



## **Voluntary Sector Working Paper**

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# **How does one voluntary organisation engage with multiple stakeholder views of effectiveness?**

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## **General Introduction to Voluntary Sector Working Papers**

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## **Abstract**

The literature on effectiveness and multiple constituency theory is explored as background to a consideration of the many interpretations of effectiveness existing amongst stakeholders of one organisation. A case study is used to examine how stakeholders judge effectiveness and the process by which their different perspectives are incorporated in the shaping and constant updating of a core view of effectiveness. The management strategies adopted in handling this process are explored, and some elements identified which may provide initial steps towards a management theory.

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## **About the author**

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## **1. Introduction**

This research paper takes the case of one established voluntary sector organisation, and examines the perceptions of effectiveness held by a range of its stakeholders. Despite an abundance of theories of effectiveness, there is little that can claim to be universal or comprehensive. Approaches such as multiple constituency theory thus offer a good way of helping to understand the subject, because they acknowledge diversity and subjectivity, taking elements from goals, systems and reputational approaches. Much of the research using multiple constituency theory within voluntary sector organisations focuses on comparing organisations and assessing their different views of effectiveness. There is a lack of research which concentrates on one organisation and analyses the range of perceptions from stakeholders of that one organisation. This research aimed to elicit such views and to see how they matched with a 'corporate' view of effectiveness. From these different versions, it was possible to identify management strategies for handling and, as appropriate, prioritising certain interpretations.

The paper initially explores the literature on effectiveness, identifying the main approaches and their relative strengths and weaknesses. A section on methodology follows, explaining the process through which views of effectiveness were sought at Hope UK, a long-established drugs education charity based in London. Findings from the interviews showed that people had different conceptions of what made Hope UK effective, depending on their position, their closeness to the organisation and their interests. Those nearest to the centre of power formed the 'dominant coalition;' and their views represented the corporate understanding of effectiveness, as promoted in the organisation's official documents. There were some consistent themes, and also some strongly polarised views.

The process for expressing these views to the management of the organisation and for engaging in dialogue seemed well-developed. The research suggested the senior staff of Hope UK did engage with issues of effectiveness, adjusting to changing environmental, constituency and organisational concerns. The final section of the paper looks at the strategies they adopted in handling different versions of effectiveness and shaping a core 'working definition'. From this analysis, elements are identified which may provide some initial building blocks for a management theory.

## **2. Literature**

### **2.1 Defining effectiveness**

#### *Introduction*

'X is an effective organisation'. The truth of such a statement depends on how effectiveness is defined, which continues to be a matter of considerable debate in organisational research, to judge from the plentiful literature. Voluntary sector research on effectiveness has grown from the 1980s onwards, developing themes from social science research, and struggling with the particular characteristics of voluntary organisations, which make 'the concept of organizational effectiveness...elusive, contested and particularly difficult to grasp' (Tassie et al., 1998: 59). Defining the voluntary sector might be said to share some of the same difficulties; in order to concentrate on the complexities of effectiveness in this paper, I propose to adopt the structural-operational definition of a voluntary organisation (Salamon and Anheier, 1992): it is self-governing and independent, it does not distribute profits, it uses volunteers and is formally organised.

#### *Bounding the domain*

Cameron and Whetten (1983) indicate that many of the difficulties with understanding effectiveness arise because it is a social construct, with unknowable boundaries. None of the many models can therefore 'capture the total construct space or the total meaning of effectiveness' (Cameron and Whetten, 1983: 7). There are as many theories of organisational effectiveness as there are conceptualisations of organisations (Scott, 1977). Within the voluntary sector literature on organisations, effectiveness has been used synonymously with a range of expressions. These include performance, efficiency, accountability, quality assurance, and impact (Kanter and Summers, 1987; Billis, 1993; Taylor and Sumariwalla, 1993; Siciliano, 1997). Knapp (1996) argues that effectiveness includes efficiency and equity, whereas Osborne and Tricker (1995) believe that performance is the all-inclusive term, incorporating efficiency, equity and effectiveness. Kanter and Summers (1987) neatly summarise voluntary sector effectiveness as 'doing well while doing good'. However widely they define it, most voluntary sector commentators are agreed that statements of effectiveness vary with purpose, level, timeframe and circumstances.

#### *Purposes*

The purpose of judging effectiveness (Brewer, 1983; Tassie et al, 1998) is significant in determining what measures are used to assess it and what outcomes will then be produced.

Voluntary organisations evaluate effectiveness to demonstrate value to stakeholders, thereby renewing legitimacy, establishing credibility and ensuring survival; to provide evidence that objectives have been met and funds carefully managed; to assure users about the quality of services provided; to give feedback to staff and volunteers about the impact of their contributions; and to enable managers to effect modifications in policy and practice to improve organisational performance (Drucker, 1990; Murray and Tassie, 1994; Kendall and Knapp, 1998). Many writers (Goodman and Pennings, 1980; Cameron and Whetten, 1983; Lewin and Minton, 1986) have commented on the confusion that arises over variables which *predict* effectiveness (determinants) and variables which *indicate* it (indicators). Voluntary sector research demonstrates this mix, with many assessments being based on the presence of inputs or outputs (Herman and Renz, 1998). Assessing outcomes (the changes achieved through delivery of the outputs) is hazardous in voluntary sector organisations where goals and missions refer very often to societal or policy change which is outside the organisation, and to which the organisation may be but one of many contributors. Many effectiveness judgements are based on the assumption that Activity A leads to Outcome B, when that causality is not proven (Perrow, 1996).

### *Identifying criteria*

Several researchers have made attempts to identify effectiveness criteria which could be widely used across organisations, thus facilitating comparison. For voluntary organisations, Herman (1990) suggests these could be financial measures (unit cost data), constituent satisfaction, outcome measures, and reputational measures. Paton and Foot (1997) add impact and longer-term goal achievement to the established balanced scorecard approach<sup>1</sup>; criteria are sorted into focus, scope and method by Tassie et al (1998). Other research has thrown up criteria which include efficiency, motivation, board effectiveness, use of correct management procedures, strategic planning and organisational survival (Kanter and Summers, 1987; Siciliano, 1997; Herman and Renz, 1997, 1998; Robbins, 2000). There are many overlaps, but nothing that can claim to be a comprehensive set of criteria applicable to all voluntary organisations. Thus one is drawn to multiple-constituency approaches, which recognise the range and variety of criteria which can be relevant to understanding a particular organisation's effectiveness.

## **2.2 Theories of effectiveness**

### *Goal achievement*

Multiple constituency theory emerged in response to the limitations of two groups of theories which sought to provide a single definition of effectiveness. The first, goal attainment, stemmed from the purposive-rational approach to organisations (Etzioni, 1961; Campbell, 1977; Green

and Geisinger, 1996), and posits that an organisation is effective to the extent that it fulfils its stated goals. There have been many critiques of this approach, particularly from a non-profit perspective. Perrow (1996), for instance, questions whether 'official' or 'operative' goals are the ones by which an organisation should be judged, and observes that goals may be easily displaced. In many voluntary organisations, the mission or goals may include value-laden elements – such as increased independence, self-esteem, awareness of development issues – that are practically impossible to measure but are desired outcomes nonetheless. The organisation's 'stated goals' therefore may give an incomplete or distorted picture of its outputs and outcomes. Cameron (1980, 1981) argues that organisations may be judged ineffective even when they have met their goals, or indeed be adjudged effective despite failing to meet the goals.

