BUREAUCRATIC CHANGE IN FURTHER EDUCATION: IMPACTS OF THE WHITE PAPER *TRAINING FOR JOBS* ON NON-ADVANCED FURTHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES, 1984-89.

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the impacts of legislation introduced by the British government in 1984 to restructure the administration of non-advanced further education (NAFE) in England and Wales. The White Paper *Training for Jobs* proposed to transfer a substantial proportion of responsibility for the delivery of NAFE away from local education authorities (LEAs) to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), involving the transfer of a proportion of LEAs' block grant to the MSC's annual budget for the purposes of NAFE delivery.

The thesis examines the impacts of the White Paper by recourse to three themes. First, the revision of the policy innovation as a consequence of resistance by local authorities and their national associations to the policy as framed, and the subsequent renegotiation of its terms. Second, the bureaucratic impacts of the policy change, principally the restructuring of local working relationships which it necessitated. Third, a consideration of its impacts upon local NAFE planning procedures, the target of the policy shift. Central to the thesis are the relative bureaucratic characterisitcs of, and the operational relationship between, the MSC and LEAs, and the effect of these upon the development and delivery of NAFE policy.

These themes are set in the context of an historical overview of vocational education and training in England and Wales, and a theoretical perspective which considers *Training for Jobs* as an illustrative example of decision-making and policy implementation in practice. It presents evidence for the argument that these processes should be perceived as a continuum in which actors at all levels play a part in the policy process, rejecting more simplistic 'top-down' approaches to the issue.

This thesis is dedicated to my father and mother,
without whose patient and unconditional support
none of this work would have been possible.

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To all my family and friends who have given me the strength and confidence to pursue this study; to my parents; to Christian; to all those in S504 who have supported my progress through the marathon that is a PhD.

And finally, to Maura, who has been an inspiration throughout.

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FOREWORD

The subject of this thesis is a field beset by numerous acronyms and jargon terms, confusing to the non-specialist reader. To counteract the first of these problems a glossary of acronyms has been included at the end of the thesis. The second can be tackled by here clarifying some of the terminology employed.

Throughout this thesis, non-advanced further education is signified by the acronym 'NAFE'. This is for purposes of consistency, despite the fact that the field has subsequently been re-termed 'work-related FE'. The same applies to the continued use of 'Manpower Services Commission' or MSC, which changed its name to the 'Training Commission' in June 1988, and again in September of the same year to the 'Training Agency'. The choice of terms in both the above instances is based on that most widely accepted during the period of empirical study.

Other terms requiring explanation are 'joint planning', the 'NAFE Agreement' and the 'NAFE Initiative'. Joint-planning is used to refer to the process engaged in by local education authorities and the MSC under the terms of a policy articulated in the 1985 NAFE Agreement, an arrangement made between the MSC and the national local authority associations. This Agreement constituted a revision to the White Paper *Training for Jobs*, and the' NAFE Initiative' is a collective reference to the policy change enacted by the both.

An explanation of two final terms will further ease the reading of this thesis: the term NAFE 'Plan' is used to refer jointly to both the Development Plan and Annual Programme produced as a consequence of the NAFE Agreement; the term 'planning round' is a reference to the year for which local officers were developing proposals. Hence 'the 1988-9 planning round' is a reference to work actually being conducted during the previous year, 1987-8.

Chapter One

Introduction.

Introduction

This thesis addresses government legislation announced in the 1984 White Paper *Training for Jobs*[1]. Its effect was to involve for the first time a quasi-autonomous government agency, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), in the planning and administration of non-advanced further education (NAFE); a function hitherto controlled entirely (in the public sector at least) by local education authorities (LEAs). The thesis is a study of how the policy came to be made, what happened to it *en route* to its implementation, and what, in practice, were its outcomes.

Public policy on vocational education and training (VET) was an issue brought significantly to the fore in Britain in the 1980s. Debates over the continuing recalcitrance of British employers to provide adequate training for their own workforce have focussed attention upon chronic skill shortages and the supposed need to meet radical industrial restructuring with a more highly skilled and adaptable labour force.

Concurrent with these debates have been continuing disputes over the role of the public sector in VET. Arguments about the proper contribution of government, central and local, have focussed on the shape of the administrative structure. Colouring these arguments have been political divisions over the relative values of collectively-planned and market-led approaches to VET delivery, and more fundamentally over the purposes of education, whether primarily aimed at employers or individuals. A key element in any analysis of British public sector VET delivery is the division of responsibility for administration and policy between (in England) the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Employment (DE). This division has created long-standing tensions within the state bureaucracy, tensions which became increasingly significant in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the government institutions in question sought to overcome chronic VET deficiencies intensified by economic recession.

In examining NAFE, this thesis focusses on the area of public sector VET where these tensions have become most manifest, the field in which training and education come together at single points of delivery: local authority colleges. These institutions have a dual role in providing specific training courses for individuals and employers on

one hand, and more general academic and non-vocational tuition on the other. This places them in the vanguard of any policy interventions which realign the institutional relationships governing NAFE.

The White Paper *Training for Jobs* announced a transfer of resources away from the central grant given to local authorities for the delivery of NAFE and into the MSC budget. This was to the extent that the Commission would be responsible for about one quarter of all public spending in the field. The Commission was a young and expanding institution rooted in the public training bureaucracy, and coordinated at central government level by the DE. The allocation to such a body of NAFE responsibilities previously the sole preserve of the education sector marked a decisive shift in central strategies addressed to the administration of VET. It marked a new propensity to resolve the state's internal bureaucratic tensions in favour of the employment and training sector.

This thesis examines the impacts of the legislation by recourse to: an analysis of its driving motivations; an interpretative identification of its intended consequences; and an examination of its actual impacts in local areas as witnessed in the period 1984-89. In doing so it takes as its focus the local mechanisms through which NAFE was administered. It is thus a study of processes operating in the NAFE bureaucracy, rather than a study of NAFE outcomes in terms of courses delivered.

The Conservative government's move in announcing the new proposals is seen primarily as an attempt to increase central influence over NAFE provision by restructuring the administrative bureaucracy using means other than direct legislative intervention in local government responsibilities. In practice, the intended policy outcome failed to materialise. The central aim of the thesis is to examine why, and what happened instead.

The introduction and implementation of the policy is analysed by recourse to three central themes:

(i)   Motivations behind the *Training for Jobs* announcement - the reasons behind

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the government's particular choice of strategy, and what it hoped to achieve thereby.

(ii)   The process through which the strategy became realigned in a period of dispute and negotiation which followed the publication of the White Paper, a consequence of which was the removal of key elements of the original policy and the addition of new ones.

(iii)   The pursuit in practice of these realigned goals, and their effects upon the bureaucratic structures to which the White Paper was addressed. It is these developments which illustrate the ultimate effects consequent upon the introduction of the original policy.

These themes are analysed by means of appraisal against an historical and theoretical context developed in the early chapters, and by means of empirical information-gathering in the affected areas, which is presented in the latter chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides an historical overview of the development of both the NAFE and employment/training sectors. It considers the growth of FE after the 1944 Education Act which established its modern legal framework, and the broader educational trends which shaped its course in the ensuing period. It examines the institutional framework of LEA colleges, and identifies explicitly the parameters of NAFE as opposed to other post-school provision, in order to clarify the policy area under discussion. The chapter goes on to examine historical changes in the training sector, beginning by analysing key post-war developments which shaped provision, and then considering the specific role of the emergent MSC within training. The final section of the chapter outlines recent changes in the NAFE sphere in both education and training. Whilst it covers areas beyond the thesis' remit, this discussion is important for the purposes of setting its material in the context of contemporary developments.

Chapter 3 builds on the context established in the previous discussion, and raises a series of theoretical perspectives which form the foundation of the thesis' argument. A

number of key are areas introduced at this stage. First, policy linkages - the manner in which policy areas are governed by institutions bound to each other by resource and administrative dependencies and separated from other institutions by the absence of such dependencies, the connections forming definable policy networks. Second, theoretical perspectives on bureaucracies, the manner in which different institutions exhibit contrasting characteristics which shape both their administrative and strategic behaviour and their relationships with other bodies. Third, an analysis of the relationship between central and local governments, with particular emphasis on the circumstances in England and Wales. After each of these analyses is presented a discussion of their significance to NAFE. Thus considered are: the nature of the policy networks involved in the 1984 legislation; the bureaucratic characteristics of the key institutions in each network, in particular the MSC, the DES and LEAs; and the effects of conflict between central and local government on policy in England and Wales in the run up to 1984.

The above discussions lay a foundation for the remainder of Chapter 3. Firstly, this presents a critical analysis of the rise of the MSC. This is followed by a section which considers theoretical aspects of the nature of policy formulation, decision-making and implementation, setting out an argument for a continuum view of this process in preference to more simplistic 'top-down' models. These two sections together, added to the previous discussions, are synthesised in the last section of the chapter in a critical analysis of the introduction of 1984 White Paper. This considers the motivation behind government strategy, the means by which it was to be effected, and the intended outcomes of its intervention in NAFE.

Chapter 4 examines the detail of the White Paper's provisions, their implications for the NAFE sector, and assesses their underlying meaning in terms of the theoretical positions developed earlier. It then, through the presentation of new data gathered in interviews, goes on to examine in detail the response of the MSC and LEAs (and more particularly their national representative bodies) to the proposed legislation. The most significant aspect of this is indicated to have been the negotiation of an Agreement between the MSC and the local authority associations, which brought to an end sixteen months of dispute prompted by the White Paper. This Agreement is found to have

substantially deflected the original intentions of *Training for Jobs*, and shifted the central issue of the policy innovation to that of planning from one of administrative control. The realigned priorities became the ultimate definition of the *Training for Jobs* policy as it became 'concretised' at the implementation stage. In analysing the impacts of the White paper, much of the thesis' original empirical contribution focuses upon the administrative structures and planning procedures which resulted from the provisions outlined in the Agreement.

Chapter 5 introduces the methodology employed in the major survey work of the thesis. After first discussing the factors which impinge on choosing a research method, the use of an iterative approach combining both intensive and extensive research techniques is considered the most appropriate. The particular methodological instruments chosen within this framework are then identified, along with an indication of the success with which they were deployed in practice.

The main part of the thesis' empirical survey data is presented in Chapters 6 and 7. The first of these focuses upon the impacts of the White Paper and the subsequent Agreement upon the NAFE bureaucracy. This broad objective means in detail an analysis of the institutional responses of both the MSC and LEAs to the new conditions, and the effects of this in creating a larger policy network for NAFE, which combined the elements of the pre-existing employment/training and NAFE policy networks. An essential aspect in studying this development is the emergent relationship between the MSC and LEAs at local level during the 1984-89 period. This is considered in detail, with discussion of, first, the mechanisms of interaction which were developed through a combination of central policy and local interpretation. Second, the quality of these relationships, and in particular how this altered through the period of study. Third, the matter of MSC sanctions provided for in the Agreement, a highly significant factor in the development of relations. And fourth, particular problem areas which were experienced by both parties in forging a joint working relationship and developing new planning procedures - which problems proved the most difficult, and the extent to which they were successfully overcome.

The discussion moves in Chapter 7 to the planning procedures which emerged in

response to the NAFE Agreement, and which represent the grounded impacts of *Training for Jobs*. Again, the empirical analysis is not a consideration of NAFE outputs, rather of the administrative processes which shape outputs. In pursuing this it examines a number of areas in which such processes were particularly significant. The first section deals broadly with LEAs' NAFE planning experiences, focussing upon the construction and quality of the Development Plans which were a key element of the revised policy. It also considers the degree to which these Plans were a product of local interpretation of the national policy, thus linking to a key theme raised in Chapter 3.

Other sections of the chapter examine arrangements for joint MSC-LEA monitoring in NAFE, how these developed over time and dealt with the issues of cooperation and trust central to the newly emerging bureaucratic relationship. The funding of NAFE administration and the additional resources given to specific projects are likewise examined, as are the key areas of labour market information (the MSC's major responsibility under the Agreement) and liaison with other bodies. The final sections deal with curricular impacts and evaluation. The educational impacts of *Training for Jobs*, as modified through the filter of the Agreement, can only be properly measured by considering their effects on the NAFE courses actually delivered in LEA colleges. Whilst the thesis is, as noted, primarily concerned with processes over outputs, a proper analysis of the White Paper's influences cannot be conducted without some investigation of curriculum change, and the role of the 1984 policy in effecting that change. The final section on evaluation develops the analysis of the policy's overall impacts, by exploring the perceptions of those most involved in its implementation about the changes which had taken place. It seeks: to identify change; to assess the relative influence of the MSC's role in bringing this about; to evaluate the level of LEA support for the *Training for Jobs*/NAFE Agreement policy several years after the planning exercise began; and to explore preferred future options, which may both reveal the level of satisfaction with the *status quo* at the time of the survey, and provide pointers to the future of NAFE administration.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by a synthesis of the main findings and offers an overview of the foregoing discussions. It summarises the arguments presented at each point, and draws together the components of the thesis into a portrait of the conception,

announcement, amendment and implementation of *Training for Jobs* in the period leading up to and including 1984-89. It considers the implications of the empirical findings for some of the theoretical points raised earlier, in particular their support for the notion of the policy-making continuum. Finally, it assess the pointers to potential future work on the subject.

