Perceptions'**

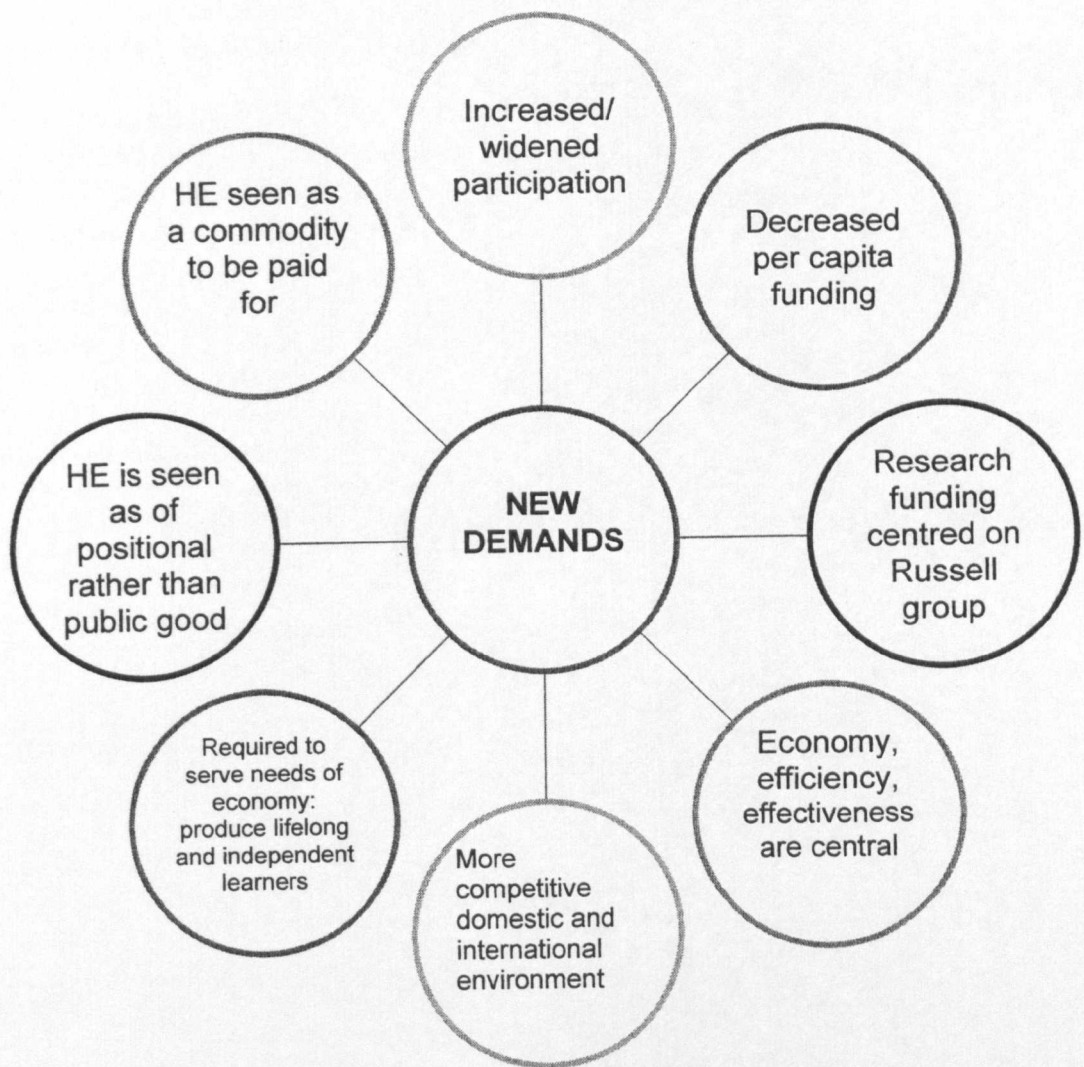
This section is concerned with the interviewee's perceptions; there is therefore no testing of theory at this stage.

- When did you first learn about the New Curriculum Model?
- Why do you think it was introduced?
- How did the model affect you in your work?
- The college literature suggests that the NCM was a response to 'new demands'. Could you tell me what you think these were/are?

##### **Part 2 'New Demands'**

- There's a widely shared understanding the NCM had to be bought in as a response to new demands. I've drawn up this diagram. Could you take a bit of time to look at the new demands I've identified.