### *Systems models*

Systems models are often set in contrast to goal models as they take an environmental perspective significantly into account. The organisation is seen as interacting with the environment, and adapting itself in pursuit of resources to ensure its survival and health (Seashore and Yuchtman, 1967). Effectiveness is thus viewed in terms of system maintenance and adaptivity; the effective organisation is one that maintains dynamic equilibrium within an environment, garnering resources in order to strengthen its position. Subsequent systems models, such as population ecology (Hannan and Freeman, 1977) or institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), view success in comparative terms – survival within the group, or influencing others to emulate the organisation's approach or form (isomorphism). Other commentators have recognised the weakness of these approaches, particularly in relation to voluntary organisations, which can persist despite their usefulness having passed (Kanter and Summers, 1987), thanks to the benevolence of a particular donor or the efforts of a limited group of individuals.

### *Other theories of effectiveness*

Many other explanations of effectiveness have been developed using elements from goals and systems approaches, but writers complain that research is non-cumulative (Goodman and Pennings, 1980; Cameron and Whetten, 1983), building new theories which plug gaps in previous theories while themselves being partial and incomplete. The construct of effectiveness is inherently subjective and open to interpretation ('in the eye of the beholder', to quote Knapp, 1996:173), and so mapping its boundaries is an infinite task. I argue below that multiple constituency theory is a useful explanation of effectiveness because it recognises this subjectivity and diversity, taking elements from goal, system and reputational approaches and explicitly acknowledging that there is no one right definition of effectiveness.



## **2.3 Multiple constituency models**

### *Definitions*

The existence of a wide range of stakeholders of a voluntary organisation is widely recognised in the literature. I use the terms 'stakeholder' and 'constituency' interchangeably to refer to individuals or groups "holding preferences or interests pertaining to the activities of a focal organizational unit" (Tsui, 1990: 461). Such people may not be directly associated with the organisation but may form evaluations of its activities and be able to influence it to some extent (Connolly et al, 1980). The multiple constituency approach was proposed as a viable alternative to goal and systems approaches (Connolly et al, 1980; Zammuto, 1984). In its most basic form, it says that the organisation is effective to the extent that it satisfies the interests of one or more constituencies associated with the organisation (Tsui, 1990). Refinements of this definition include satisfying the most powerful stakeholders or minimally satisfying a certain range of interest groups. Herman and Renz (1997:187) consider the multiple constituency model to be a modification of the goal model, where 'differing sets of stakeholders have (probably) different goals' ; the greater the number of constituencies, the wider the range of interpretations of effectiveness. Herman and Renz's research (1997) shows the multiple constituency model working in tandem with a 'social constructionist' view. Social constructionism understands effectiveness to be an artificial construct, invented and defined by individuals; hence the conception of organisational effectiveness as 'stakeholder judgments formed in an ongoing process of sensemaking and implicit negotiation' (Herman and Renz, 1997: 188).

### *Problems with the theory*

Cameron and Whetten (1983: 12) identify a number of problems with attempting to assess individual preferences and values in research on effectiveness. Firstly, people find it difficult to 'accurately report their cognitive preferences', and to distinguish between 'theories of action', which are the rationales of behaviour to which the actor is loyal and which are communicated to others as explanations of behaviour, and 'theories in use', which *actually* govern behaviour (Argyris and Schön, 1978; see also Herman and Renz, 1999). Secondly, such preferences may change radically over time. Different environmental concerns may emerge to alter people's views, and the influence or existence of stakeholder groups may vary. Thirdly, the multifaceted nature of organisations is such that they can simultaneously pursue two contradictory preferences (see for example Miles and Cameron's (1982) research into tobacco firms). Fourthly, constituency preferences may often be unrelated or negatively related to one another and to judgements of organisational effectiveness. However, Herman and Renz (1999: 119) found consistent judgements of effectiveness much more common among those non-profit

organisations considered highly effective by all stakeholder groups: 'Stakeholders are more agreed about what high performing non-profit organisations are than about what middling or poor performers are.'

### *Gaps in the empirical research*

Empirical studies of voluntary sector organisations' effectiveness using multiple constituency approaches are limited in number. Those that exist tend to use a small sample of stakeholders per organisation and a larger group of organisations<sup>2</sup>. It seemed to me that a gap in the understanding of multiple constituency perspectives of effectiveness existed by virtue of the limited range of viewpoints assessed. Most researchers make comparisons between organisations, but there is little published research which explores the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders of one organisation. While one could argue that every individual involved with an organisation has a slightly differing viewpoint, it would be unrealistic to attempt to isolate these differences for so many parties (Connolly et al, 1980). But by using a representative sample which defines individuals or groups by their role or relationship to the organisation, significant differences of views may be identified.

The other area which seems to have been neglected in empirical research concerns the organisation's management of such diverse views. Here the definition of 'the organisation' must be clarified; in this study, I have taken it to mean internal stakeholders such as paid staff, and 'boundary-spanning' stakeholders such as the Board, who are formally organised for a common purpose. I also include voluntary workers who have access to channels by which they can express their views to 'the centre'. Voluntary organisations which undertake strategic planning tend to make statements about what constitutes effectiveness for them. Such statements, found in the briefing, strategy and publicity material of the organisation, offer a corporate view of effectiveness which is usually derived from the senior staff of the organisation and which incorporates, to a greater or lesser extent, other stakeholder views. My research sought to explore the operationalisation of a multiple constituency approach to effectiveness by examining different stakeholder views, the corporate view of effectiveness found in the organisation's literature and the changing dynamics between these different versions. By examining the process in one organisation, I aimed to identify management strategies for handling diverse perceptions of effectiveness, which could form the initial basis of a management theory.

### **3. Methodology**

This section explores the methodological approach to researching the following question:  
How does one voluntary organisation engage with multiple stakeholder views of effectiveness?

Within the broader question, a number of subquestions were posed:

- What is the range of interpretations of effectiveness amongst key internal and external stakeholders?
- What is the process by which such views are expressed to and 'heard' by the organisation?
- How is the core organisational view of effectiveness shaped?
- What strategies does the organisation adopt in dealing with different views of effectiveness?

The methodological approach that suggested itself immediately was that of qualitative research. 'Qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 19) and seemed appropriate given that I was looking at different individuals' perceptions of an ill-defined construct. By collecting and analysing data from the stakeholders of one organisation, I intended to come to an 'inductively derived grounded theory about [the] phenomenon' in question (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 24).

The research done hitherto suggested the need to look at one organisation from many viewpoints, so I therefore chose to adopt a case study approach, using a single case. This seemed suitable in that 'how?' and 'why?' questions could be explored in a real work situation, using contemporary events. As researcher, I would have no control over events (Yin, 1984), but would seek by exploration to develop tentative explanations about the nature of the process I observed in one organisation which could be further tested. The case study approach is a well-known methodology for looking at organisations and people's behaviour and perceptions within them (Hakim, 1987).

The organisation I selected to work with, Hope UK, seemed appropriate for a number of reasons. As an organisation which had successfully survived and adapted over 150 years, it offered fruitful material from which to identify features which could begin to lead to a management theory. Although it had multiple stakeholders, its activities were bounded, and therefore extraneous variables were reduced for my purposes. It was an organisation in a field with peer organisations, and was not fundamentally atypical. The Director had been in charge for 13 years. The organisation was not undergoing major change and seemed stable. Access was straightforward: the staff of the organisation welcomed the idea of exploring issues related to effectiveness, and had already spent time considering them. Hope UK offered an interesting example of an organisation struggling to measure its contribution to a goal that was long-term, affected by many variables and difficult to assess. I undertook four preliminary interviews with the Director, Deputy Director, Training Coordinator and Fundraising/Public Relations Assistant to brief myself about the organisation's work.