1. Cmnd. 9135, 1984.

Chapter Two

NAFE in its historical context.

2.1 Introduction

Behind the situation at the time of the 1984 legislation is a complex history of developments in public sector education and training which shaped the various services then responsible for NAFE. These developments can be sensibly divided into: education sector developments which occurred under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science (DES); and developments in the field of industrial training and labour planning, dealt with by the Department of Employment. This chapter sets the thesis in context by examining these developments in the period leading up to 1984.

2.2 The further education sector in England and Wales, 1944-84

The present system of education in England and Wales, and of non-advanced further education as a particular aspect of it, can be traced in its broad origins to the 1944 Education Act[1]. A major turning point in provision, it renders the subsequent period a suitable one for the analysis of NAFE history.

The first of the following sections examines the detail of the Act. Subsequent sections consider the background trends which influenced further education after 1944, the particular historical developments which transpired in response to these trends, and the division of further education and its institutions into the NAFE and HE spheres.

2.2 (i) The legal framework of further education

The 1944 Education Act, in addition to establishing a tripartite system of grammar, technical and secondary schools, conferred for the first time upon local education authorities (LEAs) a statutory responsibility to provide 'adequate facilities' for further education. It defined further education as follows:

 (a) full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age;
 (b) leisure time occupation in such organised cultural training and recreational activities as are

suited to their requirements, for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose.[2]

There was an original intention that LEAs submit 'schemes' to the Secretary of State for Education (or where appropriate the Secretary of State for Wales) which would detail proposals on how these responsibilities were to be fulfilled. However, this requirement lapsed at an early stage, leaving much existing education provision technically *ultra vires*[3]. There existed also some confusion over the extent of LEAs' responsibilities towards providing for those over compulsory school age a place in a school or college.

In 1981 a working party of officers of the DES, Welsh Office and local authorities published a report on their attempts to seek a clearer definition of LEA responsibilities in this area. Entitled *The Legal Basis of Further Education* [4], the report concluded that the state of the law was unsatisfactory: given that LEAs had not followed the requirement for submitting schemes of further education after 1944, their present duties were in doubt. Amongst other proposals the report recommended that each LEA should have a duty to ensure that the needs for further education of the client groups in its population were adequately met. Amendments to the 1944 legislation redefining LEAs powers and duties were proposed. However, the report did not lead to new legislation, and the position remained unclear.

The consideration of the statutory framework within which the further education sector operates is important to later discussions of the possibilities for government intervention in the NAFE curriculum, and to potential strategies for effecting change. This theme is picked up in Chapter 3.

2.2 (ii) Trends in English and Welsh education, 1944-84

The changing state-local relationship

The relationship between the central and local institutions responsible for education delivery was one of the major areas of change in the sector after 1944. The principal

parties involved in this issue are the central government (embodied in England today by the DES, in Wales by the Welsh Office) and LEAs. The institutional character of these bodies is dealt with in Chapter 3, but the discussion here centres on the relationship between the two in the matter of implementing education policy. This relationship is enshrined in the idea of a 'national system, locally administered'[5], in which the DES or Welsh Office* is 'a major operational partner, rather than its sole controller'[6]. The relationship entails LEAs managing the day-to-day running of colleges and schools, whilst central departments deal mainly with matters of policy and monitoring, the latter through Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI).

The level of influence of the DES over local provision has not been constant over the post-war period. Ranson and Tomlinson[7] identify three distinct phases. The first, 1944-55, is described as a phase of strong central control in which the Ministry of Education (forerunner to DES) was clearly the dominant partner. This control involved detailed state monitoring of local activities, and the use of specific grants through which the Ministry could determine which items of LEA expenditure received national funding.

The second period identified is 1955-75, during which time the balance of power is argued to have shifted towards the LEAs, as they discovered the scope of autonomy and discretion allowed them as the detail of the 1944 Act became ignored. Notably, the replacement of the specific grant by a general grant (and later by the Rate Support Grant) allowed greater local control over expenditure.

During the third period, 1975 onwards, the DES is considered to have reasserted its strength in the state-local relationship against a backcloth of diminishing resources and demands for greater political realism and responsiveness to national priorities in college and school curricula.

The true picture is perhaps more complex than Ranson and Tomlinson suggest, as other actors are involved. At the local level this includes parents, colleges, schools and local authority Treasurers departments; at the national level, the trade unions, local

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* hereafter referred to as the DES.

authority associations, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). Crucial to the present thesis is the understanding of the public education bureaucracy as a policy network in which a range of actors operate. Changes in the balance of this sector are a fundamental issue, and should not be simplified to the relationship between LEAs and the DES. These points are raised more fully in Chapter 3.

In the meantime, a classification into the periods above can, with the caveats outlined, be useful in charting the broad post-war changes in central influence over administrative control in education.

One more recent significant development to add to these is the reintroduction by DES, in the Education (Grants and Awards) Act of 1984, of specific funding to certain identified areas of the curriculum in the form of Education Support Grants (ESGs). Though the size of these as a proportion of total DES expenditure was small (rising from around 0.5 per cent at the time of their introduction to around 1.0 per cent in 1986[8]), they were nonetheless symptomatic of the direction of change current at the period of study.

Demographic change and diminishing resources

Two major forces operating upon educational change are related to the resources available to the education service: demographic change; and spending cuts caused by government policy and world economic recession. In 1984 the number of students in all age-groups was declining following the baby-boom of the 1960s, the peak in each age group coming at a different time.

The effect of this decline in numbers was a reduction in funding at all levels, the calculation of which was dependent upon student numbers. Added to this was a quite independent contraction in the funding given to education as a matter of policy, in marked contrast to the financial expansion experienced in the sector throughout the post-war period until *circa* 1976.

The advent of the world recession in the mid-1970s, in particular the effects in Britain

of oil price increases in 1973 and the IMF loan crisis in 1976, led to a reduction of government spending in education as well as many other areas. This contraction was exacerbated after 1979 by the monetarist policies of the incumbent Conservative government, and the financial regime under which the education service now operated was more austere than it had been during much of the post-war period.

The growth of unemployment

The single element of post-war change which has been perhaps most significant to the field of non-advanced further education is the rise of unemployment after the mid-1960s, and particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Whilst the overall jobless total increased dramatically, from around 500,000 in 1973 to well over 3 million by 1984, unemployment amongst young people rose at four times the rate for the population as a whole [9]. These figures are illustrated in Figure 2.1, which shows the overall unemployment rate between 1974 and 1984, and Figure 2.2, which indicates fluctuations in youth unemployment (school leavers) between 1976 and 1983.

Worries about the possible implications of mass youth unemployment, in social and educational as well as employment terms, had by 1984 raised the issue of state provision for the 16-19 age group (the major NAFE client group) very firmly to the forefront of contemporary political and educational debate.

Changing attitudes - the rise of vocationalism

The broad underlying changes mentioned so far were variously the cause and consequence of changing attitudes towards education since the 1944 Act. These shifts can be summarised as: a transition from optimism about the possibilities for educationally-inspired change to disillusionment over these, leading to a political schism from a broad consensus to ideological diversity; and the rise of what may be termed vocational realism at the expense of academic idealism.

It is the latter that concerns us most here. Having once been considered an educational backwater, further education came to the forefront in an educational debate

Figure 2.1: Unemployment in the United Kingdom, 1971-84
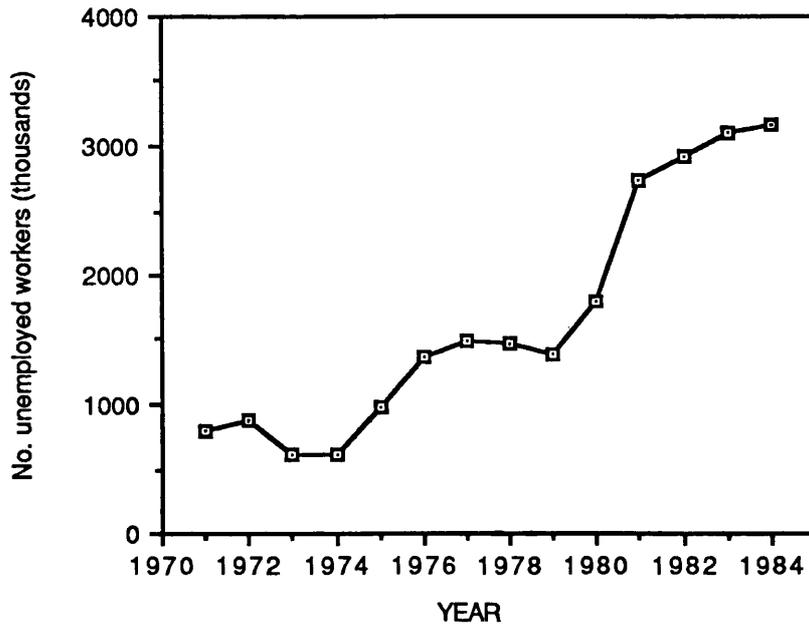
Source: Social Trends,1971-85

Figure 2.2: Unemployed school leavers, 1976-83

United Kingdom   Thousands

[Line chart showing unemployed school leavers in the United Kingdom from 1976 to 1983, with values in thousands on the vertical axis ranging from 0 to 300. The data shows seasonal peaks, the highest reaching about 250 thousand around 1980.]

1976   1977   1978   1979   1980   1981   1982 1983
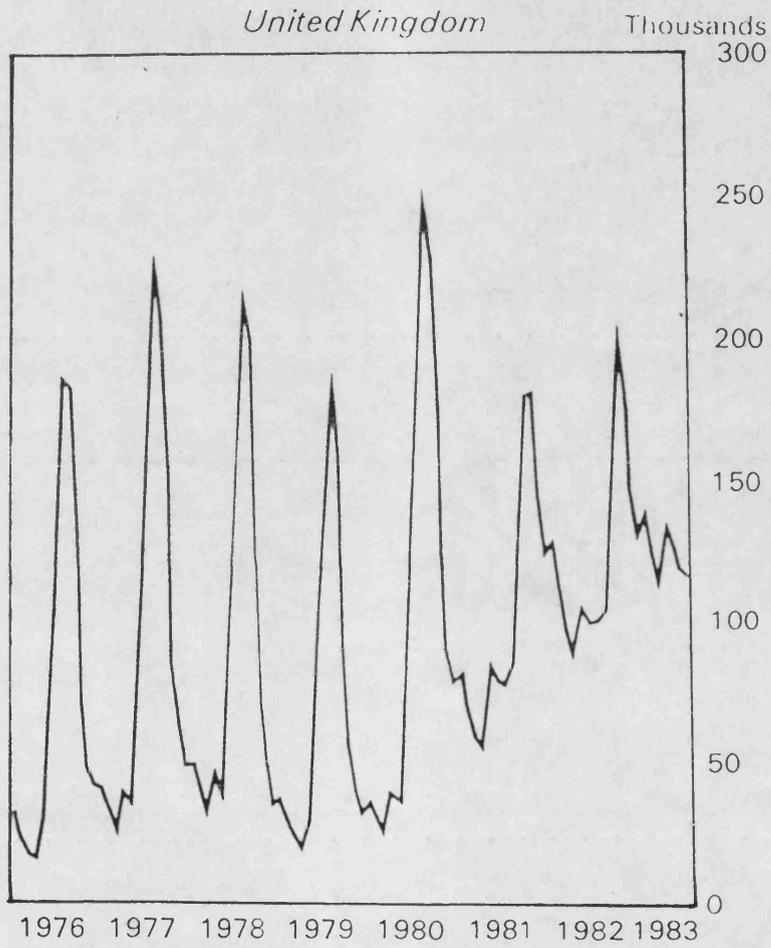
¹ New basis (claimants) School leavers aged under 18

Source. Department of Employment

Source: Social trends, 1984.

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over a vocational approach which emerged in the mid-1970s. Largely this was prompted by growing unemployment, which forced policy-makers to address the problems of those school leavers whom the academic system was failing, and whose plight was becoming less easy to ignore. Many observers felt that the school curriculum emphasised academic at the expense of technical and vocational skills, aimed as they felt it was at the narrow group destined for higher education[10,11,12]. These views were echoed by the then Prime Minister James Callaghan in a keynote speech at Ruskin College in 1976, which prompted a Green Paper on the subject in 1977 - *Education in Schools: a consultative document* - and the beginning of what he coined the 'Great Debate'. Callaghan pointed to the inadequacy of the education service's input to vocational training, accusing it of

> failing to equip pupils with the necessary basic skills and attitudes to enter work

and that schools and colleges had

> begun to fail in their responsibility to the nation's economy[13].

He called for this Great Debate to address these problems and formulate policy responses which could provide solutions.

Whilst much of the discussion centred on schools, this debate was equally relevant to the further education curriculum. The view that

> parental 'interests' were to be represented by the state's rational organisation of the school-to-work transition, and the matching of appropriate skills and aptitudes to the needs of the labour market [14],

a view which

> formally set the seal on the school-work bond as the rationale for schooling

very much involves and affects further education, always a crucial staging post between compulsory schooling and the workplace.