- I may have been taken in by the jargon, would you like me to explain any?
- Are there any of those that you don't think were new demands?
- Could you give me examples of how some of these related to the NCM?
- Which do you think had the biggest influence on the shape taken by the NCM?
- Do you think it could have been otherwise; if so, how?
- How did it have that effect? Was that inevitable?
- How is it perceived now?
- How was it justified to you/legitimated to you?
- Why were you told it was necessary?
- Do you believe that the demands affect the whole HE sector in the same way?

### **Part 3a 'Institutionalism': legitimating the NCM**

Now I'm coming onto a theory called institutionalism which I'd like to discuss with you. Institutionalism asks questions of and strives to establish the basis of legitimacy through which

organisations develop laws, rules and systems. In this instance, the focus is on the basis of legitimacy for the NCM.

There are essentially three key schools of thought within institutionalism which may help us to explain the mechanisms which formed the basis of legitimacy of the NCM. I have summarised these in the table below:

Mechanism	Meaning	Characteristics
Coercive	External pressures exerted by government, regulatory or other agencies to adopt the structures or systems which they favour. This may be pressures at various levels: internal and/or external.	Often enforced with sanctions Behaviour is constrained Rule setting Monitoring
Normative	The effect of professional standards and the influence of professional communities on organisations.	Adopting 'appropriate' behaviour for a given organisation
Mimetic	Pressures to copy and emulate other organisations' activities, systems or structures. Innovations that are deemed to enhance legitimacy are seen as desirable.	Referring to the actions of other organisations within the same sphere as a way of arguing that what you are doing is legitimate.

I may have been taken in by the jargon, would you like me to explain any further?

- Do you think any of these mechanisms were used to legitimate the NCM?
- Do you think they represent real alternatives?
- Could you tell me which mechanism or mechanisms you think were used to legitimate the NCM?
- Can you give any examples?
- Could you tell me what opportunity you were given to discuss the NCM?
- What was the nature of these discussions?
- If you had concerns about the NCM, how were these received?
- What alternative strategies were given for dealing with the new demands?

- Institutional theory would suggest that a 'champion' or 'champions' would be necessary within the college to drive the change. In your view, was there such a champion or champions?

#### **Part 4 Open debate/cool off**

- In your view, do you think these theories represent real alternatives?
- I'm offering you these as theoretical models, but what do you think?
- Do you think there's anything else?

#### **Closure**

Thank the respondent for their participation and say goodbyes.

**APPENDIX D**

**EdD Interview Informed Consent Form**

My name is Mark Mullineaux. As part of a doctorate in education I am doing research on a thesis entitled 'Curricula change in response to the changing governance in higher education'. The thesis has no sponsor.

I can be contacted at mark.mullineaux@..... should you have any questions.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview. Before we start I would like to emphasise that:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary
- You are free to refuse to answer any question
- You are free to withdraw at any time

The interview shall be kept strictly confidential and shall be available only to myself. Excerpts from the interview/individual results may be made part of the final thesis, but under no circumstances shall your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the thesis.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a report of the findings:

Circle one:    Yes        No

E mail address for the report to be sent to:

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Transcription – interviewee 09

#### Warm Up (tape Count 0- 30 side 1)

*Q. Can I ask you to state your name for the tape?*

.....anonymised

*Q. Can I ask you what your current or past job role is/was at the college?*

.....anonymised

*Q. How long have you been/were you at the college?*

thirteen years

*Researcher introduces interview.*

#### Main Body: Part 1 Perceptions

*Q. When did you first learn about the NCM? (tape count 30- 38 side 1)*

Umm, ohh, it must be sometime ago now, I mean it's counted in years. Umm, I can't remember much of the detail about it now, but I know it was several years ago.

*Q. Could you tell me in your view why you think it was introduced? (tape count 38 - 62 side 1)*

Umm, I think the promotional campaign if you like was based around a notion that it would give, it would free academic staff to undertake more research and activities of a more academic nature and that there was too much of a burden being placed on purely teaching, purely curriculum. And I think the second main motive was to shift the emphasis away from face-to-face teaching with tutors and increase in emphasis on students' own learning capabilities which then was given the name SOL, student open learning and I think those were the two main motives. Supported open learning, sorry, not student.

*Q. So, you mentioned there, in response to why it was introduced, two reasons: one was to free up academic staff to do research since there was too much of a burden on the curriculum. Is that correct? (tape count 62 - 65 side 1)*

I think so, yeah.