My data collection strategy involved gathering material from a variety of sources. Documentary data such as annual reports, strategic plans, fundraising information and publicity documents enabled me to explore what the organisation said about its own effectiveness, and to identify the criteria used for assessing it. I employed a stakeholder analysis to map the identity and relative influence of the organisation's stakeholders, as I wanted a wide range of views, from those close to the centre of power to those further away. I included those whose personal involvement was limited and who could therefore offer a comparatively objective 'reputational' view (Herman, 1990), and those whose view of the organisation was partial, since they had had exposure only to one aspect of it. I aimed to cover the main stakeholding groups with the 17 interviews I undertook; nevertheless a weakness of the research was that there were other viewpoints which might have produced different insights. Seven interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the remainder over the telephone, since they involved stakeholders based outside London (Appendix I). The interviews varied in length between half an hour and two and a half hours, and detailed notes were taken. Efforts were made to interview one further user, one other peer organisation and one funder but these arrangements were not possible. The interviews were conducted during a five week period.

Open-ended questions within a standard framework enabled me to pursue lines of inquiry from within a structure that facilitated comparison of data (Hakim, 1987). I used three different semi-structured schedules (Appendix II). The first, for external stakeholders, sought information about their knowledge of the organisation's mission and activities; it asked how effective they thought the organisation was, how they made such a judgement and how effectiveness could be improved; it also asked how they fed their views into Hope UK. The second, for network organisations (that is, peer or umbrella organisations in the drugs education field), was shorter and also asked for perceptions of effectiveness. The third, for staff and Trustees, added to these with further questions on how the organisation assessed effectiveness, how user and partner views were heard and how they 'sold' Hope UK to potential users. It also asked for the three biggest organisational challenges of recent years, and predictions for future organisational challenges.

#### *The case study organisation*

Hope UK is a drug education charity, providing information and training which enable children and young people to make healthy lifestyle choices. It had its origins in the Victorian temperance movement; starting in Leeds as the Band of Hope in 1847, it organised children's events via churches. By 1855 it had established a London headquarters as the Band of Hope Union, acting as a central point for a number of voluntary groups based around the country. The Christian temperance message was the foundation of its activities, which included producing literature, lecturing in schools, promoting studying and examinations on alcohol use and abuse,

and running children's groups and holidays. By about 1970, the remit had broadened to cover a wide range of drugs, with alcohol still the main focus. Over the years, the centre survived better than the branches, and by the late 1980s, the decision was taken to change the name to Hope UK, and restructure, with some affiliated groups opting to retain the Band of Hope name and others changing with the headquarters. Hope UK has weathered changes in the social perception of alcohol and drug-taking, changes in civil society behaviour and changes in school provision of social education.

It has emerged as an organisation of around 20 paid staff, based in Borough, South London, but with part-time regional staff around the country and a network of 58 voluntary educators who have been through Hope UK's training programme and carry out its drug information and education sessions. The focus is less on schools now, as government provision has increased considerably, and more on church-based groups for children and young people. Hope UK aims to provide training and information to those who work with young people, such as youth workers, parents and teachers, believing the message is conveyed more effectively as part of an integrated programme with someone known to the young people, rather than being delivered in an unrelated one-off session from an outsider. It promotes harm prevention, aiming through education and information to make young people aware of the risks of drugs, and the alternative options that exist.

The 17 interviews were conducted with seven groups of stakeholders. Hope UK defines its users as those organisations and individuals who approach Hope UK to arrange training for them. These can be overseeing bodies, such as the Federation of London Youth Clubs, or other youth or church organisations. Most of the groups trained comprise adults who work or interact with children (defined here as those aged up to 11) or young people (those between 11 and 18). Partner organisations are defined as those with whom Hope UK collaborates in the production of informational material or a training scheme; this may be an equal partnership or with one organisation leading. A representative from one network organisation was interviewed in order to gain the perspective of someone who knew of Hope UK but had no direct experience of using its services. In addition to its network of voluntary educators, Hope UK also trains and uses associate educators, who are employed by other organisations such as the Salvation Army. Four staff were interviewed: the Director and two senior staff from London and a project officer based regionally. Finally, the Chair of the Board of Trustees was interviewed, together with a long-serving Trustee who had known Hope UK for more than 60 years and a newer Trustee who was also a voluntary educator.

26 of Hope UK's documents were analysed to see what the organisation said in writing about its own effectiveness, ranging from annual reports to strategy documents to newsletters to drug education literature (see Appendix III). The organisation's website was also considered.

## **4. Findings**

This section looks at the findings from the 17 interviews, examining the different views of effectiveness and the process of making them known to Hope UK. In exploring what criteria people used for making their judgements of Hope UK's effectiveness, I have adopted headings that arose from their answers (Appendix IV), rather than sorting data using a pre-existing framework such as those suggested by Herman (1990), Paton and Foot (1997) or Tassie et al (1998). General findings were that users and partners judged Hope UK's effectiveness on the basis of knowledge of one part of it, and had their own criteria to assess how well it performed for them. Voluntary educators presented the most disparate group in terms of constituency preferences, depending on their allegiances, interests and motivation. The three London-based staff formed the dominant coalition (the most powerful stakeholders; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), and their views represented the corporate understanding of effectiveness. The Trustees, like the other volunteers, had different individual perspectives but were very conscious of their financial responsibilities and felt the assessment of effectiveness to be a staff matter. Reputational views counted for more the further one got from the centre of power. The organisation's documents are modest on claims of effectiveness, largely because their fundraising/public relations potential has not been recognised. Different versions of the mission show how Hope UK tailors its approach to different audiences; by and large, measures of quality and quantity of service predominate. What evaluation information there is on outcomes remains relatively piecemeal and at project level. It is not aggregated to enable higher level statements of organisational effectiveness. The website, like some of the public documents, reflects confusion about purpose and audience.

### **4.1 The range of interpretations of effectiveness**

#### *Quality of service delivery*

All interviewees used an output measure to judge Hope UK's effectiveness, commenting on the quality of the training sessions and information. The four users identified the professionalism of Hope UK's staff and aspects of good practice in training (such as thorough preparation, awareness of the group's needs, participatory and imaginative techniques, getting participants to arrive at conclusions independently and being in touch with young people's thinking) as informing their judgement of it as effective. This view was shared universally, and recognised by Hope UK's staff and Trustees as key to its success in attracting and keeping both Christian and secular users and partners. It is highlighted in many of the documents, emphasising that Hope UK's expertise in drug education has been developed over 150 years of the organisation's history. Positive quotations from satisfied participants on courses or users of the literature, gleaned from post-session evaluations, endorse this.

Implicit in the use of this measure is a comparison. Two users compared Hope UK with other drug education organisations they had tried for training; one compared Hope UK's performance of 2000 favourably with its 1999 training sessions. One Trustee, one user and the network organisation commented that Hope UK had to achieve higher standards than secular peer organisations in its service delivery to counter stereotypical images of a Christian organisation as well-meaning and amateur; in order to secure a wider user base, Hope UK needed to appeal to potential secular users by the professionalism of its output. The Director cited various ways in which Hope UK used comparisons in order to maintain quality control: by using external advisers, by cross-checking all written material by a critical audience and by establishing rigorous monitoring of voluntary educators' performance.