It is arguable whether the Great Debate initiated or merely typified the shift towards vocationalism. Some have claimed that it 'at best accentuated an already well-established

trend'[15], and that these attitudes had existed before 1976 without having any significant influence over educational change. Whether one sees Callaghan's move as decisive, or agrees with Gleeson[16] that it was simply the collapse of work which 'completely undermined our traditions of schooling', a fundamental alteration in approach is evident after 1976. In the 1977 Green Paper and subsequent government material, references to the egalitarian ambitions for schooling were no longer present; the political significance in these new attitudes being evident in the support received from Rhodes-Boyson and other right-wing 'realists'[17].

With changing government attitudes to the role of education, which intensified after the election of a Conservative administration in 1979, new programmes, initiatives and agencies reflected a rapidly developing relationship between the education world and government institutions outside the traditional education sphere. These are picked up in section 2.3 which details the rise of the MSC.

Before that, the following section considers more detailed developments which took place within the further education sector since the 1944 Act.

2.2 (iii)   Specific developments in post-war further education

The number of students attending further education courses rose rapidly since the mid-1940s,from 1.6 million in 1946 to 3.5 million in 1980[18]. This dramatic rise in numbers was matched by an increasing diversity and complexity in college courses. The plethora of vocational education and work-related training provided for the school-leaver and young adult population in the late 1970s and early to mid-1980s has been described variously as a 'rich and varied tapestry'[19], a 'confusion'[20], 'a jungle'[21], and a 'non-system'[22]. Dent[23] suggests a reason for this in the 'almost limitless possibilities' inherent in the wording of the 1944 Education Act which governs the extent of LEA autonomy over the nature of local provision*.

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*   see section 2.2(i)

In order to analyse this diverse array of courses and programmes, it is helpful to examine specific developments in FE 1944. The first of two sections on this which follow deals with the period 1944-76, the second covering the period 1976-89.

Developments in further education, 1944-76

The response made by LEAs to the requirements of the 1944 Education Act is analysed by Cantor and Roberts[24] by means of a division into three time periods, which subdivide the 1944-76 phase.

The first of these, 1944-56, saw the establishment of County Colleges in 'technical education' was provided for the 15-18 age group (15 being the school-leaving age after 1947). By 1956 three main types of college had developed: Regional, Area and Local Colleges, the first of these offering the most advanced courses. A fourth type, Evening Institutions, dealt mainly with adult recreational activities. However, there developed no rigid division between colleges into advanced/non-advanced or specifically 'work-related' provision, a matter of significance in considering the 1984 legislation.

Much of the provision was delivered in the form of day- or block-release, which the 1944 Act sought to promote strongly in order to avoid a repetition of the weak response made to a similar measure in the earlier 1918 Education Act. Dent[25] notes a dramatic increase in the number of young workers released for part-time education or training, from 41,500 in 1939 to 600,000 in 1966[26]. Clearly, the new Act was having a greater impact than the old, and the further education sector was becoming firmly established as a major area of LEA provision. Although still, it must be stressed, well behind schools provision in terms of LEA priorities.

The second of the three phases under discussion is 1956-63. In this period ten of the Regional Colleges became Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs). The Education Minister of the time 'sequestered these from the LEA province'[27], making them direct grant institutions in 1962, which was the first step in their later elevation to university status.

A distinction needs to be drawn here in the age-group of the students attending these colleges. Whilst local technical colleges aimed heavily at providing for the 16-19 cohort, along with mature students and those seeking recreational courses, CATs were aimed primarily at post-18 provision, frequently at the advanced level, and operated in much wider catchment areas. These differences were never clear-cut, reflecting the blurred boundaries of a further education system which developed more through a form of organic growth than any kind of planned strategy coordinated at national level. It is significant that the period under discussion here coincides with that referred to in section 2.2(ii) in which LEAs supposedly enjoyed the greater power over education provision compared with central government, i.e. 1955-75. The college curriculum, its shape and mix of educational levels, was being determined locally, and government intervention took the form of building on what the LEAs had created. This is of considerable importance in analysing the approach taken to central intervention in NAFE in the 1984 White Paper, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Following the publication of the Robbins Report on higher education[28] in 1963, the CATs and remaining Regional Colleges were recognised as being primarily providers of higher education and were transformed into universities and polytechnics. Meanwhile, the Industrial Training Act of 1964 was passed. Its implications for the training sector are considered in section 2.3(i), but here it is important to consider its impacts upon NAFE. Described in 1972 as 'one of the most far-reaching measures dealing with this sector ... during the last twenty-five years'[29], it transferred a large share of training responsibility from industry to the state (the state, in this context, being represented by the public sector further education service). The intention was to greatly increase the amount of part-time training in day- and block-release courses, and to 'improve the working liaison between colleges and industry'[30].

Despite these high hopes, however, the number of 15-18 year olds receiving day-/ block-release training increased only marginally in the period 1964-70, from 19 per cent to 24 per cent[31]. Given this, the intended 'close liaison' between the education service and industry appeared not to have yet materialised.

Nonetheless, expectations for the future were optimistic. In 1972, the White Paper

Education: a Framework for Expansion confidently recommended an expansion in the further education sector of over 100,000 places, raising the total number in public sector colleges to around 375,000 by 1981. This confidence was not to be matched by events during the 1970s.

Further education, 1976-84

The three periods used in the previous section were initially suggested by authors writing in 1972. After that time much changed, a radical transformation being worked on further education in the period 1976-84 by the factors outlined in section 2.2(ii). The repercussions of the Great Debate led fairly promptly to the implementation of post-16 policies by the MSC*. Measures such as the Youth Opportunities Programme and later the Youth Training Scheme began to change the face of further education, introducing to it many new students with which it had not previously dealt. It has been contended that the main beneficiaries of further education in the late-1960s and early 1970s were more able middle-class students using it as a second chance (or second choice) route into employment or higher education, the less able and 'unemployable' youngsters being largely neglected[32]. This left a gap in provision which, as will be seen, the MSC marched into decisively, and it was arguably only in response to this move that the education service woke up to its wider responsibilities.

It would be unfair to suggest that the education institutions had not been active in this area, however. For example, the Certificate of Extended Education (CEE) was a DES initiative already in place in 1976. Analogous to a Certificate of Secondary Education for candidates of greater maturity, this programme was initiated in pilot form in 1972. Whilst it made provision for post-16 candidates of lesser ability, as a single subject course it was not considered to be very compatible with further education progress and tended to be on offer more commonly in sixth forms than colleges. Nonetheless, the DES was making provision for more 'vocational' type courses in response to the Great Debate before the MSC stepped in ahead of it with proposals for the Youth Opportunities Programme.

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* see section 2.3.

Whilst some moves had occurred before the MSC initiatives, therefore, the latter prompted a much greater education service response, bringing forth a whole crop of new courses and qualifications in the NAFE field. Examples were those courses examined by the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) and the Business and Technical Education Council (B/TEC). Amongst these were CGLI's Foundation Course, its 365 course and its Certificate in Vocational Preparation (General), which started in 1981-2, and B/TEC's General Course.

Furthermore, attempts had been made within the education service to unify courses into a single qualification in order to simplify a rather complex pattern of provision. The Keohane Committee recommended in their Report (1979) that CEE should be introduced universally, but the Further Education Unit (FEU), an advisory body to the DES set up in 1977, produced an alternative proposal in its report *A basis for choice* [33]. The latter recommendations were favoured by DES and eventually incorporated into its booklet, *17+, A new qualification* [34]. This proposed a new Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), which has been described as a compromise plan centred around *A basis for choice* [35].

These developments were not to bear fruit until after 1984. In the meantime the initiative for change in further education was seen to be very much in the hands of the MSC. Its activities are considered further in section 2.3 below. This section is concluded by a discussion of three further areas crucial to the thesis' remit: the division of FE into NAFE and AFE; the structure of LEA colleges; and the identification within that structure of 'the NAFE college'.

2.2(iv) NAFE in further education

Definition of NAFE

The term non-advanced further education (NAFE) was first coined in the early sixties in order to distinguish this type of provision from both compulsory schooling and advanced further education (AFE), otherwise known as higher education (HE). More specifically,

NAFE can be defined as courses provided for students above compulsory schooling age up to GCE 'A' level and its vocational equivalents.

The LEA college network

The sections above have dealt with various aspects of the development of LEA institutions providing further education. It is important at this stage to present a portrait of the college network which the 1984 legislation addressed. The post-war evolution in college types had by 1984 progressed to the stage where four broad types of institution were operated under local authority control. These are listed below, along with the number present in each category (1980 figures[36]):

    i) *Polytechnics* - dealing almost exclusively with higher education (HE) - 30 institutions;

    ii) *Colleges and institutes of higher education* - mainly providers of HE - approx. 70 institutions;

    iii) *Colleges of further education* - mainly providers of NAFE - approx. 500 institutions;

    iv) *Evening institutes* - providers of adult leisure and recreational courses - approx 5,300 institutions.

This is a simplified list, a range of other terms existed, including 'colleges of further and higher education' and 'tertiary colleges' (combining sixth-form with NAFE work) among others. This suggests that the range of further education colleges represented something closer to a continuum than a division into strict groups. There being no clear rules governing nomenclature or scope below the polytechnic level, the 'organic' evolutionary development referred to earlier had created the slightly baffling array of college types in existence. As has been noted elsewhere in the context of HE providers,

> individual colleges and institutes vary both according to the proportion of advanced work which they provide and also the types of courses which they offer, depending partly on the nature of the institutions which went to make them up and partly on the way in which they have developed over the past few years. [37]

To reverse this notion, NAFE colleges would be defined negatively as being those institutions which did not offer a significant amount of HE courses, although NAFE itself

was taught across a whole range of college types. It is clear from this analysis that no simple portrait of 'the typical NAFE college' can be drawn. However, the bulk of NAFE was taught in colleges which fell into the third category above, colleges of further education. It is this type of institution that the discussion of colleges in this thesis will mainly refer, although the diversity and complexity of college types must always be borne in mind.

Having considered much historical and contextual detail concerning developments in the education sector in the post-war years up to 1984, it is necessary now to turn to the parallel (and related) evolution of the training sector over the same period.

2.3   The post-war industrial training sector in England and Wales

The implications of government-inspired intervention by the MSC in NAFE in 1984 can be properly understood only in the context of the values which the Commission was introducing from the industrial training sector. In order to furnish such an understanding, the following sections detail the relevant historical elements lying behind the *status quo* in 1984, whilst the meaning of these developments is examined more theoretically in Chapter 3.

To understand the more recent developments in the rise of the MSC, it is pertinent to examine the post-war history behind these. This is approached here by recourse to sections dealing with: (i) the period up to 1964, the provisions of the Industrial Training Act of that year and its continuing effects up to the creation of the MSC in 1973; and (ii) the period of MSC growth in the decade leading up to the White Paper *Training for Jobs* in 1984.

Important themes developed here which instruct the thesis' subject include: temporal shifts in responsibilities over training provision between public institutions and private industry - how this developed over time, shaping attitudes over who should influence curriculum design in NAFE; the basis of funding for public sector training; background to the establishment of an interventionary national training body, identifying the MSC's

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antecedents.

2.3 (i) Industrial training before 1974

Prior to the second world war, industrial training was delivered almost entirely by employers, agreement with the trade unions, and mainly in the form of apprenticeships. Associated with these were long indentures, through which trainees on low wages were tied to companies for periods sometimes lasting many years. The overall amount of training in England and Wales was not high, and varied between industries and from firm to firm, more training being undertaken in the heavy industries than, for example, the distributive trades[38]. This situation continued after the war and up to the early sixties, at which time only 20 per cent of male school leavers, and only 5 per cent of females, undertook any form of skills training at all[39].

Concern grew in the early post-war period about training, as even for those in receipt of it, the quality and length of time devoted to it were

for the most part unsatisfactory, being mainly related to obsolete ... skills[40].

Worries about the use of trainees as cheap labour, and union opposition to the training of large numbers of young people who might flood the labour market and depress wages, hindered the improvement of training provision. At the same time, improvements in trainees' rights in the form of better wages and shorter indenture commitments were eroding employers' incentives to train. Increasing awareness of the serious problems facing the national training system led to a report being produced by the Carr Committee, entitled *Training for Skill: Recruitment and Training of Young Workers in Industry* , in 1958. This advocated revised apprenticeship requirements and improved links between education and industry, and criticised the restrictive nature of apprenticeship schemes. The Report led to the creation of the Industrial Training Council (ITC). This body, which represented employers, trade unions, the nationalised industries, government and the further education sector, can be considered an ancestor of the MSC, being the first attempt to centralise responsibility for training in a single national authority. Intended to raise

training standards, it achieved little more than an increase in the number of Government Training Centres (these had been set up as a wartime measure in 1917).

However, the serious concerns being expressed about national training provision led to further action under Harold Macmillan's Conservative administration. In 1962 a White Paper, *Industrial Training: Government Proposals* , pointed out the inadequacy of a system in which all firms benefitted from training, but in which the responsibility for funding fell on only some of those firms. This was followed up in 1964 by the Industrial Training Act , which first introduced the notion of collective provision for industrial training arrangements. The aims of the Act were to improve the amount and quality of training, and to share its costs more evenly. Its principal measure was the establishment of over twenty Industrial Training Boards (ITBs), each responsible for a particular sector, overseen by a Central Training Council (CTC), which took on the role of the ITC and comprised a similar combination of representatives. The precise number of ITBs varied over time: in 1969 there were 26, a figure which fluctuated to 23 by 1981. Each ITB was empowered to generate income by means of a levy charged as a percentage of the payroll of each firm in its sector. Grants would be paid to firms who offered training, thereby intending to promote training by financial incentive rather than by government exhortation.