*Q. And the second motive: shift from face-face teaching to students' own learning abilities through something called SOL, or supported learning. Is that right? (tape count 65 - 69 side1)*

Yeah

*Q. Did you mention at the beginning of that answer that that was the way it was, did you say it was 'sold' to you? Is that the words you used? (tape count 69 - 83 side 1)*

Umm. I think, ehh, I can't remember the actual word I said. I think there was a limited amount of information came around. It was something of a fait accompli; I don't think there was any great discussion about the merits or otherwise of this NCM. Umm, but I also

know that not everyone subscribed to it, ehh, there's certainly one area within the college that doesn't operate within the, within the NCM, and that's counselling.

*Q. Do you happen to know why they don't use the NCM (tape count 83 - 91 side 1)*

I think it's the nature of their curriculum which is very intensively, umm, person-to-person orientated as you can imagine with counselling. There's a lot of practice has to be undertaken and they just couldn't do it, observe practice, they just couldn't do it in the timeframe that's made available in the NCM.

*Q. You said it was a fait accompli. Could you just expand on that? What do you mean by that? (tape count 91 - 104 side 1)*

Well, I don't, I mean, umm, there was a sense in which there was no alternative. I mean, the only alternative that I could see was something successfully resisted in the sense of saying that this won't work for us. Uhh, but the rest of the college, as far as I'm aware, umm, had to, had to subscribe to this curriculum model. It followed .....(anonymised) and there was a sense in which that was where (anonymised) .....to lead the college in terms of curriculum.

*Q. So you said there was a sense in which there was no alternative and most of the college, with the exception of the counselling section which you've already mentioned, had to subscribe to the model following the .....(anonymised) (tape count 104 - 110 side 1)*  
Uh huh.

*Q. Could you just tell me a little bit about how the NCM affected you in your work? (tape count 110 - 148 side 1)*

Umm, it seems to have been embedded for so long now it's actually quite difficult to reflect back. I mean, the most immediate thing was the amount of contact time that ehh was affecting students. So, from having, umm, a curriculum timetable that was based around 450 hours a year, suddenly, well, that's still in place, suddenly there was this, umm NCM which dramatically cut the contact time between tutors and students. Umm, and I'm not sure that ehh, certainly I think from what I see, I don't think there was any concerted effort to monitor or follow how supported open learning activities were being structured and put in place to replace this face-to-face contact. Yeah, that was the most evident thing. I mean, I'm not saying anything about the nature of face-to-face contact because I'm not lamenting the passing of that necessarily because I think of the, a lot of the old versions of spending all morning or all afternoon or sometimes all day with a class was filled with various activities that were, well, I'm not sure they were particularly productive. You know, some of them became a bit clichéd I think, so perhaps it had a good effect of getting rid of those, but, you know, putting people into small groups for the, for the passing and running videos for the passing of time and trying to get people to discuss things in an overlong, rather protracted way sometimes, I think we've all been there as students ourselves and experienced it. So, I suppose in a sense it had a, that was an immediate impact. You get rid

of that, you trim it right down to the, to the absolute basics of what's required or what you feel is required to impart to people.

*Q. So, there you mentioned in terms of the effect it's had on you, in some respects it's quite difficult to reflect back since it's so embedded now, but the key was the amount of contact time change. Suddenly there was a NCM which dramatically cut the contact time; you mentioned there was no concerted effort to monitor the SOL, which replaced the face-to-face contact time. You also said that it's perhaps had a good effect in terms of trimming right down to the absolute basics and necessities of what you've got to get across. Is that a correct interpretation of what you've said? (tape count 148 - 164 side 1)*

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. And I think that's evidenced by the fact that nobody seems to be, umm, coming out of the degree classifications with any worse classification than they ever did before. So, ehh, if that's a marker of whether something works or whether it doesn't, umm, then certainly nobody appears to have suffered in terms of the outcome of all this.

*Q. The college has suggested that the NCM was a response to 'new demands'. Do you think you could explain in your view what you think those new demands were? (tape count 164 - 171 side 1)*

No. No, I don't.