Voluntary educators, in highlighting quality of service delivery as an effectiveness criterion, commented on the thorough preparation they received in their own training, and the support they received from Hope UK staff, tailored to their needs and circumstances, to enable them to perform effectively at the front line. Staff confirmed the high priority given to maintaining best practice (in youth work, training techniques, drugs education), through their own recruitment, training, learning and experience, and by following government guidelines.

In saying they judged Hope UK's effectiveness by its high-quality outputs, several interviewees indicated they used data from evaluation forms. Hope UK is systematic in getting written and verbal evaluations after sessions have been delivered, from the participants and from the organisers. The staff member, voluntary or associate educator who delivers the training also completes an evaluation. There is thus plenty of material from which to form an assessment of the effectiveness of the training session. The effectiveness of the training in terms of whether it influences behaviour and attitudes is another question. Certainly the users I interviewed were clear that they judged Hope UK's effectiveness purely on the basis of the training they had observed. In each case, the training was part of a wider programme with its own separate purposes and effectiveness criteria. All interviewees referred to the need for Hope UK's training to be complementary to their own existing programmes, to enable them to integrate drugs messages in their wider work. It was not clear whether they undertook long-term or outcome-based evaluations of their own effectiveness, but if they did, such information did not feed back to Hope UK. In other words, Hope UK staff were not able to learn anything about the ultimate effectiveness of their training in terms of its ability to help young people make considered and healthy choices about drugs, and could rely only on evaluations conducted on the day for feedback on the quality of service delivery.

### *Achieving the mission*

Few interviewees offered outcome measures spontaneously in their selection of effectiveness criteria – for example, describing how the training had changed people's subsequent behaviour. They tended to concentrate on output and process measures (as do the written documents), shying away from judgements on whether Hope UK was succeeding in helping to prevent drug-taking among children and young people. When prompted on whether Hope UK was being effective in achieving its mission, responses varied from a confident affirmative (one voluntary educator) through doubt and uncertainty (the majority) to strong views that Hope UK was positively affecting the lives of only a few individuals and that this was not enough to counter the damage being done by others' promotion of drug use, such as alcohol advertising (one staff member, one voluntary educator). All shared the hope that Hope UK was achieving its mission, but the absence of concrete evidence of this was a concern for some (one voluntary educator, three staff, one Trustee).

Users did not give a high priority to outcome measures for the whole organisation as they had bounded expectations of what they wanted from Hope UK, and judged its effectiveness on the delivery of that specific remit. One user, however, was confident that drug education of the type Hope UK offered was instrumental in shaping young people's attitudes: the training sessions provided by Hope UK to her organisation were one part of an integrated programme tested over seven years which she felt had contributed to young people's decisions to forego drugs. One partner organisation undertook the same kinds of drug activities as Hope UK and therefore shared its concerns about the difficulty of assessing outcomes. The recognition that Hope UK was not unique in struggling to find evidence of its impact did not entirely alleviate the sense of frustration felt by some staff and voluntary educators in not knowing the end result of their activities. Two voluntary educators exemplify the ends of the spectrum: one felt that only by longitudinal research could Hope UK begin to understand its impact and that perhaps the most it could currently hope to achieve, once other influences like family, peer behaviour, economic status and so on were taken into account, was a positive effect on young people's social skills. The other volunteer said he did not 'agonise over effectiveness' and felt confident that the message was getting through and resulting in different lifestyle choices.

The variety of responses to questioning about whether Hope UK was achieving its goals was symptomatic of an organisational dichotomy over users. While the majority of stakeholders accepted the dominant coalition view of Hope UK working most effectively through adults in order to affect the choices made by children and young people, some stakeholders thought direct work with young people did work and should be done more systematically: 'After all, a children's organisation needs to be grounded in working with youth' (a staff member). The three interviewees who supported this view thought that people working in their local communities



could develop long-term relationships with individuals and thereby avoid the disadvantages of outsiders providing one-off unintegrated sessions. While the Director favoured the cascade theory of training trainers, nevertheless he encouraged an unspecified amount of direct work with youth groups to allow staff 'to keep their hands in' and to give a means of keeping up-to-date with young people's concerns and perspectives, which might otherwise become distant. These two approaches also highlighted stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness as short or long term. Some saw effectiveness in terms of satisfying the user in the short-term (e.g. the group of youth workers who were receiving training); others thought the effect on the ultimate user (the young person attending the youth group) had to be taken into account before effectiveness could really be known.

#### *Ability to learn*

An important criterion used by several stakeholders was Hope UK's ability to learn and to change as a result of that learning. The users all commented on Hope UK's readiness to evaluate and to get feedback from one session in order to adapt the material and approach for the next session. Hope UK was seen as effective because it learned in order to improve, acknowledging where things could have been handled differently and seeking to discover whether the participants' needs were met. The priority given to learning and systematic use of a 'plan-do-review' approach were seen by voluntary educators and associate workers as effective ways of keeping them updated and ensuring a two-way flow between workers in the community and headquarters. Staff gave examples of the many networks they were involved in, benefiting from the cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches in recognition of the synergy that can be gained from contributing to a common goal. Hope UK's documents point up this willingness to learn and share good ideas; examples are given of schemes derived from Hope UK's own, such as a Northern Ireland volunteer scheme, and a partnership with Amethyst. In the absence of research data of their own, Hope UK staff used findings from studies carried out by other organisations and research institutions (Exeter, Roehampton).

#### *Adaptability*

Both the Chair and the long-serving Trustee took a long-term view on the effectiveness of Hope UK, commending the way it had transformed itself into a modern professional organisation, maintaining some links with the past while successfully throwing off the Victorian temperance image with the name 'Band of Hope'. The Director characterised the change in Hope UK's approach over time as moving 'from building barriers to building bridges'; Hope UK had needed to adapt in order to survive, as a result of the changing drug culture, the provision of drug education by other bodies and changes in people's attitudes. Adaptability was therefore adopted as an effectiveness criterion, particularly by those who had been with Hope UK for

some years and seen the environmental changes to which Hope UK had of necessity to respond. Another example of Hope UK's adaptability which staff and Trustees used as evidence of Hope UK's effectiveness was its ability to find a niche. The rapid increase in drug education in secondary schools over the last few years necessitated a change of focus for Hope UK towards the voluntary sector, and internal stakeholders felt that change had been accomplished smoothly and effectively.

### *Financial measures*

The Trustees and the Director were the interviewees most conscious of balancing activities against cost. Shielded as it is against some of the financial uncertainties besetting other voluntary organisations thanks to investment income from the sale of a large London property in the 1980s, Hope UK nevertheless has to make financially prudent decisions and keep unit costs down. The Trustees, in particular the Chair, saw Hope UK's ability to do a high volume of work on limited resources as a measure of effectiveness. Whilst those looking for objective measures of effectiveness might use financial data on unit costs to judge an organisation, this study of stakeholder views found little recourse to such matters by those other than the Trustees and Director<sup>3</sup>. Although almost all interviewees said Hope UK could be more effective if it did more (covered a wider area geographically, did more Drugnet sessions, had a higher media profile), only the Trustees and two senior staff tied this to choices about redistributing current income, raising more income from external sources or spending more of the reserves. Hope UK's literature does not highlight financial concerns or publicise low unit costs, largely because documents such as the newsletters, 'Focus' and 'Action', have not been seen as vehicles for marketing or fundraising.