Criticisms of the Act from employers were loud and, apparently, powerful, as in 1971 a Green Paper was published by the Heath Administration entitled *Training for the Future* , which conceded most of the protestors' case. Despite this, the subsequent Employment and Training Act of 1973 largely perpetuated the existing system.

Most significant to the present work was the 1973 Acts new proposals. These were for the establishment of three new bodies: the Employment Services Agency (ESA); the Training Services Agency (TSA); and the Manpower Services Commission. These developments are dealt with in the next section.

The 1964 provisions and their amendments largely met their demise after the election of the first Thatcher Administration in 1979. In 1981 a new Employment and Training Act made provision for the abolition of the ITBs. Later the same year sixteen of them were

pushed into the voluntary sector by the withdrawal of government support.

2.3 (ii)   The rise of the MSC: 1974-84

The Manpower Services Commission, having been established by the Employment and Training Act of 1973, began its life on 1 January 1974. Accountable to the Department of Employment, it was intended to oversee the operations of the ESA and TSA. It has been described as a 'constitutional innovation'[41], through its having been given executive responsibilities rather than being purely advisory. Herein lies a crucial distinction with its predecessors, the ITC and CTC.

The new body was firmly rooted in the corporatist tradition of the post-war consensus politics still current at the time. It has been described as the 'brainchild' of the TUC[42], who pressed for a body whose responsibilities would extend beyond training into employment services, job creation and national manpower planning. When the Trade Union Congress (TUC) had persuaded the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) 'at the last minute' that together they could run such a body, the Prime Minister agreed to the proposal.

The structure of the resultant MSC comprised a ten-strong Commission supported by an executive arm, the Office of the Manpower Services Commission (OMSC). The Commission comprised a membership representative of the CBI (three Commissioners), the TUC (three Commissioners), with Commissioners from the education service and local authorities and the Chairman making up the total. The notion behind this was that it would create partnership and co-operation between the various bodies operating in the field of employment.

The OMSC originally employed only 40 staff, given that its duties were no more than to service the Commission and oversee the operations of the ESA and TSA. These much larger bodies employed 13,000 and 3,000 staff respectively, and largely accounted for the £125 million annual budget.

The first Chairman of the Commission, 1974-76, was Dennis Barnes, and in this period the first signs of renewed high unemployment created a demand for special employment measures in which the MSC became increasingly involved. In the mid-1970s its activities were aimed at restoring full employment[43]. The Job Creation Programme involved various individual schemes and was launched in October 1975, followed by such other schemes as the Work Experience Programme (1976) and the Special Temporary Employment Programme. Activities involved amongst other things community projects funded to provide work for the long-term unemployed, a later example being the Community Programme.

As the 1970s wore on, however, it became increasingly apparent that the employment situation was going to get worse before getting any better: new policies were needed to address the rising problems of unemployment in general, and of rapidly increasing youth unemployment in particular. In 1976 Barnes was replaced as MSC chair by Richard O'Brien. This proved a crucial year in the development of the MSC. After Callaghan's Ruskin speech had put vocationalism firmly on the public agenda*, the MSC published two significant papers, *Training for Vital Skills* [44] and *Training for Skills: a Programme for Action* [45]. The same year saw proposals from the DES under the then Secretary of State Shirley Williams that it should organise a major programme of youth training and work experience to combat the rising problems . This prompted the drafting of another MSC report *Young People and Work* , which was published in the Spring of 1977[46]. This came to be known as the Holland Report, after its author, and advocated a similar scheme to that being proposed by the DES but to be run under the aegis of the Commission. The MSC version was favoured by the Callaghan government, and the Commission went on to develop the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), which began on 1 April, 1978. It aimed to provide a range of courses for around 250,000 youngsters in the 16-18 age-group, and the programme involved a three-month off-the-job training component. Whilst much of this was conducted elsewhere, a significant proportion was provided in LEA colleges, and this can be identified as the point at which the MSC first became significantly more closely involved in funding NAFE. Similar training in public sector NAFE colleges was offered to adults under the MSC's Training

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* see section 2.2(ii).

Opportunities Programme (TOPS), which had been in place prior to the Commission's inception, and for which it took over responsibility in 1974.

In terms of the Commission's internal shape, the period 1974-8 had seen much restructuring. Its size and budget had grown with its increasing importance. The special employment measures, originally organised by the OMSC, were handled by a new Special Programmes Division (SPD) when they grew in scale. In 1978 the ESA and TSA became subsumed into the organisation as the Employment Division (ED) and the Training Division (TD), consolidating the MSC as an increasingly significant and powerful national body. Its headquarters moved from London to a new large base (with room for expansion) at Moorfoot in Sheffield. Numerous departmental restructurings took place in the following years. The issue of the MSC's internal structure is taken up in Chapter Six, where those parts of it which have become involved in NAFE are more closely examined.

The MSC budget grew dramatically through the seventies, as indicated in Figure 2.3. This indicates that the actual rise had considerably exceeded the Commission's own (1974) projection of future expenditure by 1979, and the annual budget rose even more rapidly thereafter. MSC-funded provision was expanded at 'an unprecedented pace'[47]. There developed a wide network of training workshops, community service programmes and Information Technology Centres (ITeCs).

The election of the first Thatcher government in 1979 caused a shake up in public policy from whose ramifications the MSC did not escape. A major programme of cuts in public expenditure included a proposed decrease in the Commission's budget in the period 1979-84 of £94 million, an 18.5 per cent cut[48]. The members of the new administration seriously considered abolishing the Commission,

> the creation of a Conservative Prime Minister their leader had ceased to admire and the expression of a consensus they despised[49].

However, the MSC moved fast to outflank these changes. After establishing a

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Figure 2.3 : MSC annual budget, 1974-84.
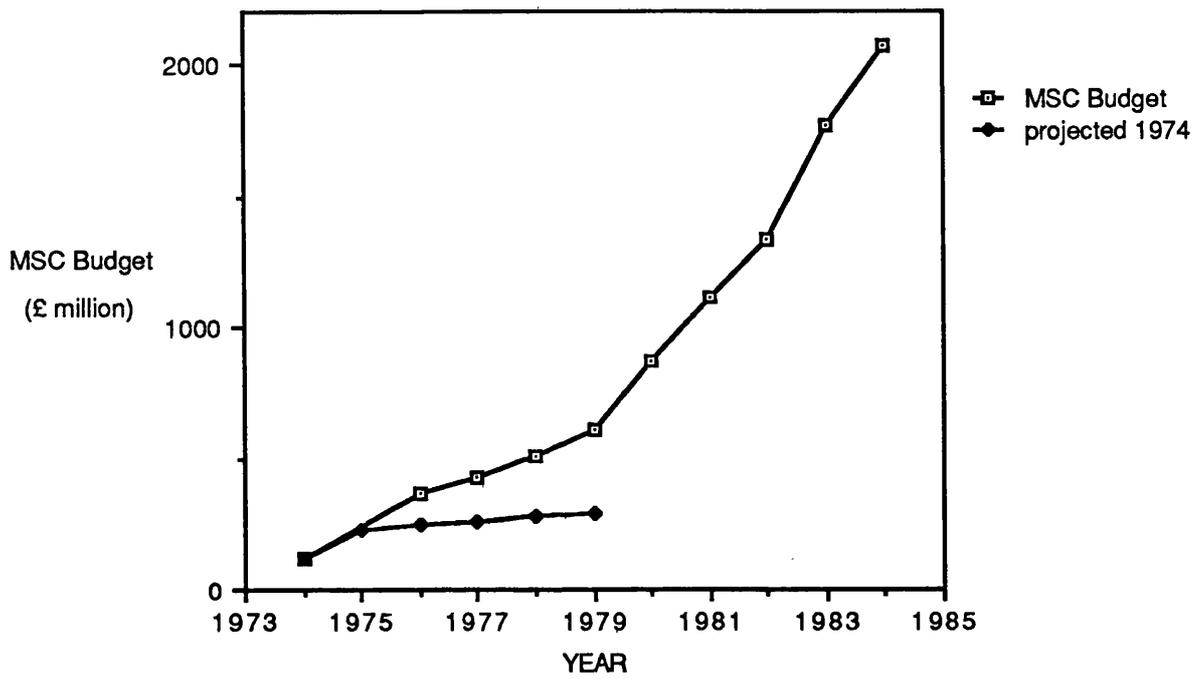
Source: MSC Annual Reports, 1974-85.

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Review of the Employment and Training Act, the Commission expressed opposition to the proposed cuts, claiming instead for itself a more prominent role in managing employment and training measures. This view it backed up in May1981 with a major document emanating from the above Review, entitled *A New Training Initiative*[50]. A paper set to become a key element in eighties' training policy, it comprised three major proposals:

(i)   to develop skill training to enable young people entering at different ages with different qualifications to acquire agreed standards of skill appropriate to jobs available and to provide them with a basis for progression through further learning;

(ii)   to move towards a position where all those under eighteen years of age have the opportunity of full-time education or a period of work-experience with skill training;

(iii)   to open up opportunities for adults to acquire, increase or update skills during the course of their working lives.

The requirements for the achievement of these proposals were identified as: a statutory machinery to provide for employer and union involvement; co-operation with the education services; and adequate funding, from both government and employers.

The MSC paper was issued under the Chairmanship of Richard O'Brien. Shortly afterwards he was replaced by David Young, 'a shrewd and ruthless Thatcherite strategist'[51]. In December of the same year, in a turnaround in its attitude to the funding of the MSC, the government took on board the above proposals, and issued a White Paper entitled *A New Training Initiative: A Programme for Action* .

The principal NAFE-related measure announced in the White Paper was the introduction of a new Youth Training Scheme (YTS), designed to replace the Youth Opportunities Programme. After an early period of success, this had become subjected to a widespread criticism as a palliative measure which exploited young people for cheap labour whilst offering them little in the way of genuine training. The new scheme sought to head off such problems by guaranteeing a minimum period of thirteen weeks off-the-job training in the year-long programme, which was to be provided either in further education colleges or in private training establishments. Negotiations between the CBI

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and LEAs led to college fees being discounted by a third for YTS trainees.

The scheme was divided into three Modes, A, B1 and B2. The last of these, accounting for around five per cent of the whole YTS cohort, involved schemes run mainly by LEAs or individual colleges. It offered places to those who had not been able to secure a place on an employer-based scheme, and contained a high proportion of disadvantaged groups amongst its clientele. This boosted the take-up of college-provision already connected with Mode A.

The measures announced in *A New Training Initiative* also led to a changed form of provision for those over 18, the Adult Training Strategy (ATS). The ATS was not devised as a single scheme but a set of proposals, aimed at all parties involved in adult training, to boost its flexibility and adaptability.

The above programmes accounted for the MSC's financial involvement in NAFE by the turn of 1984. It was estimated by the government in this year that the Commission was spending 'about £90 million as a customer, direct or indirect, on NAFE courses or services'. This compares with £875 million total expenditure on YTS and the £250 million of MSC money being spent overall on adult training programmes[52].

One other significant MSC programme affecting the NAFE sector was announced prior to 1984. On 12 November, 1982, the Prime Minister announced quite unexpectedly the introduction of a new programme for 14-18 year-olds, to be called the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). The announcement had been preceded by none of the more usual consultation procedures seeking the consent associated with education initiatives hitherto. To commence in pilot form in September 1983, TVEI was to be run by the MSC in conjunction with LEAs, who were invited to tender for pilot funding. As well as marking the first involvement of the MSC in compulsory schooling, this was to be a further avenue of its influence over further education once the first cohort of TVEI students reached the post-16 stage.

By 1984 it had become quite apparent that the MSC had advanced its importance and influence far beyond its modest origins as the overseer of the ESA and TSA, extending its

role widely in the sphere of industrial training and, increasingly, of education. The original brief of the Commission was 'to help people train for jobs ... and to help employers find suitable workers'[53], and to plan policy for the ESA and TSA. Having stepped well beyond this, it had come to impinge upon policy areas previously handled solely by the DES and LEAs. The implications of this development, and the factors which have driven it, are considered more fully in the next chapter.

Before turning to such closer analysis, it is first necessary to outline the more recent changes which have occurred in the fields of further education and training between 1984 and the present, which go beyond the remit of the empirical analysis to be presented here. These serve to complete the historical picture, and indicate how the work here connects with contemporary developments.

2.4   Recent changes in the NAFE sphere

Education

The long-running plans to introduce a new vocationally-relevant qualification into further education referred to in section 2.2(iii) finally bore fruit in 1984. At this time the CPVE was introduced in pilot form. This course, intended to unify the complicated array of vocational qualifications on offer, was overseen by both CGLI and B/TEC. Introduced fully in September 1986, it was described as a case of 'the DES strikes back'[54] in the face of the MSC incursion into the post-16 sector, although its capacity for bringing about change was called into question.