*Q. If I put it a different way, do you think there's anything about HE which was different in 2001 from perhaps 10 or 15 years earlier? (tape count 171 - 199 side 1)*

Well, ehh, I mean I don't think there's been any what I would describe as a dramatic change, a sort of overnight, umm, sensation. I think HE, the shape of it's been changing over the past couple of decades or so. I mean, the massification of HE has clearly had an effect on, umm, student numbers and variation of courses. People that, ehh, people that can access institutions seems to have changed quite, mm, I suppose that's, umm, in relative terms, that's a dramatic change compared to what it was, umm, when I was young certainly. Umm, but, in terms of the NCM, I can't actually put my finger on anything and say, if that hadn't have happened, the whole system would have collapsed or something would have gone dramatically wrong. I'm sure at the time that the new demands was phased, there was maybe a policy statement or something that was ehh, that suggested that in some ways institutions needed to be more flexible, more responsive, umm, but whether the NCM is the only outcome for that, I'm not sure. But, I'm speculating here. I can't actually, without knowing what the, umm, what the new demands refer to, umm, I'm just rambling really.

*Q. That's what your perception of what the new demands are or were, should I say? (tape count 199 - 204 side 1)*

Ehh, yes. Umm. I think so. I mean, unless somebody gave me a trigger word now, I'd probably hold onto that unless I could reflect back to when it started and think what was going on at the time, but I certainly can't at the moment.

*Q. You've mentioned things like, possible new demands would be the shape has changed over the last couple of decades and the key one that you mentioned was massification which had lead to a change in students numbers and the number of courses has also changed. You also mentioned widening access. So, would you view them as new demands? (tape count 204 - 223 side 1)*

I think that's not an unreasonable assumption. And, at the local level, which has to be borne in mind, I suppose, another new demand is the closure of sites. With the closure of sites you get a concentration of student numbers in one area. So, ..... (anon) closed, umm, some of the outposts, for want of a better word, like, umm, .....(anon) shut down, that was a big teaching area. There's been a, an extensive build here on one site which still hasn't finished and, in terms of containing those student numbers, the old routines of teaching from 9 - 5 have gone and people are teaching routinely now, teaching twilight hours, umm, and by that I mean sort of up to 5, 6 , 7 o'clock, umm as classroom contact.

*Q. So, you're saying here, on a local level, some more demands are the closure of sites and you mentioned .....(anon) and outposts like, for example, .....(anon) have shut down. There's extensive building on one site and the old routines of 9 - 5 have certainly gone and it's more routine now to teach in twilight hours. Is that right? (tape count 223 - 228 side 1)*

Umm. That's right, yeah.

## **Main Body: Part two 'New Demands'**

*Researcher explaining new demands diagram*

*Q. Are there any that you'd like me to explain? (tape count 228 - 256 side 1)*

The positional rather than public good

*Researcher explains.*

*Q. Are there any of those that you don't think were new demands in 2001? (tape count 256 - 279 side 1)*

Umm, it seems to be that these things were probably concepts that people were dealing with way before the NCM actually came in. Perhaps the NCM saw itself as a belated response to some of these things. Certainly when it was introduced, I guess, umm, I'm trying to think back now, ehh, we had, I think we were onto our

.....  
.....(anon)

came in this, the NCM, was introduced. So, ehh, but the concepts on your model seem to me to have been around for some time, so perhaps it was viewed as, in part, some belated reaction or response to that.

*Q. So, when the college says it was responding to new demands by introducing the NCM, what do you think they were referring to? (tape count 279 - 296 side 1)*

Well, umm, thinking of the college, I would imagine their main emphasis would probably have been around increased and widening participation. And they would also have had a second focus on



economy of scale. Ehh, so certainly if we put the two together like the reduction of places to teach, places to learn, you know the physical infrastructure of the place reducing, but at the same time needing to pull new people in, I guess you need a system in which you can deal with that in one concentrated area and a pattern of curricula that allows greater flexibility with the local community and people who you think you might be drawing in, into the system.

*Q. You suggested there that when looking at these, umm, am I right in interpreting that you were suggesting that some would be more important than others for this college? You specifically mentioned, thinking of the college in particular, you said widening participation and economies of scale were particularly important. Is that right? (tape count 296 - 331 side 1)*