### *Growth*

Voluntary educators, staff and Trustees saw the growth of the organisation's work as evidence of effectiveness. This was measured by the amount of 'repeat business' – users coming back for further sessions after being impressed by the first – and by 'new business'. This could either be generated by headquarters staff proactively networking and negotiating with umbrella bodies, locally by approaches to voluntary educators, or as a result of Hope UK's reputation and profile in the drug education field. Quantity of service was used as an effectiveness criterion more significantly in the organisation's literature (number of Drugnet sessions, number of voluntary educators trained, number of 'Knowledge' leaflets distributed) than in the interviews, though one staff member said Hope UK had a higher output at lower cost than comparable organisations. Hope UK resists adopting many quantity performance measures because the amount of work voluntary educators can put in is unpredictable and the financial cushion has relieved Hope UK so far from operating a stringent policy of covering costs by charging for

services. Stakeholder views were varied on growth as an effectiveness criterion: those based regionally (one partner, one staff member, the voluntary educators, two Trustees) felt greater effectiveness could be achieved by more resourcing of the regions and trying to get a wider geographical spread. Others (two staff, one Trustee, one user, one partner) felt growth needed to come from making greater inroads into the church user groups. So while the same criterion was employed by many stakeholders, the interpretation of it took quite different forms.

### *Reputation*

Some interviewees used reputational criteria ('Hope UK is seen as **the** drug education and prevention charity' – a partner); these tended to be stakeholders who had least direct knowledge of Hope UK's work. One voluntary educator spoke with pride about the spin-off sessions that he had been asked to run as a result of an initial half-day with a youth group. Hope UK staff considered that the best influence they could have on building a good reputation for the organisation was to achieve professional high-quality outputs. Reputation appeared a powerful force in generating new business, and the interviews demonstrated reputation-making in action as users described how they had recommended Hope UK to other colleagues or passed its literature on to other organisations. The majority of the users had come to Hope UK because they had seen a leaflet explaining what it did and wanted to try it out. Hope UK was thought to have a high profile in some drug education networks, and particularly Christian ones: 'News at Ten rang us recently for a comment. If schools know about us and ask for information that's a measure of success. People beat a path to our door much more than ten years ago' (a Trustee). However, some interviewees (notably one voluntary educator) were critical of Hope UK's low media profile, feeling this hampered its effectiveness. Little use of reputational measures was made in Hope UK's literature, yet it may be true that depicting Hope UK's attributes more confidently, as one user pointed out, would generate more interest from potential users. More could be made of the organisation's reputation; certainly in my interviews, users made several comparisons with other drug education organisations, commending Hope UK by contrast as more professional, more attuned to children's needs, and more understanding of the need for a Christian basis.

### *Organisational values*

The three church user organisations referred to Hope UK's Christian basis and the ability of staff to integrate Christian messages into the training as being fundamental to the effectiveness of the training. The one non-church user commented that Christian references would have been detrimental to how the training was received, and that none were made. Apart from the one secular user, all the interviewees described themselves as Christian, and saw Hope UK's Christian basis as a fundamental part of its identity. While this ideology pervaded the

organisation, none of the interviewees said that the organisation's Christian basis rendered it more effective than a comparable secular organisation. Indeed one Trustee commented that Hope UK was 'held back in the eyes of society in general by being Christian. If that makes us more ineffective, we're proud of it'. Several people felt that shared Christian values and a belief that they were 'doing God's work' (Jeavons, 1994) made for high levels of cooperation and commitment, which worked towards greater organisational effectiveness overall.

#### *Organisational efficiency*

I use the term 'efficiency' in the way interviewees used it: not as a ratio of outputs to inputs, but as a perception of smoothly managed working practices and competently organised processes. External stakeholders commented on their view of Hope UK as effective because they perceived it as well-run, responsive and 'efficient'. Examples were the speed and regularity of feedback after drug education sessions, the swift response to letters and queries, staff's good preparation and communication skills. These elements fed into the fostering of a good reputation and enhanced satisfaction on the part of the recipient. Stakeholders describing the quality of service delivery made reference to internal processes such as these, and it was clear from interview responses that Hope UK managers have devoted time and energy to building up workable systems and a culture of organisational efficiency.

#### **4.2 Processes for communicating views**

All interviewees were asked about the means by which they fed their views into decision-making at Hope UK and the extent to which they felt 'listened to'. Summary findings were that stakeholders, external and internal, felt that they had adequate means, informal and formal, to express their views on effectiveness and that comment was welcome. When decisions had been contested, interviewees felt that they had nevertheless had the opportunity to make their case (as in a recent debate over National Lottery funding). Staff felt similarly empowered, but gave examples of frustration at being outvoted on particular matters<sup>4</sup>. Each staff member commented wryly that the Director and other staff knew how they felt on particular issues, so their frustration was more to do with being over-ruled than unheard.

As a formal organisation with paid staff, Hope UK exhibits many features of a bureaucracy (Weber, 1947), with the Director at the helm. Over the years, the power of professional staff, both structural and political, has increased, and that of the membership has declined. Some Trustees, staff and volunteers have been with the organisation for many years, and the evolution of the organisation has been handled carefully to ensure continuity and maintenance of links with the past (for example, the affiliated group arrangements). Formal opportunities for stakeholders of the organisation to meet together are the Annual Meeting (open to members)

and the Consultative Forum (comprising Trustees, representatives of affiliated groups, three voluntary educators and some other individuals). As a small organisation of around twenty staff, Hope UK hovers between a family and a bureaucracy in the way decisions are made internally. The Director chairs a monthly Planning and Budgeting Group meeting, attended by senior staff. All London-based staff meet briefly daily at midday for a quick news update and prayer. Regional representatives (mostly part-time) have a nominated manager in London. There is a systematic method of ensuring follow-up and supervision of voluntary educators. Users and partners indicated that Hope UK staff had given them every opportunity to offer their views at different stages of the collaboration, and praised the tenacity and care with which Hope UK staff sought dialogue.

The interviews with senior staff highlighted two areas where it was felt that communications could be improved, in addition to the headquarters/regions tensions one would expect to find in any organisation with regional outbases. The first of these was hearing the authentic voice of the ultimate user. One staff member talked about how Hope UK had tried different ways over the years of involving young people in the organisation; indeed the Director and Chair had come up through the organisation after time in the youth movement. It appeared the youth element was no longer present in the voluntary side of the organisation, and attempts to have a youth panel had been unsuccessful through seeming tokenistic or unrepresentative. Only through staff working directly in schools and youth groups could they stay in touch with current issues for young people; otherwise youth views came second- or third-hand through youth leaders, parents and voluntary educators. Hope UK's relationship with its ultimate users is different from many voluntary organisations, which are increasingly conscious of the need for genuine ownership and participation in decision-making (Oliver 1996, Taylor, 1996). Hope UK's approach is more paternalistic; although staff are anxious to be in tune with young people's lives and attitudes to drugs, Hope UK's harm prevention approach means that they are, in a sense, targeting people who do not necessarily know that they need the product Hope UK is offering. Several interviewees recognised this meant aiming Hope UK's interventions at ever-younger age groups<sup>5</sup>.

The other problem area in terms of communications processes was gaining access to and dialogue with church organisers. Staff at Hope UK felt their effectiveness was curtailed by the reluctance of this group to engage with drugs issues and acknowledge young people's need for information; they felt Hope UK needed to improve its marketing and communications to facilitate access to a greater proportion of this potentially vast future constituency<sup>6</sup>.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings showed diverse perceptions of effectiveness according to the viewpoint of the stakeholder, but the emergence of some consistent themes. The process for expressing these views to the management of the organisation and for engaging in dialogue seemed well-developed. Data from stakeholders of Hope UK suggested the senior staff of the organisation did engage with issues of effectiveness, adjusting to changing environmental, constituency and organisational concerns. This section looks at the strategies they adopted in handling different versions of effectiveness and shaping a core 'working definition'. From this analysis, elements may be identified to provide some initial building blocks for a management theory.