A more significant development on the qualification front has been the establishment of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), overseen by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). This body was established by the 1986 White Paper *Working Together - Education and Training*. It was intended to co-ordinate all educational and training qualifications below degree level, linking them to a system of four grade bands, NVQ I-IV. The purpose was to reduce confusion and boost the recognition by employers of vocational qualifications, and also to benefit trainees and students by 45

providing greater flexibility, accessibility, and comprehensibility. By integrating certification and accreditation of previously unconnected areas, it aimed to improve progression through knowledge and skill areas. The NCVQ was not given responsibilities for examination or validation, but was rather intended to coordinate the work of bodies already established in those fields.

The same White Paper announced a national extension of TVEI, which hitherto had existed only in pilot form. This was to be carried out over a ten year period commencing in the autumn of 1987. Despite earlier assurances that the running of the programme would be handed over to the education sector, the White Paper indicated that the extension would be administered by the MSC 'working closely with DES and HMI'. This provides further evidence of the MSC's ascendancy at this time, of a greater government trust invested in the Commission than in the education service.

In October of the same year the new Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, announced the establishment of twenty City Technology Colleges, a new idea intended to boost vocational education. To be based in central city areas, and aimed at the 11-18 age group, these were to be funded directly by central government and run by educational trusts. Whilst offering a full programme of secondary education, the curricula of these schools were to place greatest emphasis on technology, science, business studies and design[55]. These proposals received a critical response in some quarters, being seen as a divisive and discriminatory development which would provide expensive facilities for a select few whilst denying opportunities to the majority. At the time of writing only a limited number of these colleges had yet become established.

Another major development to substantially affect the further education sector was the removal from LEA control (initially only in England) of higher education institutions, a measure announced in the 1987 White Paper *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge* [56]. This involved 29 polytechnics and 28 of the larger colleges whose courses were wholly or largely at advanced level (as noted earlier, no clear cut division between AFE and NAFE colleges exists). A new body, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) was set up to oversee the planning and funding of these institutions. The main effect of this on the NAFE sector was a reduction in LEA responsibility for colleges

nationwide. The AFE courses which remained in the LEA sector were also to be overseen by the PCFC, and conversely LEAs were to contract with PCFC colleges for the provision of such NAFE courses they still required.

The most significant recent educational development affecting the field of NAFE planning and administration, and a development pertinent to this work, is the Education Reform Act of 1988. A wide-ranging document the legislation dealt with issues as diverse as the new National Curriculum for schools and the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority. In the NAFE sphere, there were two major developments, one involving college governance, the other dealing with the planning and resourcing of NAFE provision.

The new bill announced changes in the constitution of college governing bodies affecting their size and composition. A governing body of 20-25 members was considered 'sufficient to allow an appropriate balance of the main interests to be represented'[57]. At least half of these were to represent business and employment sector interests (including a small trade union component), whereas no more than a fifth were to be representatives of the LEA.

In terms of planning and resourcing NAFE, two linked measures were introduced by the bill. On one hand LEAs were required to delegate responsibility for college budgets to the newly constituted governing bodies, reflecting the government view that all educational institutions should be given as much freedom as possible to manage their own affairs. At the same time it recognised 'the importance of proper planning and coordination of further education provision both between colleges and in relation to neighbouring schools'[58]. In consequence of this recognition, responsibility for strategy and planning was to remain in the LEA's hands.

The bill required that each LEA should submit to the Secretary of State for Education a scheme for delegating 'extensive financial powers and responsibilities' to its colleges within a continuing framework of strategic planning by the LEA[59]. The Secretary of State would be empowered to approve, amend or reject such schemes, and impose one should an LEA fail to respond. This echoed the 1944 provision for LEAs to submit FE schemes,

only in the modern case there was less scope for them to avoid the requirement.

In recognising a strategic planning role the Bill largely solidified into statutory form the process which had been developing under the NAFE Agreement since 1985. Some commentators expressed concern about LEAs' ability to continue to plan effectively when they no longer had control over college budgets[60]. A statement made by some senior DES officers recognises that the Act set up a tension between the college and its LEA, but that the government believed this to be a 'creative tension'[61]. How successfully or otherwise these tensions are resolved is a matter yet to be determined. Of more certain advantage is the establishment of a clear legal framework for FE, something which the sector had previously lacked.

Clearly, the experience LEAs and colleges gained from the operation of the NAFE Agreement* has influenced government thinking to a substantial extent. The point has evidently been reached where the strategic coordination of NAFE is widely recognised as a desirable, workable and effective procedure for achieving educational goals.

Changes in the training sector

One of the national institutions most central to the discussion in this thesis is the Manpower Services Commission. It is highly significant to this discussion, therefore, to note that a series of major changes have taken place which have completely altered the shape of the body which   was in 1984 being asked 'to extend its range of operation so as to be able to discharge the function of a national training authority'.

The first major alteration in the Commission's structure came in the summer of 1988, when the Secretary of State for Employment, Norman Fowler, announced that the employment services division was to be subsumed into the Department of Employment (DE) bureaucracy, in accordance with the most recent Conservative election manifesto. The remainder of the former body was renamed the Training Commission in recognition of its new, slimmed-down role. This name proved to be short lived, surviving only

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*   see Chapter 4

through a summer which witnessed extensive and sometimes bitter arguments about the newly proposed Employment Training Scheme for adults. This scheme replaced the Job Training Scheme, which had in turn been a fairly unsuccessful replacement for the TOPS programme in 1985. The main opposition was from the TUC, whose reservations stemmed from the proposed form of trainee allowance on the scheme, which was to be linked to unemployment benefits.

The TUC's role in the Commission had been previously criticised as legitimising government measures without significantly influencing policy[62]. Now, when according to some it had become sufficiently weak to be dispensable in the eyes of the government, it took a stand on Employment Training at its annual Congress in September 1988, refusing to co-operate in the running of the scheme. Fowler promptly announced the abolition of the Commission, and its replacement by the Training Agency. This was effectively the same institution, minus the Commission, to be overseen directly by the DE. Thus fell one of the last bastions of tripartist corporatism, about which it was commented at the time:

> What is remarkable is not that a Tory Employment Secretary has killed it off, but that it should have survived for so long. For a decade it rode the resentment of many and the enmity of a very powerful few.[63]

The abolition of the Commission was formally announced in the White Paper *Employment and Training in the 1990s* , published in December 1988, in which another reason contributing to the Secretary of State's decision was revealed. This was the announcement of a new system of training delivery based on local bodies representative of employer and other interests. To be called Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), these are set to take over responsibility for most of the programmes formerly run by the MSC and more latterly the Training Agency, as well as coordinating local training activities. The Training Agency is set to continue, its local branches likely to serve the executive functions of the new TECs, whilst its regional and national operations will continue to coordinate training policy at a wider scale. Significantly for NAFE, those areas of the Training Agency's activities which deal with education, largely NAFE planning and TVEI, are not to be handed over to the TECs. In consequence this Training

Agency responsibility is to be conducted at Regional Office level.

A further very significant change is the discontinuation of the annual contract between the Training Agency and LEAs, the lynch-pin of the NAFE Agreement. Now that LEA obligations to conduct strategic NAFE planning are determined by the schemes of delegation submitted to the DES, such a change can be characterised as a reversal of the earlier 1980s trend which saw educational influence slipping away from the education policy sector and increasingly into the MSC orbit. Some of the worst fears of those commentators who lamented this development would thus appear to have been averted.

The upshot of all these developments, the restructuring of the MSC and of the provisions of ERA, leave the planning and administration of NAFE in a position very different to that experienced between 1984 and 1989. The experiences of that period have had a clear impact upon the future direction of the sector, and are likely to influence NAFE policy-making for some time to come. The findings of this thesis, in illuminating various aspects of this experience, substantially contribute to the foundations upon which such future policy-making can be based.

This chapter has detailed the historical developments in both education and training which have impinged upon the area of NAFE provision addressed in this thesis. Having provided this context, the next chapter turns to a more explanatory analysis, which seeks to uncover the mechanisms which underlay these events.

Notes to Chapter Two:

1. *1944 Education Act*

2. Quoted in Dent, 1968.

3. Cantor and Roberts, 1986.

4. DES, 1981.

5. DES, 1982.

6. Cantor and Roberts, 1986.

7. Ranson and Tomlinson, 1986.

8. Travers, 1986.

9. Ranson and Tomlinson, 1986.

10. Dale, 1986

11. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

12. Gleeson, 1986.

13. Clarke and Wills, 1984.

14. Baron *et al*, 1981.

15. Clarke and Willis, 1984.

16. Gleeson, 1986.

17. Times Educational Supplement, 1977

18. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

19. Appendix B of MSC/LAA Policy Group Report, May 1985.

20. Tolley, 1983.

21. Hainsworth, 1983.

22. Briault, 1982.

23. Dent, 1968.

24. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

25. Dent, 1968

26. *Ibid.*

27. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

28. Cmnd. 2154, 1963.

29. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Hordley and Lee, 1970.

33. FEU, 1979.

34. Department of Education and Science, 1982.

35. Ebbutt, 1983.

36. Figures obtained from Cantor and Roberts, 1986.

37. Cantor and Roberts, 1986.

38. Cantor and Roberts, 1972.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. Holland, 1986.

42. Jackson, 1988.

43. Mason, 1984.

44. Manpower Services Commission, 1976a.

45. Manpower Services Commission, 1976b.

46. Holland, 1977.

47. Holland, 1986.

48. Department of Employment Gazette, January, 1981.

49. Jackson, 1988.

50. MSC, May 1981.

51. Jackson, 1988.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Holland, 1977.

54. Times Educational Supplement, 12.9.86.

55. Times Educational Supplement, 17 October 1986.

56. Department of Education and Science, 1987a.

57. Department of Education and Science, 1987b.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. Morris, 1988.

61. Libby and Hull, 1987.

62. e.g. Benn and Fairley, 1986.

63. Jackson, 1988.

Chapter Three

The policy context: perspectives on policy-making and bureaucracies.

3.1 Introduction

The 1984 White Paper *Training for Jobs* announced a new policy for the provision of non-advanced further education. It marked a major policy shift from any past FE legislation, and reflected the adoption of a wholly new strategy in the pursuit of policy in this area. The legislation embodies a strategic central government initiative aimed at restructuring the basis of NAFE delivery in England and Wales. In order properly to understand the nature of the underlying strategic objectives it is necessary to extend the discussion of the previous chapter to explore the underlying theoretical context within which this policy initiative must be viewed. Such a discussion, crucial to explaining the significance of the White Paper, is presented in this chapter.

The policy context to the White Paper embraces a number of areas which explain (a) the relative circumstances of the education service institutions and the MSC, and (b) their respective relationships with central government, in the period leading up to the White Paper. These concern:

- the policy networks within which each institution was operating;
- the bureaucratic character of each;
- the recent history and theoretical background to relationships between central and sub-central government in England and Wales;
- the parameters of the decision-making and policy implementation processes within which governments operate.

These areas are considered in a series of following sections, each of which first outlines relevant theoretical perspectives before a second examination analysing their significance to the MSC and the education sector. The final section of the chapter synthesises these discussions into a theoretical outline of the central government's 1984 NAFE strategy, identifying its motives, its action in support of those motives, and the broad objectives at which it aimed in the ensuing period of implementation.

3.2 Policy linkages - communities and networks

The first of the four theoretical areas identified above as crucial to explaining the meaning of the 1984 White Paper centres on policy linkages between institutions. A number of alternative terms exist to describe such relationships. Examples include: 'policy communities'[1], 'policy networks'[2], 'clan structures'[3] and 'policy sectors'. The latter has been defined by Benson as:

> a cluster or complex of organisations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies.[4]

Rhodes takes this definition on board, but elaborates it by arguing that such structures vary along five key dimensions:

- *Constellation of interests* - the interests of participants in a network vary by service/economic function, territory, client group and common expertise (and most commonly some combination of the foregoing).
- *Membership* - membership differs in terms of the balance between public and private sector; and between political-administrative élites, professions, trade unions and clients.
- *Vertical interdependence* - intra-network relationships vary in their degree of interdependence, especially of central or sub-central actors for the implementation of policies for which, none the less, they have service delivery responsibilities.
- *Horizontal interdependence* - relationships *between* the networks vary in their degree of horizontal articulation: that is, in the extent to which a network is insulated from, or in conflict with, other networks.
- *The distribution of resources* - actors control different types and amounts of resources, and such variations in the distribution of resources affect the patterns of vertical and horizontal interdependence.[5]

Further, Rhodes prefers an alternative terminology. Distinguishing between 'policy communities' and 'policy networks', he considers the former to be characterised by:

> stability of relationships, continuity of a highly restrictive membership, vertical interdependence based on shared service delivery responsibilities and insulation from other networks and invariably from the general public (including Parliament). They have a high degree of vertical interdependence and limited horizontal articulation. They are highly integrated.

Policy networks, in contrast, are less integrated, and can take on a variety of forms.

Crucial to Rhodes' conceptualisation is his view that different public policy communities and networks do not have a common, single centre, but that the centre (characterised in England and Wales by the Cabinet) is fragmented. In effect, 'the centre' comprises a system of multiple centres, most clearly represented by the different government departments or departmental sections[6]. So whilst each policy network may be centralised, the centre cannot, in Rhodes' view, coordinate them all.