Yeah, I mean I think, I think the college does, and always has, worked on an economic model and I think that's, it's an inevitable, umm, consequence of an institution like this. And I think there was a stage even, uhh, I mean, some of these things perhaps don't deserve the symbolism that they get, but I think there was stage when, I read something that the Principal was either referred to or referred to herself as the CEO of the institution and that I think's a very interesting sort of conceptual shift away from being a principal of an educational system. Ehh, the CEO to my mind is a person in charge of a company, in charge of a business and there's a certain way of thinking that goes with that concept. So, it's difficult to know where the ideas in your own head come from necessarily, but, I think little things like that, I mean the very fact that I've mentioned that seems to suggest to me that these little moments all add up and become something, ehh, and the conversations you have in meetings, the sorts of things where chairs of meetings, the things that they emphasise, the things that they draw to your attention, are inevitably based around student numbers, umm, income and, ehh, fear of loss, fear of failure in some sense, that in some way it's all going to go wrong if we don't get these numbers up. If we can't, if we can't make the most of funding opportunities that follow things like widening participation and, ehh, so the whole thing is driven, seems to me underpinned, shored up, the whole infrastructure is actually economics. What happens in the institution is, umm, hopefully, still educational, it's to do with the creative act of taking all those drivers and turning them around into something where people still feel they're getting something of quality and something of education, something that makes them feel better and prepares them for their future.

*Q. If I'm right in interpreting what you've said there in relation to those new demands, one of the things, one of the key things I believe you said to me is that perhaps the word new isn't right in that some of those, if not all of them, could be seen to have been factors in advance of the NCM. Is that a correct interpretation? (tape count 331 - 335 side 1)*  
Umm

*Q. Taking that on board, you would perhaps emphasise some over others, and particularly the increased participation in the context of this college, you said. But, you also said economies of scale, is that right? (tape count 335 - 349 side 1)*

Yeah. Uhh, I think, umm, I saw economics as the driver and, ehh, I think increased par..., well, I know, as everyone does, widening participation's a national agenda, it's not just to do with here. Umm, but in terms of the way this institution has had to make cutbacks on the one hand and be responsive on the other, I think that's, that's, every institution has its own story and that's the story of this institution, that it's tried to do two things: it's tried to respond to need and at the same time it's had to make some, umm, difficult decisions about where it focuses its attention, what it cuts back on and where it, you know, where it emphas..., where it places its emphasis for the future.

*Q. There seems to be a key element in what you're saying, please do tell me if I'm incorrect here, that you're suggesting that there's a specific interpretation of these demands based on this institution. Is that correct? (tape count 349 - 383 side 1)*

Uhh, yeah. I think so, yeah. I think every institution has to interpret policy and make of it what it can. Umm, there's an expectation of all, all institutions to deliver ehh, something, but each institution is going through its own processes at any time that you look at it and, ehh, and this institution's no different. I think this institution, from what little I, I mean I've never been privy to any particular paper, but this institution has obviously felt at times that its back's been against the wall economically on more than one occasion and it was not so long ago I was listening to one of the senior members that's now left college saying it's not a question of if the college closes, it's when. Umm, for somebody in a senior position to be saying that seems to suggest that it's never really lost that ehh, that sense in which college isn't quite flourishing although clearly there are two stories here: one's the one that it presents to the outside world and there's another story in which staff are more or less privy to information about what's really going on within the college. It probably feels now about as comfortable as it has for about a decade, I think, in the college in terms of its potential and its future, so, ehh, and certainly some of the conversations about college collapse appear to have, well, they've disappeared and they have for a couple of years now which I think is a good thing, but it doesn't mean to say that the conversations about what's informing the future aren't still economically driven or policy driven by widening participation. You've only got to look around the college to see the new appointments that have been made recently in terms of Aim Higher and various other agencies within the college to see that they're emphasising overseas students, they're emphasising widening participation and they're looking for ways of, umm, engaging with the community at that level, umm, which is, I suppose at a philosophical and educational is a wonderful thing, but equally I realise that it's underpinned by economics, that there's government money following this so it's a good place to be.

*Q. You've mentioned on two or three occasions there that, if I can just repeat back to you, 'the whole thing is underpinned by economics', is that correct? (tape count 383 - 386 side 1)*

Uhh huh.

*Q. And that government money is following this process through Aim Higher for widening participation etc? (tape count 386 - 388 side 1)*

Yeah. Yeah.

## Main Body: Part 3 Institutionalism

*Researcher introduces institutionalism and asks interviewee whether any need explaining further (tape count 388 - 412 side 1)*

*Q. Do you think any of these mechanisms were used to legitimate the NCM? (tape count 412 - 414 side 1)*

Sorry, in what sense?