### *Existence of the dominant coalition*

Early in the research, it became clear that Hope UK was not atypical in its power relationships (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978): the dominant coalition, that is, the most powerful stakeholders, turned out to be the Director and senior managers of the organisation (and periodically – on contested matters – the Chair of the Trustees). This was not surprising given the following factors: a) the organisational structure; b) the Director's long tenure and knowledge of the organisation; c) the widely-held view of senior staff as competent; d) the Trustees being in 'supportive' mode<sup>7</sup>; e) the fact that Hope UK had a number of partners and users, none of whom individually was crucial to the organisation's survival; f) the absence of a significant donor. The interviews showed that the core organisational view of effectiveness was the one articulated by this dominant coalition at Hope UK, and promoted by them at Trustee meetings, the Consultative Forum and other staff and voluntary educator gatherings and less systematically in the organisation's literature. The existence and composition of the dominant coalition was largely accepted by the other stakeholders of the organisation, although the latter stressed the importance of open communications and opportunities for debate.

### *Acknowledging multiple constituencies*

Hope UK's dominant coalition were conscious of the organisation's multiple stakeholders and of the need to acknowledge the legitimacy of their views. In order to do this, they had established good mechanisms to hear the views of current stakeholders, and fostered an atmosphere in which complex or contentious issues could be brought up for debate (as evidenced by the list of agenda items for the Consultative Forum). The Director and senior staff had made a judgement on the relative importance of different stakeholder views (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978): users and partners were seen as important constituencies, though the interviews showed many of their views on effectiveness to be based on partial knowledge and their own external goals. Voluntary educators were identified as another important constituency, providing the dominant

coalition with feedback from the front line to enhance their own perceptions from direct service delivery. Unlike Tsui's findings (1990) about the importance of resource providers as a key constituency, Hope UK did not demonstrate subservience to a donor view; however the dominant coalition's alertness to environmental change meant this viewpoint might become more significant in the future. Constituency views had been sought by the dominant coalition from other groups – staff, voluntary educators, Trustees, network organisations and, to a lesser extent, members – but it was not possible to rank these in order of importance in establishing the core view. The research showed then an ongoing assimilation of stakeholder views by the dominant coalition, and active engagement with different views rather than authoritarian or expedient control.

#### *Dealing with contradictory preferences*

Senior staff and Trustees at Hope UK demonstrated a deft touch in handling contradictory preferences of stakeholders, performing 'in contradictory ways to satisfy contradictory expectations' (Cameron, 1986: 550). Opposing tendencies run through all organisations; they can be fundamental or more superficial (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983; Morgan, 1997); the skill is in managing such tensions constructively. The balancing of short and long term views of effectiveness was exemplified in the Trustees' ongoing deliberations about how much investment income to use. Hope UK could improve short-term effectiveness by increasing its staff, putting on more training sessions and thereby reaching more adults and ultimately young people with its drug education message. But this might be at the expense of the organisation's long-term health or survival. The balancing act adopted by Hope UK was to take a cautious approach to growth, releasing a limited amount from the reserves as seedcorn money for developing new initiatives, but encouraging a greater effort on fundraising in order to increase income for particular projects and contracted staff. Successful handling of contradictory preferences could be attributed to the Chair's and the Director's management skills and long tenure, which gave them extra credibility in the eyes of other stakeholders.

#### *Balancing competing demands*

Recognition of multiple stakeholder perspectives of effectiveness necessitates choices on the part of the leadership of the organisation, in deciding which constituencies are most important to satisfy at any particular time. Strategies such as satisficing (minimally, as opposed to optimally, satisfying constituency expectations), sequencing (prioritising different constituency interests at different times) and trade-offs (trading off one set of preferences against another) were observed in operation at Hope UK (Friedlander and Pickle, 1968; Cameron and Whetten, 1983; Zammuto, 1984). Satisficing was seen in the freedom given to regional project workers to plan their own work for best impact, but in limiting direct activities with schools; sequencing allowed

for debate on whether Hope UK would be more effective if it developed a counselling remit, as advocated by some interest groups, but not pursuing this as a priority; trade-offs were seen between headquarters and local resourcing to improve effectiveness. These strategies are by no means unique to handling diverse views of effectiveness; they are recognised management approaches for dealing with the different priorities and support needs of groups or individuals in an organisation (Robbins, 2000). In terms of a management approach to multiple stakeholder perspectives of effectiveness, managers at Hope UK were balancing different interest groups, and weighing up their relative importance at any particular time. Hope UK's relatively small units (no one dominant user, for instance) made it more possible for the Director and his senior staff to control this process.

#### *Developing a core view*

The clearest and most systematic version of what constituted effectiveness for Hope UK and how it should be addressed came from the Director. Those closest to him in terms of structural and political power were most consistent in their versions with this view of effectiveness, while those further away had perspectives which took less consideration of overall organisational issues, and tended to be partial or specific to the individual stakeholder's relationship to Hope UK. The key aspects to the core interpretation of effectiveness were an emphasis on quality (with high standards maintained by following best practice, learning from other organisations and from evaluation feedback, seeking internal and external comparisons, and keeping up-to-date with research findings), quantity (high numbers of outputs at low cost), and reaching target groups. These were seen in the context of the organisation's agreed mission, priorities and values, set out in its 'Three-year planning guidelines' and 'Values and Priorities' documents. Measures of organisational health such as securing resources and maintaining a good reputation were also part of the core view. The dominant coalition had spent time encouraging a debate about how effectiveness should be defined and assessed (notably at a Consultative Forum meeting), and the interviews in this study did establish that a level of consensus existed amongst internal stakeholders. This core view was not, however, systematically communicated in the organisation's public relations literature. In its relationships with stakeholders, Hope UK therefore supported Tassie et al's finding (1996) that by open dialogue and interchange it is possible to build shared interpretations of effectiveness and to increase the common ground among constituency views.

#### *Being aware of change*

One critical aspect of Hope UK's management of different stakeholder views of effectiveness was its responsiveness to change. This included changes in internal constituency views, and the composition and relative importance of such constituencies (Perrow, 1977; Zammuto,



1984). Good communications systems and a willingness to foster grass-roots debate provided the means to keep abreast of such changes. Hope UK also showed the ability to respond to external change. As a small player in a populated field, it had to be conscious of what bigger drug education organisations and government agencies were doing, and aware of changes in drug fashions, marketing and availability. One might characterise this as organisational self-awareness: the effective organisation needs to understand its place in context, scan the environment and respond to change accordingly, while keeping tabs on the changing characteristics, composition and preferences of its internal constituencies. Hope UK's management had identified a useful niche market for the organisation (providing drugs education to voluntary sector organisations), but was aware of the importance of partnership and collaboration as self-protective mechanisms. It engaged actively in drug education networks and non-competitive behaviours, recognising that there was more to gain from collaboration than competing, and that it had a strong enough identity and funding base to maintain a degree of independence. This study showed that one of Hope UK's management strengths, seasoned over 150 years of operation, was its adaptability while maintaining a clear identity and set of core principles.