Adopting the concepts and terms* describing policy linkages as thus articulated, these may now be applied to the fields most directly involved in NAFE as a consequence of the 1984 White Paper, i.e. the education and employment/training policy networks. It is to an examination of 'the process of exchange and the rules and strategies governing resource transactions[7] that this analysis must turn if the relationships within and between these networks are to be understood. The discussion which follows concentrates its attention upon the situation as it existed immediately before the 1984 White Paper: the reason being to furnish a portrait of the situation in which the new legislation intervened, and against which the new equilibrium which emerged in the following years was forged. This later situation is outlined by recourse to empirical work in Chapter 6.

3.2 (i) The NAFE policy community

To consider first the education sector, its pre-1984 linkages may best be described by the term 'policy community'**. The sector at this point in time exhibited relationships which had been stable over a long period of time (largely unchanged since 1944), was

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* Rhodes uses the term 'policy network' as the generic label for all types, a practise which is followed here when both 'networks' and 'communities' are being referred to.

** From this point on the term 'NAFE policy community' is adopted, as the work here considers only bodies involved in NAFE. This may be distinguished from a larger 'education policy community' which, though very similar, includes some bodies who have no resource links with NAFE.

highly integrated, its bodies having considerable involvement with each other whilst having very little with those outside the community, and a high degree of vertical interdependence (a systematic mechanism governing exchanges throughout the hierarchy between the classroom and the Cabinet). This is illustrated in Figure 3.1. This shows the institutions involved in NAFE at the national, regional, local and college levels prior to the 1984 legislation, i.e. at a time when the MSC's involvement was limited to one among many client interests.

At the national level, the key player was the Department of Education and Science (DES). Whilst a separate department, the Department of the Environment (DoE), was significant as a conduit in the allocation of funds from the Treasury to local authorities, it had no direct role in education policy-making. The DES is the hand of central government in the education policy community, though one which had, as indicated in Chapter 2, enjoyed varying fortunes in its degree of control over the direction of educational policy since 1944. (The degree to which the DES was an extension of Cabinet thinking, and that to which it had its own independent line, is considered in section 3.3 below.)

Associated with the DES at national level are the Further Education Unit (FEU) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). The first of these is a small body which, though nationally based, sits in a hierarchical sense somewhere between the DES and the local authorities, supported by the consent of both. Established in 1977 under the original title of the Further Education Curriculum Review and Development Unit, the role of its small and largely seconded staff was to

> act as a focal point for curricular matters in further education and to promote a more co-
> ordinated and cohesive approach to further education curriculum development in England and
> Wales.[8]

Funded by DES, but guided by a Board of Management representative of central and local government, teachers and industry, it had since January 1983 been a charitable company limited by government guarantee. Whilst in this sense its policies and programmes were independent, one FEU commentator observed that it had to be aware of the sensitivities of its sponsoring bodies, DES and LEA, and that it had to be

Figure 3.1: The NAFE policy community in 1984
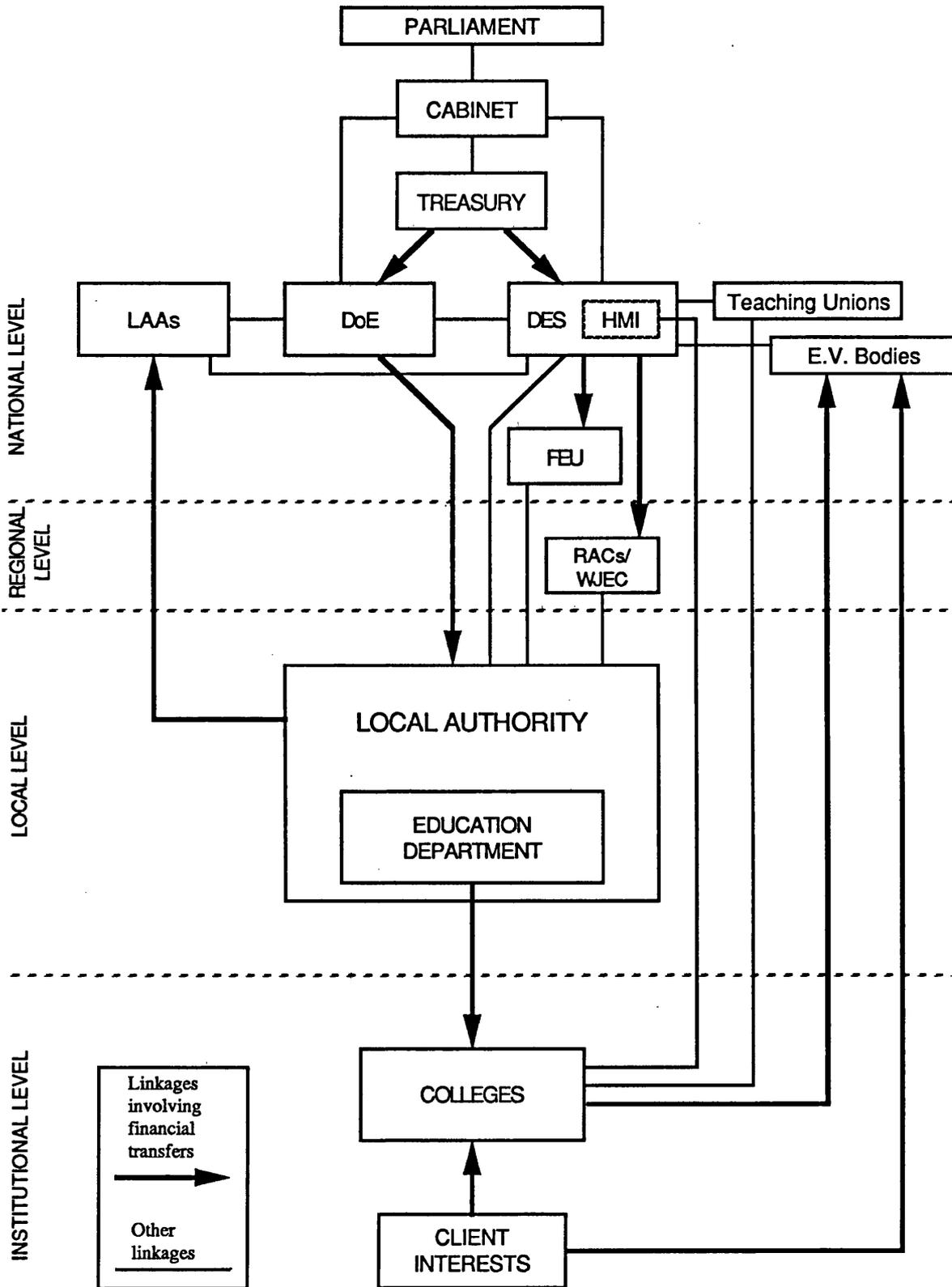
Source: Compiled by the author.

constructive in its comments to ensure that its future not be jeopardised[9].

HMI was a more prominent player, being very active in the field as an agent of the DES. Its job was to oversee all aspects of both school and further education, and it monitored and assessed performance at national, regional and local levels. A DES paper stated that

> it is the duty of the Inspector, as of other civil servants, to assist the central government in discharging the responsibilities that successive parliaments have laid down.[10]

Local inspectors also acted as college advisers, assisting institutions in solving a range of educational problems[11]. Salter and Tapper state that HMI acts as 'an important information broker' between centre and locality in education, the supposed professional detachment of the Inspectorate rendering it independent of both[12]. They question this detachment, however, arguing that the HMI's 'myth of autonomy' has the function of legitimating DES policy decisions which are based on the information it provides. They see it as a 'crucial tool' in the DES efforts to enclose the policy-making process in education.

The other important institutions at the national level were the examining and validating bodies, the teaching unions and the local authority associations. The first of these included such bodies as B/TEC, CGLI and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), and their involvement was largely curricular in impact, as they were responsible for determining the syllabus in their respective college-based courses. The teaching unions, such as the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), were the principal national representatives of college staff interests, having inputs to national negotiations on such issues as teacher salaries and staff development programmes.

The local authority associations sought to offer a national voice representative of local authority groupings. In NAFE, the relevant bodies were the Association of County Councils (ACC) and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA). More than mere representatives of local authorities, however, they were key actors in their

own right, forming what Rhodes terms the 'national local government system'[13]. Rhodes suggests that local government policy innovations only rarely originate at local level. More commonly, local councils look to the local authority associations

> for guidance about what standard of service to provide, for ideas to imitate or avoid, for ways of tackling common problems and for justifications or philosophies of particular strategies.

The local authority associations thus provided an otherwise disparate group of individual authorities with 'a mechanism of ideological integration'. Dunleavy underlines this view, stating that policy-making in local authorities does not respond straightforwardly to local political inputs[14]. Rather, policy is seen as being often determined by nationally-produced 'fashions', which emerge through the operations of the local authority officer professions as a distinct interest group, and which are articulated by the local authority associations. This will be aptly demonstrated when the key role of these bodies in formulating the policy which emerged from the 1984 White Paper is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

At the regional level in the pre-1984 NAFE policy community, bodies known as Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) were intended to fulfill an advisory role to LEAs. Their brief was to deliver advice on the FE needs to be met, and to seek to co-ordinate provision in their region. An important function was as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas between parties interested in NAFE[15]. RACs also had a role in the examination of certain courses at craft and operator levels. England had ten RACs, whilst in Wales the Welsh Joint Education Committee fulfilled a similar role. There was some liaison at this level with the Regional Staff Inspectors who were part of HMI.

At the local level, by far the most significant player was the local authority. The term 'local education authority' refers to those councils who had responsibilities for providing education, in practise the shire counties, Welsh counties, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and the Inner London Education Authority. In total there were 104 such authorities in England and Wales. In these authorities education represented only one amongst a number of functions, albeit the most significant in resource terms. Administered by one of a series of authority departments, it commonly

had a full committee of elected council members supplemented by sub-committees which dealt with specific areas such as FE, overseeing the day-to-day activities of the executive personnel. Central government resources were not allocated directly to education administrators by the DoE, but instead were allocated to the authority as a whole in block grant form and mediated through the local elected chamber of councillors and the local Treasurer's department. Administrative and policy links, in contrast, both upwards to the DES and downwards to colleges, are dealt with in the main by the education departments. NAFE is commonly dealt with by a sub-section of the department with a title such as 'FE Section' or 'Post-16 Education'.

At the local level of the policy community are the colleges themselves, the institutions which are the delivery points of NAFE. Funded by the LEA, their other key links are with clients (both individual students and their sponsors), with the examining and validating bodies, with the teaching unions, and with HMI, which involves itself in curriculum and management issues on a local as well as regional and national basis.

In considering exchange within policy networks at the sub-central government level, Rhodes cites five resource types which are involved:

- *Authority* refers to the mandatory and discretionary rights to carry out functions or services commonly vested in and between public sector organisations by statute or other constitutional means.
- *Money* refers to the funds raised by a public sector/political organisation from taxes (or precept), service charges or fees, borrowing, or some combination thereof.
- *Legitimacy* refers to access to public decision-making structures and the right to build public support conferred either by the legitimacy deriving from election or by other accepted means.
- *Information* refers to the possession of data and to control over either its collection or its dissemination or both.
- *Organisation* refers to the possession of people, skills, land, building materials and equipment and hence the ability to act directly rather than through intermediaries.[16]

Rhodes indicates that the effect of these resource considerations upon relationships depends upon both the rules of exchange and the skills with which they are deployed, i.e. the strategies of actors. Such strategies will be considered more fully in section 3.7, but here it is more important to first consider the linkages between bodies in the NAFE

policy community.

The definition given above of Benson's, that policy networks are delimited by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies, is the basis upon which Figure 3.1 has been drawn. For reasons of clarity, it indicates only two types of linkage, 'flow of financial resources' and 'other linkages', but the various links between policy community actors have been constructed in terms of Rhodes five resource categories. The first of these, authority, was distributed throughout the Cabinet-DES-LEA-college hierarchy, with different levels carrying out different functions. Whilst the Cabinet in principal had the most power, in practice it delegated almost of this to its departments who acted on its behalf in all but the highest profile issues, such as legislative change. In the context of education some of this passed to the Treasury and the DoE, who wielded power over resources, but mostly it was invested in the DES. In turn the DES delegates powers and responsibilities to the LEAs; and, as noted in Chapter 2, the extent to which it did this varied over time, according to the prevailing centralising or decentralising trend. The passing on of authority to colleges by the LEA varied less over time than between LEAs and between colleges: whilst some LEAs were very active in managing their colleges' affairs in some detail, others assumed a virtually 'hands-off' stance, relinquishing authority to college principals and acting simply as financiers and guarantors of college activity. Similarly, some college administrators were more 'go-ahead' than others in seeking independence to run their affairs with minimal direction from above, and the delegation of authority varied between colleges within LEAs in consequence.

The other linkages within the policy community as shown in Figure 3.1 did not significantly involve the exercise of authority, with the possible exception of HMI's semi-directive role in managing the curriculum. Relationships such as those between LEAs and the local authority associations, or between colleges and the Examining and validating bodies, were more a matter of liaison, negotiation and co-operation than the imposition of authority.