*Researcher: In the sense that, umm, the idea of institutionalism is that you would, they're suggesting that you've got to have ways or mechanisms by which you legitimate something. For example, if you coercively legitimate it, it's forced through, tending to be with sanctions backing it up. If it's mimetic, you would be regarding other institutions and, for example, saying 'this institution does this, therefore we can legitimate what we're doing with reference to the', for example. If it's normative, in your case it may be something like looking at the ... and suggesting 'well, that's what the ... suggest we should be doing and, therefore, we can legitimate it'. But, in your view, were any of those mechanisms used to actually legitimate the NCM? Did you ever hear anything like that or see anything that would make you think 'well, this is a coercive mechanism making us do it, this is a normative mechanism, or this a mimetic mechanism.' (tape count 414 - 440 side 1)*

Umm, I've got no memory of, umm, of these things. I mean, ehh, but that may be a limitation on my part. I would imagine, although I've got no evidence that, ehh, that this must have been, that this must have been documented and there would, as with all documents, be a rationale as to why you feel you need to do it. Umm, and it had obviously been, it's clearly not a one horse act this. I mean, somebody's, somebody's put this together, but it must have been sanctioned by the college as a whole which involves more people making decisions. So, the fact that I, I can't point to one of these and say I feel this would be the driving force, umm, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. And, I'm not, the difficulty with these categorisations are, of course, you can see something of everything in all of them. Ehh, the fact that it's been categorised into, ehh, three areas here doesn't mean, I don't think, that you can't cross these boundaries.

*Q. You say you can see something of everything in all of them and you can cross the boundaries. Umm, can you give me any examples of where you think any of these were actually used or mentioned or that you heard of? Let's perhaps relate to the meetings that you had about the NCM. What was the nature of these meetings? What was the consequence of the meetings etc, if you can remember any of them? (tape count 440 - 448 side 1)*

I can't really. I mean I'm struggling really to go back and, umm, ...No, I really can't. I'd be struggling to invent it rather than actually having any real memory of it.

*Q. You say that, with reference to this idea of institutionalism, that this is the idea that they've come up with as to how you could legitimate something, umm, you said that you can see something of everything in all of them. Umm, could you elaborate on that, so if you were going to legitimate something, umm, would you prefer if the model was laid out in a different way? (tape count 448 - 487 side 1)*

I'm, I can see that you might, in any organisation at any time, feel that one of these was more, more of an issue than others, but you can't help looking at your own situation as well within this. I mean, interestingly, you highlighted the ... there and that would be my situation at the moment which is very much would fall into this normative categorisation. Umm, but within that context, I mean, for example, the ... has a very circumscribed curriculum, umm, its syllabus is laid out: you either adopt that syllabus and do what the professional body wants or you're not part of it. So, as far as I'm concerned, that's the normative mechanism within the context of the bigger organisation that probably feels it does have to respond to external pressures, umm, for example, to widen participation and so forth. Umm, and it's also, for example, copying what you might regard as some of the newer universities that have much less emphasis on research and much more emphasis on teaching and other systems and that do embrace these innovations. So, on your model where you've got research funding centred on the Russell group here, that wouldn't be much concern in this institution I wouldn't think where its research profile is really very modest. So, what, what I would at in these two models is, umm, yes, on the one hand, this institution is trying to become a university. It's already got its university college status this year, probably going to get a university status by the end of the year, umm, in that sense, in terms of its systems, its structures and so forth, what it's doing is it's falling in line with what is required of it to, umm, to get that status. Umm, because the shape of universities, as we all know, what universities do, how they respond, is very, very different to the way it was several years ago. Umm, but in order to do that, in order to be mimetic, it is following this, is it a coercive line, yes this coercive line about 'if you don't do this, if you don't take on board increased participation, if you don't, umm, become competitive and international and so forth, the, umm, you're not going to be able to function, we won't give you the money that you require to, to make those changes or to be the organisation that you think you want to be. It's difficult to tell sometimes what's informing what. Sorry if that's a bit blurry.