#### *Maintaining organisational values*

The interviews with stakeholders showed that there was a strong sense of commitment to the Christian values that have underpinned Hope UK from the mid-nineteenth century. The principles of Christian morality, faith and belief in service were seen to flavour both the expected outputs and outcomes of the organisation and its ways of going about its work. There was a high degree of identification with the organisation's values: staff had voluntarily signed a pledge of abstinence, believing that if you want to lead by example you should adopt a practice of abstinence from drugs yourself. Whilst an exploration of motivation and commitment in religious organisations is beyond the scope of this report, it should be recognised that Hope UK's strong organisational identity and shared Christian values are part of the way in which consensus is built on effectiveness, and a core understanding is developed of those principles which are not responsive to change or flexible to environmental pressure. A conviction of the moral worth of Hope UK's work appeared to be combined with a philosophy of everyone doing the best they could, which was perhaps more characteristic of a voluntary association than a professionalised bureaucracy (Billis, 1993). While the Director was at pains to stress Hope UK's tolerance and aversion to evangelising, the twin themes of Hope UK's membership – being Christian and adopting a drug-free lifestyle (this including socially used drugs like alcohol and tobacco) - provide a unifying force which binds people in to the organisation and reinforces by example and shared experience the messages Hope UK propounds in its training and literature. Hope UK also provides some support for the notion of expressing values through processes of work rather than emphasising the attainment of goals (Mason, 1995).

*Acknowledging the difficulty of evaluating outcomes*

One objective that the dominant coalition of Hope UK had gone some way towards was finding appropriate alternatives to outcomes data, and offering these as substitutes or proxies for unattainable information about the long-term effect on young people's attitudes. The interviews supported research findings (Taylor and Sumariwalla, 1993; Sheehan 1996; Forbes, 1998; Knapp, 1996) in showing how people choose outputs, process measures and other alternatives to outcomes when asked to judge effectiveness. Hope UK is not alone in this dilemma of understanding its contribution: it is a problem common to voluntary organisations which adopt overarching societal goals and which have an intention 'to affect the world outside the organization' (Sheehan, 1996: 111). Such complexity underlines the limitations for voluntary organisations of a goal achievement approach when it is based on the mission or highest goals of the organisation. The logic works better at lower levels (for instance, judging the effectiveness of Hope UK's Drugnet training by the achievement of the goals set for those sessions). Indeed I would argue that goal achievement theories are highly relevant at the level of activities, where goals can be seen to be measurable or observable, relatively few in number and widely agreed upon (Cameron, 1986; Hasenfeld, 1983). But for Hope UK, as for other organisations undertaking health education, the key must be to find other ways of showing effectiveness. Common risks in such an undertaking are relying overmuch on quantitative data at the expense of qualitative or judgement-based data, assuming that what cannot be easily measured is of little value, and distorting data to try and fit it to frameworks that do not readily suit the organisation's work or priorities. Hope UK's management had identified some workable measures of effectiveness to compensate for the lack of knowledge about long-term outcomes, but had further work to do in ensuring these were known systematically through the organisation's constituencies, and developed in a consistent way across its literature and website.

*Recognising the legitimacy of subjective views*

The interviews at Hope UK showed several stakeholders who judged the organisation as 'effective for them'. They discussed why its outputs met their particular needs, and, in the case of users, explained that its effectiveness was enhanced by the flexibility with which its activities could be adjusted to suit other individuals' or organisations' goals. Such definitions of effectiveness are to be expected of an organisation that delivers services to people; Hope UK was seen as effective because it had asked the question 'What do you want from us?' of its users, and adjusted its responses accordingly. This example shows how effectiveness can be seen as a distributional issue: 'the ability of the system to maintain itself by returning human benefit in sufficient degree to induce participant cooperation' (Keeley, 1978: 277). The managerial team's task was to balance such external forces with reference back to the

organisation's mission and goals, and to the values that created its organisational identity; in this way, it could be responsive to the environment without allowing mission creep. The strong articulation of a core organisational view of effectiveness ('this is why we believe we are effective...') can also act as a counterweight, helping all parties to know the outer limits to the organisation's flexibility. Tsui et al's research (1995) showed the importance of responsiveness to different constituent views, finding that attempts to change others' expectations were negatively associated with effectiveness. Hope UK's dominant coalition appeared to engage with other views openly, suggesting that, within certain parameters, it was willing to consider adaptation to fulfil others' interpretations of effectiveness. The constituencies it had not satisfactorily engaged with on this score were church leaders, and perhaps young people themselves, through lack of a forum. Constrained by a lack of time and funds, Hope UK staff had also not explored the potential constituencies reachable through using the Internet as a vehicle for disseminating drug information.

#### *Building credibility*

This study gave some indication of the usefulness of reputation as a criterion of effectiveness. It found this was particularly important in generating new business, and unsurprisingly diminished in importance the more people got to know Hope UK directly. The dominant coalition recognised the value of establishing a good reputation, not simply in terms of service delivery and outputs, but also in how the organisation came across to anyone making contact with it. Efficient office systems, friendly and helpful telephone communications, and staff's apparent willingness to put themselves out all fed into the perception of Hope UK from the outside. The interviews with users bore out Herman and Renz's (1999) assertion that people tend to judge an organisation on the basis of their knowledge of only part of it. Users made an assumption about the whole organisation from the quality of the one training session; such a view fed into the building of the organisation's reputation. It was thus important for Hope UK to be sure that their front-line workers – voluntary educators and staff in contact with users – portrayed the organisation professionally, accurately and competently in order to maintain reputational effectiveness. Accepting that they could not actively control what others thought of Hope UK, its managers nevertheless adopted different techniques to further the credibility and good name of the organisation.

#### *Tailoring effectiveness messages*

The dominant coalition at Hope UK showed awareness of how stakeholders were likely to judge effectiveness, and this enabled them to a certain extent to adjust effectiveness messages to suit audience expectations, just as they subtly altered the mission statement in different documents. As a strongly values-led organisation, Hope UK already has the basis of a centrally consistent

core to its interpretation of effectiveness, but could tailor messages more consciously and systematically, perhaps yielding greater benefits in terms of fundraising and new users. This would support Herman and Renz's (1997: 202) contention that managers should provide favourable information against different constituencies' effectiveness criteria: 'in effect we are recommending tailoring the effectiveness message to each audience'. Managers in their study had responded to this recommendation with some anxiety about distorted data. My research indicated that Hope UK staff did use the effectiveness criteria favoured by different constituencies in discussion (sometimes unknowingly), but had not done this to any extent in their literature, and had made no attempt to understand different audience perspectives in terms of their website. Further research could usefully delve into the extent to which organisations are conscious of how they are adjusting their responses to satisfy different expectations.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study found that multiple stakeholder perspectives of effectiveness could be accommodated and balanced by the dominant coalition of the organisation. Having developed a central core view of effectiveness, they engaged in dialogue with other parties to ensure this view was regularly updated and informed by stakeholder views. Management techniques of dealing with contradictory preferences, balancing competing demands and tailoring effectiveness messages were supported by a strong sense of organisational identity; core values remained immutable despite flexibility to future opportunities and recognition of different 'effectivenesses'. In the absence of existing appropriate measures of effectiveness, particularly to assess outcomes, the study showed how the dominant coalition found substitute criteria which were organisation-specific but likely to bear comparison with other similar organisations' measures.