To take the second of Rhodes' resource categories, money exchange in NAFE in the pre-1984 policy community most significantly involved the flow of central

government resources, generated from taxes, from the Treasury to colleges (through intermediaries), and the flow of course fees to colleges from clients. The routing of central resources to the delivery point followed a complicated path: negotiation between the DES and other central departments determinedthe annual allocation of central resources to education. A portion of this amount was allocated to NAFE, included in the resources allocated to the DoE for distribution to the LEAs in the form of block grant, and thus entered the LEA account handled by the local Treasurer's department. This will be combined with local revenue before being allocated to colleges in an annual budget. The size of this allocation was determined annually by council committees, based on considerations such as student and staff numbers, equipment and maintenance costs. The greater the number of colleges in an authority, the more complex the decision-making over budget allocation. The complex nature of this system crucially affected the power relationship between the DES and the lower tier NAFE institutions. Boyle argues convincingly that

> there can't be a straight single control here for the very simple reason that the Ministry directly controls so very little money[17]

the great majority of NAFE monetary allocation being recurrent block grant expenditure rather than capital funding from the DES.

The other financial linkages were largely a matter of covering administrative expenses, such as the allocation made to the DES for its running costs (which included funding HMI), the DES's funding of other bodies such as the FEU and the RACs, and the support given to the local authority associations by their member authorities. The payment of fees to the examining and validating bodies also figured in this. Not included in Figure 3.1 are financial inputs from those outside the NAFE policy community, the most significant of which were the tax and rate payers who provided the great bulk of national and local public sector financial resources.

The most essential forms of legitimacy, Rhodes' third key resource category, in the pre-1984 system were the electoral mandates held by both the central and local government administrations. This is the basis of the authority on which the DES

handed down directives to LEAs and colleges, and of that which the LEAs used both to govern college activity and in some cases resist central legitimacy by appeal to their local mandate. This matter is considered more fully in section 3.4.

The collection and dissemination of information is a significant consideration in this context: the lack of information gathered by anyone in NAFE was one of the larger criticisms levelled at the education service at the time of the 1984 legislation. DES had long collected and handled some statistical information about NAFE, and the HMI inspectors had probably acquired as much knowledge and understanding about the workings of NAFE as anyone; but in such a decentralised field, where most curriculum- and course-based data were handled locally in a multitude of colleges, and most management data were handled in 104 LEAs, no major institution was in a position where power over information gave it an effective advantage over any other in pursuing its NAFE strategies.

In terms of Rhodes' organisation resource category, the most significant effect in NAFE was that whilst the DES formulated policy at the national level, it was implemented by a separate agency, the LEA, which in taking responsibility for administering educational policy acquired a degree of power over it. Colleges, in turn, could be said to possess some powers to follow their own chosen programmes given that the grass roots expertise, held by the teaching staff, was located within them. All this was significant to the process of exchange in the direction of NAFE policy, as the non-executant centre was able only to influence local outcomes to a greater or lesser extent; it could not direct local operations through some form of line management chain. Furthermore, the organisational power possessed by LEAs and colleges over the actual delivery of NAFE was significant to the manner in which the measures of the 1984 White Paper became translated into a set of outcomes rather different to those intended.

Another point worth bearing in mind when considering the workings of the NAFE policy community is the existence of informal policy-making structures. These are often based on personal links between individuals who have been working in the community in one capacity or another for some time. Such links may result from regular contact over the years, either as colleagues in the same organisation or through liaison and

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negotiations with other organisations. Rhodes observes that education policy-making throughout much of the mid-post-war period was based upon informal discussions between the officer personnel of certain key parties[18]. He cites a claim that many decisions were made effectively by a 'troika' consisting of the Permanent Secretary at the DES, the General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, and the Secretary of the Association of Education Committees[19]. Whilst these comments refer to largely to schools policy, they do underline the importance of attention to personalities as well as to organisations in understanding the workings of policy networks.

The bureaucratic nature of the institutions occupying the NAFE policy community is considered more fully in section 3.3. First, it is necessary to focus upon the other major policy network which was involved in the 1984 legislation, that of employment and training.

3.2 (ii) The employment and training policy network

It became evident in Chapter 2 that industrial training had in 1984 long been a matter which was dealt with to a large extent by the same bodies which were responsible for the employment services, emphasising its work-related nature. The principal bodies involved are shown in Figure 3.2.

The Figure has been constructed according to Benson's definition*, which states that policy networks are delimited by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies. The resources it considers are again the five key elements suggested by Rhodes. The choice of the term 'policy network' has been chosen over 'policy community' because in this instance, in contrast with the NAFE sector, there was a less rigid vertical interdependence, and a greater degree of horizontal articulation between involved parties. Whilst the DE-MSC section of the network was organisationally quite rigid, the whole was a much looser and more complex constellation of interests.

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* see above, p.55.

Figure 3.2: The employment and training policy network in 1984

Figure 3.2: The employment and training policy network in 1984

PARLIAMENT

CABINET

TREASURY → DE

CBI

TUC

MSC HEAD OFFICE

ITBs

National Employers

NSTOs

MSC REGIONAL OFFICES

EMPLOYMENT DIVISION AREA OFFICES (+Jobcentres)

TRAINING DIVISION AREA OFFICES

Local Employers

Local unions

NATIONAL LEVEL

REGIONAL LEVEL

LOCAL LEVEL

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

PUBLIC SECTOR TRAINING PROVIDERS:
LEA colleges
ITeCs
Skillcentres

PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING PROVIDERS

Linkages involving financial transfers →

Other linkages

INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS

To examine the detail of the figure, the principal public institutions involved in employment and training policy in the pre-1984 schema were the Department of Employment (DE), the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the surviving Industrial Training Boards. The MSC's status was that of a quango* accountable to the DE (or, in Wales, the Welsh Office**), but with discretionary powers invested in its Commission. Its executive arm was divided into three levels, the Head Office in Sheffield, eight Regional Offices (excluding an additional one in Scotland), and a larger number of Area Offices. Divided into a number of divisions, the principal ones were the Training Division and the Employment Division. Whilst both branches operated from the same national and regional offices, each had a separate string of Area Offices around the country. Whilst the Employment Division was responsible for employment functions such as Jobcentres and employment rehabilitation services, the Training Division arranged funding for training programmes of various kinds. In financial terms the principal of these were YTS, and adult training such as TOPS, but other funding was given for such purposes as ITeCs and Skillcentres. At the national level the Training Division was responsible also for the financial support of the ITBs.

The other principal parties in the policy network were the employers, trade unions, training providers, and the sectoral industrial training organisations (ITOs). Employers are depicted in Figure 3.2 as being 'national' or 'local'; it must of course be recognised that employers ran businesses at a whole range of scales, the division here being for simplicity of presentation. Employers were involved in training either as direct providers or as clients of both public and private sector training. In some remaining sectors they funded the relevant ITB, or contracted with it as a training provider, and in other sectors may have had a similar though voluntary relationship with a Non-Statutory Training Organisation (NSTO). At the national level employers were represented by the CBI, which negotiated on their behalf with government, the MSC, the TUC and others. Employers also had direct dealings with relevant trade unions at both local and national levels.

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* a quasi-autonomous non-government organisation. The use of this term in the case of the MSC is contentious, as noted in section 3.3.

** The involvement of the Welsh Office in Welsh matters is hereafter implied in references to the DE.

The trade unions' role in training was to both represent their members' interests in negotiations about provision, and in some cases to fund or organise training themselves. Like the CBI, they had representatives on the Commission, and thus an important input to the making of training policy. However, their role has diminished from what it once was with the decline in traditional apprenticeships. This accelerated rapidly in the recession of the early 1980s.

The ITOs embraced a small number of ITBs and a large number (over 100) of NSTOs, some of which were former ITBs. Whilst the ITBs had statutory powers and obligations to raise funds by levy and distribute these for training purposes, the NSTOswere involved in promoting and co-ordinating voluntary arrangements in their sectors.

The other key group in the policy network was that of training providers, both public and private sector. Public sector training was conducted largely by LEA colleges, but other bodies were involved, including the Information Technology Centres (ITeCs) and Skillcentres, and with MSC's increasing prominence, universities, polytechnics and schools.

As with the NAFE policy community, it is fruitful to analyse linkages in the employment and training policy network by recourse to Rhodes' five categories of resource exchange, the first of which is authority. This was somewhat dispersed in the network, although significantly more rigid in its public sector bodies than was the case in the NAFE policy community. The MSC, although quasi-autonomous, nonetheless formed a fairly unrestrictive conduit through which directives from the DE could be passed down a civil service management line to the Area level. There was some potential interruption to this in the form of the Commission with its corporatist representation, but most commentators have observed very little resistance to central government authority throughout the Commission's history. (Later history proved the futility of attempting resistance, in the TUC's doomed opposition to ET as outlined in Chapter 2). This matter is picked up again in section 3.5, which contrasts the NAFE and employment/training networks' appeal to central government as means of imposing

its policies locally.

Taking the network as a whole, however, there were many linkages in which statutory authority was not involved. The ITBs had certain levy-raising powers over employers, but apart from this employers were largely free to act as they would with regard to their employment and training policies. The trade unions were similarly unshackled by the constraints of a higher authority. Public sector training bodies were generally subject to the jurisdiction of a directing authority, but private sector training providers were, like employers, free to conduct business in their chosen manner.

To consider money exchange, Figure 3.2 indicates the network to have exhibited a complex series of links involving numerous financial transfers. The most significant of these, however, are the public funds channelled through the MSC and the other payments made to providers of training. Money handed to the Commission from the Treasury was subdivided amongst its divisions, the largest slice going to the Training Division. Whilst some of this was spent on the Commission's own running costs, the bulk was paid to training providers for courses or to trainees in the form of allowances. The other major income sources for training providers were employers sponsoring members of their workforce through courses, and the fees paid by individual students - a significant though (particularly in the public sector) much smaller input.

Legitimacy (Rhodes' third category) in the employment and training policy network was distributed more simply than in the NAFE policy community. Whereas in the education sector the presence of a local electoral mandate compromised central authority, here the legitimacy to invoke public powers was held solely by central departments under the direct jurisdiction of the Cabinet. Of course, given the greater significance of non-accountable private institutions in this network, the directive influence could be challenged or ignored in other ways. However, the absence of a second centre of publicly-conferred legitimacy in the network was very significant to the central government's 1984 strategy, which is considered further in section 3.7.

Information in the network was a resource held by most of its members about their own parochial interests, but information about employment and training as a whole was

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most concentrated into the hands of the DE. Its control over the national unemployment figures is a well-known area of its information-based power, whilst such nationally-co-ordinated data as was available on training was held by the DE or the MSC on its behalf. A need for improvements in the collection and dissemination of information on this subject was nonetheless being widely expressed at the start of 1984, and the White Paper *Training for Jobs* was part of the subsequent process aimed at seeking to bring about improvements. Given this, it is perhaps fair to say that no-one was significantly imbued with influence over training as a consequence of possessing much information about its workings.

Organisation was an important consideration in the provision of training. Whilst employers, private and public sector training bodies and even trade unions had the grass roots organisation to actually deliver training to trainees, the overseeing bodies (i.e. the ITOs and most notably the MSC) did not. The significance for the MSC was that it could determine delivery-point mechanisms only by virtue of its spending power: if one provider did not offer what the MSC was looking for, it could look elsewhere; but were nobody prepared to provide it, the MSC was not equipped to deliver its own programmes.This became a significant factor in the derailing of the government's 1984 strategy, as discussed in Chapter 4.

These considerations conclude the portrait of the two policy networks involved in the 1984 White Paper as they existed immediately before its publication. The ideas considered here lead directly into the presentation in Chapter 6 of the new, combined network which came to affect the administration of NAFE in consequence of the 1984 measures.

Before that stage, however, there are a number of other important theoretical and empirical aspects which must be considered. The section below follows on from the discussion of policy networks to an examination of their constituent bodies' bureaucratic character; most notably, the particular characteristics of those bureaucracies most closely involved in the government's 1984 policy.

3.3   Perspectives on Bureaucracies

The central government's choice of strategy in the construction of its 1984 NAFE policy involved a preference for one bureaucratic institution over another, i.e. the MSC over the education service. In analysing the government considerations which led to this, and the establishment and development of relationships between the two sets of institutions in the subsequent implementation period, an understanding of the bureaucratic characteristics of these bodies is essential. The pursuit of such understanding is conducted here in two broad stages: firstly, the examination of some theoretical perspectives on the nature of bureaucracies; and secondly, by drawing portraits of both the MSC and the education service in the terms thus derived.

3.3 (i)   Theoretical aspects

This section covers three main themes, which are as follows:

(a) the definition of a bureaucracy, and distinctions between types;

(b) the question of independent organisational objectives;

(c) the role of 'street-level' bureaucrats.

To take the first of these, there is a range of meanings across which the term 'bureaucracy' can be used, embracing both broad and narrow applications. At its widest, it can refer to a whole field within which administrative linkages occur, including inter-organisational as well as internal relationships. More narrowly, it can be applied specifically to a single organisation, referring solely to its inner workings.