*Q. Could I just go through these in order. I'd like to relate them specifically to the NCM and if we look at the first one, this coercive idea, at the time when the NCM was put into place, do you think there were any external pressures exerted by either government, regulatory or by college agencies to adopt the structure or were you just left to decide for yourselves what sort of curricula you were going to have? (tape count 487 - 509 side 1)*

I would certainly under no impression that if we, if we hadn't undertaken the NCM that something terrible would happen or something, or we would lose something. So, in that sense, umm, there was a, there was a, how can I put it, there was a sort of a coercion that in some sense we were, umm, we were falling behind, we were a bit,

ehh, umm, out of step in some undefined or ill-defined fashion. Umm, that the way that we were delivering the curriculum was, I don't know, clunky, umm, not in tune, somehow off-message. But, I can't really remember, eh, and it doesn't mean to say it didn't happen, but I can't recall any persuasive argument about why, if things changed, eh, it would be so much for the better. In fact, the only, the tension at the time I seem to remember was a thing that defined this college at the time was its interpersonal contact with its students, its smallness and there was a fear of, if you went too far down this alternative model, would you lose that? But, I mean, that was an internal debate rather than, rather than a sort of government agency driven thing.

*Q. This top one can be either. It could be internal or external coercion (tape count 509 - 510 side 1)*  
ohh, right, yeah

*Q. So, I think you've suggested there to me that in terms of external pressures you don't think there would be any high degree of external coercion. Could we come onto the internal side; sorry, would you agree with that, is that what you were just saying to me? (tape count 510 - 514 side 1)*

That's, fine. As far as I can recall, I don't remember anything that was, umm, you know, do this or die kind of approach.

*Q. And on the internal side? (tape count 514 - 515 side 1)*  
Well, the internal side, there was, umm.....

*Q. Were there any pressures there or was it very much a kind of open kind of debate, that type of thing? (tape count 515 - 517 side 1)*  
Umm. There was, there was, eh, there was some debate, debate following decision if that makes sense. umm..

*Q. Sorry, a debate following decision? (tape count 517 - 538 side 1)*  
Yeah, it's that approach where somebody somewhere appears to make the decision and the only debate is the consultations that follow about how you'll manage the decision. So, in a sense, it's not a case of 'shall we do this or shall we not?' It's a case of 'the decision's been made, now let's talk about how we engage with that decision'. So, eh, that's the, it seems to me that that's a model that's used fairly frequently these days. Umm, or 'we have a choice and these are the two choices'. We're not interested in whether you have a third choice, work within these two choices'. So, that was one thing. There was also, umm, one of the things I do remember was there was a sense in which no one was quite certain about the, I mean, it's interesting you've turned up and use the term legitimacy, but in a different context about where this was coming from a, from an informed theoretical perspective. I don't think that was ever really articulated. I remember, there was a somewhat cynical edge to this ....(section removed to anonymise)..... So, there was an edge, there was a sense in which, eh, there was a guinea-pigging thing going on here and everyone being part of a greater laboratory. Umm, I think that, that's sort of become sort of forgotten over time and I don't know to what extent that actually influenced anything ultimately but, umm, there was a sense in which, eh, it could lead to loss rather than gain I think.

*Q. So, if I've got a picture of what you're saying to me here, you're suggesting when the institutionalists talk about these kind of mechanisms, umm, are you suggesting that a better way of looking at it would be, rather than looking at them as discrete, individual mechanisms, that perhaps at any one time you may find one which is more dominant than the others, but you may have others, other mechanisms interacting at the same time? (tape count 538 - 565 side 1)*

Umm. Yeah. I mean, I think there are a little bit like, umm, certain things are sort of cyclical in a sense that when a new government comes in you get, you tend to get a lot of drivers about change and the momentum for change and the importance of change. Sometimes you wonder if it's change for change's sake. Ehh, but as the cycle moves through, then the number of changes, well, the places that get targeted for the change tends, tend to differ, so there are points of, umm, consolidation some, at some places and at some points. Umm, and there's also a case of there's not just, there's not just external mechanisms that you can look at in terms of this model, but there are internal processes as well. So, every time, for example, a new principal has been appointed, you can feel or you can sense in which some of these things have to give or there's a different spin on them or a different take on them depending on how that person's choosing to interpret their world and how they're interpreting what they believe is the best way to lead forward. So, style, I think is influential. Ehh, umm, but also, you know, the greater outside, what's happening with policy and practice. And, of course, crucially, where the money's coming from. But I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I think it would be difficult to see them as mutually exclusive mechanisms. If you did this, if you were a psychologist and you did this on a card-sort, for example, you'd probably take all these meanings as separate entities on a piece of card and then ask people to cluster them in little bunches where you think makes most sense to them. Umm, I think that would be an interesting thing to do, because I'm not sure that they would be clustered in terms of coercive, normative and mimetic. I think you might end up with one big stack.