From this case study, we can begin to derive a management theory which would need to take into account the following factors. Establishing a dominant or enabling coalition is a prerequisite for the emergence of a working definition of effectiveness which is consistent with the organisation's identity and values. While this definition should be explicit enough for people to work to, it should also be evolutionary. This necessitates setting up systems for communicating to stakeholders what that core definition is, and providing mechanisms that allow stakeholders to rework it in terms of practice; in other words, it should be an open system, evolving through negotiation, and accommodating the contradictions and ambiguities that arise in applying it to real operational situations. The emphasis is on process rather than blueprint, and it is the management task to nourish that process and maintain its good health, keeping lines of communication open, and finding alternative solutions when difficulties threaten it. The salience of the process should become more prominent at times of significant change; at such points, perceptions of effectiveness need to be brought to the fore and possibly re-evaluated. While

these elements of the process may have wide applicability, there is another set of factors affecting the dominant coalition's implementation of this management approach which cannot be divorced from the context (such as values, management history and culture). The presence of this set of factors, unique to any organisation, highlights the value of case study approaches in researching it. It remains for future researchers to take up the task of further exploration of the common elements to the process identified here.

## **Notes**

1. The balanced scorecard adopts four perspectives for performance assessment: the customer perspective, the internal process perspective, the financial perspective and the innovation and learning perspective.
2. Forbes (1998) provides a useful summary of empirical research on effectiveness in non-profit organizations from 1977 to 1997.
3. Hope UK's formal documents, such as Annual Reports and Accounts, include these data.
4. Some of these might fall into the category of what Paton (1996) characterizes as values issues. These are matters which voluntary sector staff feel strongly about, and which become issues of morality and ideology, not easily resolved through expedient management or compromise.
5. Recruitment efforts are currently focused on appointing a Children's Coordinator, to oversee the development of literature and new training programmes for those involved with the 5-8 age group.
6. The director quotes figures of 53,000 churches in Britain, and 6 million Christians.
7. The Board saw its role as supporting by prudent fiscal management the activities and decisions made by the Director and staff; with a competent staff and Director, they appeared to be in a supportive rather than leading phase (Wood 1992); as a result perhaps, none of the interviewees made the link between the effectiveness of the Board and the effectiveness of the organization (Herman and Renz, 1999). One interviewee suggested that Hope UK might be challenged to greater effectiveness by a shake up of the Board.

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## Appendix I

**Table showing number of interviewees from representative constituencies of Hope UK**

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Face-to-face interview</b>	<b>Telephone interview</b>
Users	4	3	1
Partner organisations	2	0	2
Paid staff	4	3	1
Trustees	3*	1	2
Voluntary & associate educators	3	0	3
Network organisations	1	0	1
	* one trustee was also a voluntary educator		

## **Appendix II**

### **Questions used in interviewing stakeholders**

#### **A. Questions for external stakeholders of Hope UK**

1. Can you begin by telling me about your involvement or connection with Hope UK?
  - nature of involvement – role or relationship
  - extent of experience – number of years and how intense
2. What involvement have you had/do you have in the organisation's decision-making processes?
3. How much would you say you know about the organisation's work?
  - mission and purpose
  - current activities
  - future plans
  - past performance
4. Would you describe Hope UK as an effective organisation? To what extent and in what ways?
  - fulfilling its mission and purpose
  - reducing drug-taking among young people
  - good reputation
5. What information do you get to help you make that judgement?
  - from Hope UK
  - from other sources
6. Do you feel you know enough about Hope UK's activities to make that overall judgement? What else would you like to know?
7. Do you think Hope UK could be more effective? If so, in what ways?
8. Do you have any opportunity to express your views on effectiveness to the management of Hope UK? If so, through what means?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say about Hope UK and its effectiveness?

#### **B. Questions for interviewee from network organisation**

1. Can you begin by telling me about your involvement or connection with Hope UK?
  - nature of involvement – role or relationship
  - extent of experience – number of years and how intense
2. How much would you say you know about the organisation's work?
  - mission and purpose
  - current activities
  - future plans
  - past performance

3. Would you describe Hope UK as an effective organisation? To what extent and in what ways?
  - fulfilling its mission and purpose
  - reducing drug-taking among young people
  - good reputation
4. What information do you get to help you make that judgement?
  - from Hope UK
  - from other sources
5. Do you think Hope UK could be more effective? If so, in what ways?
6. Is there anything else you would like to say about Hope UK and its effectiveness?

### **C. Questions for internal stakeholders of Hope UK**

1. Can you begin by telling me about your involvement or connection with Hope UK?
  - nature of involvement – role or relationship
  - extent of experience – number of years and how intense
2. What involvement have you had/do you have in the organisation's decision-making processes?
  - planning
  - policy-making
3. Would you describe Hope UK as an effective organisation? To what extent and in what ways?
  - fulfilling its mission and purpose
  - reducing drug-taking among young people
  - good reputation
4. What information do you get to help you make that judgement?
  - from Hope UK
  - from other sources
5. Do you feel you know enough about all Hope UK's activities to make that overall judgement? What else would you like to know?
6. How does the organisation currently assess its effectiveness?
7. How long has this method of assessing effectiveness / these measures been in use by the organisation, as far as you know?
8. What channels do you have for hearing the views of users and partners?
  - can you give me an example?
9. How do you measure effectiveness in your own area of work?
10. How would you "sell" Hope UK as an effective organisation to potential users or partners?

*How does one voluntary organisation engage with multiple stakeholder views of effectiveness?*  
– Sarah Mistry

11. Do you think Hope UK could be more effective? If so, in what ways?
12. What have been the three biggest organisational challenges or issues for Hope UK of recent years?
13. And what do you predict as big challenges for Hope UK in the future?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say about Hope UK and its effectiveness?

## **Appendix 3**

### **Sample of Hope UK documents analysed**

- 1 Annual Reports
  - a. 1999
  - b. 2000 (draft)
  - c. Accounts 2000 (draft)
  - d. 1968
  - e. 1978
  - f. 1988
- 2 Monitoring and evaluation report for Department for Education and Employment on Drugnet training
  - a. after 6 months
  - b. after 18 months
3. Fundraising letters
  - a. Drugnet
  - b. Save and Prosper; report on N Ireland activities
4. Memorandum of Association (first section)
5. Action: newsletter for churches
  - a. spring/summer 2001
  - b. autumn/winter 2000
  - c. Plymouth Action (regional insert)
6. Focus: newsletter for schools and youth service
  - a. spring 2001
  - b. 'Sensible drinking' briefing paper
  - c. spring/summer 2000
7. Drugnet information
  - a. information (double-sided colour)
  - b. publicity leaflet (single-sided black/white)
  - c. project outline
8. Three-year planning guidelines
9. 2001 Objectives
10. Values and Priorities
11. Resources
  - a. Main guide
  - b. 'Take Dope'
  - c. 'The Knowledge'
12. Legacy leaflet
13. Website

## Appendix IV

### Criteria of effectiveness used by stakeholders in interviews

	Users	Partners	Voluntary educators	Associates	Staff	Trustees	Network organisations
Quality of service delivery	YYY	YY	YYY	Y	YYYY	YYY	Y
Achieving mission	Y??	?	?YX		????	??Y	
Ability to learn	YYY	YY	YY?		YYY?	YY	
Adaptability		Y	Y		YY	YY	
Financial measures					YY	YY	
Growth		Y	YYY		ZZZZ	ZYY	
Reputation	YY	YY	Y	Y	YY	YY	Y
Organisational values	YY	YY	YYY	Y	YYYY	YYY	Y
Efficiency of processes	YYY	YY	YYY	Y	YYYY	YYY	

Key: X: criterion used by interviewee; Hope UK judged to be ineffective

Y: criterion used by interviewee; Hope UK judged to be effective

Z: criterion used by interviewee; Hope UK's effectiveness judged partial

?: criterion used by interviewee; interviewee unable to judge Hope UK's effectiveness