*Q. In your view, I just want to come onto the final element, why do you ultimately think that the NCM was bought in? (tape count 565 - 585 side 1)*

I think that's a very good question. Ehh, umm. I think it may have had, umm, perhaps it had a more complex, umm reasoning behind than we knew at the time. Perhaps there was, perhaps there was a future that might have been viewed of as unpalatable at the time. Umm, but, and so that was never quite revealed, ehh, as to what the implications might be. At the time it came in was a critical time for the college in terms of, umm, cutbacks and radical change and, umm, a sort of real sense of, umm, economic doom and gloom around the corner. In some senses I think there was an immediacy to that model that was saying, 'right, in some ways this will cut back the amount of time we are spending in face-to-face contact, but it frees you up to do other things'. Now, I've mentioned research, but think that's only scratching the surface. I think there was a lot of discussion and there still is, of course, about where extra money comes from, about consultancies and making money from other, from other, income drivers, basically, from other areas and I

think all those things probably conspired, if that's the right word, to, to help it through, to help it in.

*Q. Is there anything else you'd like to add on that? (tape count 585 - 604 side 1)*

No, I think that's, umm, that's it. I think there's still a sense in which the management of the NCM wasn't as strong as it might have been, that it was conceptually driven and, umm, what's happening, as far as I can see in many places, is that the substantive element of the NCM, two thirds of it almost is based around the notion of SOL and that to me seems the weakest element of everything because, ehh, it requires, it requires a sort of formative engagement between students. Umm, and the interpretation of it by most staff has been fairly uncreative really; from what I can see, its been a case of 'here's a few books, go away read them; here's an activity, you're not obliged to do it, so most students don't do it', and, depending on the discipline that you're in, there's been a loss. So, my discipline, psychology, I've seen a loss in terms of guided fieldwork practice, I've seen a loss in terms of students coming into the laboratory to use laboratories. I think I've seen an emphasis on HE being seen, even by full-time students as an adjunct to their work, so work is prioritised and HE now becomes a thing that you do when you have to drop in and do it. It's become more of an instrumental task and in that sense the NCM supports that very well.

*Thank you*

## Appendix F

*NVivo7 Perceptions* directory  
Initial Free Node Coding and Actions

Free node no.	Initial Node:	Action
1	Meeting targets	Revised into 35
2	External Drivers Community Drivers	Specified later in interview what these were: removed as node
3	Responses	Revised into 11
4	Enhance Quality	Revised into 19 then into 35
5	Radical Restructuring	Second reading: one, very broad comment. No specific demand. Removed as node
6	Governance	Revised into 21
7	Stakeholders	No definition of these at that stage in interview; no specific demand.
8	Privy Council	Revised to 19 then to 35
9	Internal Demands	No action
10	Increased Competition	No action
11	Closure of Sites	No action
12	TQEF requirements	Part of HEFCE 98/40: revised to 35
13	Formal Demands	Revised to 35
14	Less Formal Demands	Revised to 35
15	No perceptions	No action
16	Demands from management	Revised to 9



17	Wanted Change	Revised to 28
18	Inviting Scrutiny	Revised to 29
19	QAA	Revised to 35
20	Teaching Fellows	Reviewed coding. Not a new demand. Node removed
21	Tension between demands	No action
22	RAE	Revised into 35
23	Need for income generation	Revised into 27
24	Global dimension	No action
25	E Learning	Revised to 36
26	Personal dynamic and frustration	Revised to 28
27	Less funding	Renamed: economic factors
28	Proactivity	No action
29	Audit and scrutiny	Revised into 35
30	Vocationalism of degrees	No action
31	Appropriateness/normative	No action
32	Mimesis	No action
33	Changing nature of students	No action
34	Monetary considerations	Revised into 27
35	HEFCE and Govt external demands	Renamed: QAA RAE HEFCE
36	Independent and lifelong learning	No action
37	Coercion	No action
38	Widening participation	No action

**Appendix G**

*NVivo*<sub>7</sub> Perceptions Directory

Free Node codes after revision (in descending order of dominant references within the interview scripts)

Free Node No.	Node
1	Widening participation
2	Independent and lifelong learning
3	QAA RAE HEFCE
4	Economic Factors
5	Coercion
6	Proactivity
7	Changing nature of students
8	Mimesis
9	Appropriateness/normative
10	Vocationalism of degrees
11	Internal demands
12	Global dimension
13	Closure of sites
14	No perceptions
15	Tension between demands
16	Increased competition