Weber's definition of a bureaucracy follows the latter approach. He lists five characteristics which identify his definition, and these are:

(i)   a continuous organisation with a specified function, or functions, its operation bound
        by rules. Continuity and consistency within the organisation are ensured by the use
        of writing to record acts, decisions and rules;

(ii)   the organisation of personnel is on the basis of a hierarchy. The scope of authority

within the hierarchy is clearly defined, and the rights and duties of the officials at each level are specified;

(iii)   the staff are separated from ownership of the means of administration or production. They are personally free, 'subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations';

(iv)   staff are appointed, not elected, on the basis of impersonal qualifications, and are promoted on the basis of merit;

(v)   staff are paid fixed salaries and have fixed terms of employment. The salary scale is normally graded according to rank in the hierarchy. Employment is permanent within a certain security of tenure, and pensions are usually paid on retirement.[20]

For the present purposes it will be useful to consider individual organisations as separate bureaucracies, whilst also looking closely at the administrative links between them. In analysing an area such as NAFE, where a number of bureaucracies are involved in the delivery of a single policy, such relationships become important. In seeking to describe and understand these, some idea is required of the differences between the various bureaucracies involved. This in turn requires a means of identifying an organisation's characteristics.

Salter and Tapper argue that

> Bureaucracies have their own preferences and ambitions as to how they structure their activities basically derived from the need for routinized and predictable procedures for the purposes of maximising the efficiency of their operation - as they see it.[21]

This describes their notion of the 'bureaucratic dynamic', which becomes expressed differently in different organisations; an organisation's structure, procedures, guiding principles, the overall style in which it operates are the manner of such expression. They further state that

> in our increasingly complex society, group interests, and the ideologies supporting them, are expressed chiefly through highly bureaucratized institutions, such as those which make up the education system, which are quite capable of establishing their own logic of development in line with their own bureaucratic dynamic.[22]

Thus over time organisations develop stances which merge ideological assumptions

into their routine policy procedures, and which strongly influence the response the organisation is likely to make to a given set of circumstances. Associated with this concept is Rhodes' description of 'appreciative systems'[23], relating to the 'accumulated wisdom' or 'map of the world' which develops in an organisation, enabling it to steer a course through its policy environment. This concept, he argues,

> is invaluable for drawing attention to the systematic way in which patterns of organisational ... values influence, for example, the choice of strategies and set the limits to the range of options considered by the policy makers.[24]

Other writers have concentrated on particular aspects of organisations' characteristics. Burns and Stalker[25] draw a distinction between 'mechanistic' and 'organic' types. The former is more rigid, hierarchical and ordered, organisational tasks being pursued in a rational, structured and pre-determined manner. 'Organic' bureaucracies are much less rigid. In these, individuals interact in a less formal, more flexible manner; the reduction in importance of the vertical hierarchy or organisational authority allows greater flexibility and responsiveness to the changing demands of their bureaucratic tasks.

Related to this is the conflict Merton[26] identifies between rationality and rigidity in an organisation. Merton's argument runs as follows: an effective bureaucracy requires its procedures to be reliable, which in turn necessitates a strict devotion to regulations. In consequence of this, rules become absolutes which are no longer perceived as being purely relative to a set of specific purposes. This reduces an organisation's adaptability to unanticipated conditions, which in certain instances will lead to ineffective delivery - the opposite to the original intent. Thus the most rational or effective bureaucracy may be rigid, or the opposite, or may be somewhere between these extremes. Determining which is best in a given situation does not therefore involve any general rule: rather, it is dependent on the nature of the tasks required of the organisation. This identifies the important link between organisational function and organisational form. The significance of this to the Conservative government's choice of the bureaucratic structure it felt best suited to the purposes of its NAFE policy is considered in section 3.7.

A further distinction between bureaucratic types worth mentioning is Lipsky's[27], which focuses on the autonomy of individuals within the organisation. Where these have a high degree of autonomy, Lipsky suggests that individuals are able to play an active role in developing new approaches to their tasks, resulting in a sophisticated and responsive service. Conversely, reliability is the virtue identified by Lipsky of a bureaucracy governed largely by top-down directives, with little autonomy of individual officers. Once again, it is recognised that the maximisation of rationality in a bureaucracy's form is contingent upon its functions. Accepting this, the consideration of such rationality in specific instances must become a matter of case-by-case analysis of each organisation in each area of study, rather than one of nomothetic prediction.

Moving on from the above area, the second key consideration in this analysis of bureaucracies is the propensity (or otherwise) of organisations to pursue objectives of their own, in contrast to objectives imposed from outside. The idea that an organisation can have goals which exist independently of the immediate demands placed upon it requires a recognition of the development of 'organisations' as 'institutions'. Selznick draws the distinction thus:

> The term 'organisation' thus suggests a certain bareness, a lean no-nonsense system of consciously coordinated activities. It refers to an expendable tool, a rational instrument engineered to do a job. An 'institution' on the other hand, is more nearly a natural product of social needs and pressures - a responsive adaptive organism.[28]

Selznick recognises institutions to be a product of more than their original functional design, a secondary informal structure gradually becoming established by the individuals who occupy it. Institutions come to develop a concern for their own survival, and interests emerge internally which may not coincide with prevailing attitudes outside. This ties in with the ideas expressed above about the bureaucratic dynamic and appreciative systems, which recognise the development of an institutional ideology or philosophy which will to some extent guide a bureaucracy's activities.

In support of this McGrew and Wilson[29] note that an organisation's goals are not necessarily equivalent to public ones. Perlman suggests that

bureaucrats want to maximise their own utility functions[30]

a consequence of which is that the bureaucrat

will benefit from organisational growth more than from organisational effectiveness in providing services at minimum cost or maximum benefit.[31]

In this scenario,

the maintenance and aggrandisement of the organisation becomes a new policy goal which is privately added as a new ingredient to the policy goals which are given to the bureaucracy.[32]

Such goals may run counter to public imperatives.

Moving on from this to the third area to be considered in this section, the role of the 'street-level' bureaucrat, it is profitable to turn to the ideas forwarded by Lipsky on the subject. These emphasise the influence on policy of lower tier actors, an influence which will vary from one field to another, depending on circumstances and the bureaucratic characteristics of the organisation for which they work. In less rigidly hierarchical organisations, the scope for discretion (and therefore influence) in the lower tiers will naturally be greater. Lipsky notes that one factor determining this is the level of involvement of professionals in the field, these having greater influence than other types of street-level bureaucrat[33]. Where an organisation makes extensive use of professionals, this is seen as indicative of:

(i)   high expertise in the lower ranks;
(ii)   complex task;
(iii)   supervision difficulties
(iv)   need for flexibility and adaptability.[34]

This view can be turned on its head, and be stated in the form that where the above conditions prevail, the role of the lower tier actor will be highly influential, whether or not it is considered as strictly 'professional'. Both attributes, the presence or absence of professional staff and of tasks which reflect the four factors listed above, are important

considerations in assessing an organisation's bureaucratic form.

3.3 (ii) Bureaucracies in NAFE

Having arrived at a series of theoretical concepts in the above section, it is necessary now to examine the particular institutions which were principally involved in the 1984 policy change in the terms set out in these concepts. This will provide a further key element in unravelling the logic behind the government's strategy. A consideration of the characteristics of the education service follows an analysis of the MSC.

The MSC bureaucracy

To consider first Weber's definition, it can be stated that the MSC in 1984 is accurately described by his five points, i.e. it was a continuous organisation with specific functions bound by rules, hierarchically organised, had staff who were non-elected, promoted on the basis of merit, separated from ownership and who worked under fixed conditions of employment and remuneration. Having established these more straightforward attributes, it is important to identify how the MSC expressed its 'bureaucratic dynamic'.

To employ Burns and Stalker's terminology of 'mechanistic' and 'organic types' of bureaucracy, it is interesting to observe that the MSC exhibited aspects of both. In some senses it was rigid, hierarchical and ordered: a firmly structured system of civil-service line management from the most senior to most junior grades ensured that directives were transmitted through its ranks with little amendment, officers each level carrying out tasks as defined for them by their immediate superiors. Thus ensured was the rational, structured and pre-determined pursuit of organisational tasks required of the 'mechanistic' bureaucracy form. The MSC was highly centralised, policy directives being issued at the highest level. It has been observed that this centralisation operated spatially as well as in an organisational sense:

Its commands come not only from the top down, but also from the centre outwards.[35]

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In this sense the Commission was able to implement a specific policy throughout its ranks without alteration.

Despite such corporate rigidity, however, the MSC was in other ways remarkably flexible. Burns and Stalker's description of 'organic' bureaucracies anticipates that a high degree of flexibility or responsiveness results from weaker forms of vertical hierarchy and organisational authority. The MSC demonstrated that in contrast it could be very adaptable, but rather *because* of than despite its authoritative structure. Free from the lethargy associated with age-old practices, the organisation marking its tenth anniversary at the start of 1984 had always been able to adapt and manœvre rapidly with changing circumstances. Salter and Tapper, noting this adaptability, observe that

> since its foundation ... the MSC has shown itself both willing and able to change its internal organizational form and its external organizational linkages in order to expand its responsibilities, influences and resources.

This meant frequent changes in the Commission's divisional structure, local organisation and the number of staff engaged in different activities. However,

> in its public documents the MSC is at pains to claim that this process of adaptation is not ad hoc but governed by a regular system of management and policy review ... It publicly promotes an image of an organization dedicated to the effective and efficient delivery of services through flexible and adaptive structures.[36]

The Commission's *Corporate Plan 1982-86* emphasised this:

> The Commission must be prepared to adapt continuously its programmes and their means of delivery to changes in the environment and the requirements of its clients.[37]

Such adaptation was facilitated by a planning style in which short-term horizons reduced the stability of its programmes yet facilitated year-to-year change at a sometimes dizzying pace.

These observations confirm Merton's claim noted earlier that rigidity and rationality

in an organisation do not necessarily go hand-in-hand; the difference in this case is that reliable procedures and strict devotion to regulations can be highly rational if an organisation's managers adopt a flexible culture which actively seeks to meet changing circumstances.

Another important consideration is the Commission's autonomy and its accountability. Numerous observers describe the MSC as a quango, but some dispute this. One view, defining a quango as

> an organisation intended to act independently of representative government and provided with accountability machinery to do so

claims that the MSC in contrast

> acts on its own alright, but it has no accountability machinery. ... All its boards... are created by appointment from overseeing bodies.
> ... Meanwhile those at the receiving end have few rights and little say. Nor has the electorate power to change matters locally. Only the slimmest tie to elected democracy exists, and that is at the very top through the occasional parliamentary select committee review.[38]

The same commentators go so far as to describe the Commission as being 'dictatorial' in its methods, and that its supposed practice of eschewing feedback and discussion from the lower ranks allowed for little dissent. Meanwhile, it is important here to consider Lipsky's points (outlined in section 3.3(i)) on street-level bureaucrats, and the influence wielded by certain types of actor; professionals are seen in this view as most influential. The fact that the MSC's personnel consisted of civil servants on a career ladder which took them frequently from post to post, and its having a culture in which directives from above were more influential than the exercise of judgement in the lower ranks, both tie in with the idea of a bureaucracy in which the street-level bureaucrat has less influence.

Non-accountable, therefore, and largely autonomous from directive control from any other source than the DE and the Cabinet, the MSC can be said to have had the powers, resources and freedom to operate largely as its masters wished. Whilst the Commission itself supposedly operated as a representative consultative mechanism, it

has already been observed above that in practice this constraint was largely ineffectual. The significance of the appeal of these facts to government thinkers in formulating the 1984 NAFE policy will be picked up in section 3.7.

In the previous section it was noted that in addition to a characteristic administrative style, a bureaucracy will have a philosophical or ideological outlook stemming from its functional role and acquired attitudes. Selznick was noted as having identified the existence of organisational goals which do not not necessarily coincide with the tasks allotted to an institution from outside and the development within a bureaucracy of a concern for its own survival.

The guiding philosophy commonly held to be inherent to the MSC's bureaucratic dynamic was a market-oriented, business-centred view, in which the pursuit of economic efficiency overrode other considerations. Salter and Tapper describe the Commission as having been 'on the industry side of the industry-education fence'[39]. In outlook and policy style they see it as having been sympathetic to and compatible with the 'economic dynamic', which prioritises efficiency and profitability in all fields. This involved an ideological as well as technical function, in promoting the notion of a skilled and flexible workforce as the first priority in the development of employment and training policy. Which is to say that its was outlook was vocationalist, with (according to some) a 'utilitarian ethos'[40], its supposed enthusiasm for which led to claims in some quarters of its being 'doctrinaire'[41]. The significance of this in the context of NAFE is clear: a body whose view of education was that it functioned primarily as a means of supplying skilled labour to industry would be an attractive attribute in the eyes of a central administration seeking to swiftly impose a market ideology upon the education sector against a background of years of incremental change. The MSC had an 'unashamedly economic ideology of education'[42], in which the such notions as that training must be firmly work-oriented 'are laid out as self-evident truths', with 'no nonsense about education and personal development'[43]. However, whilst the Commission may have exhibited a clear overall stance, it was not tied to any firmly established specific policies which could inhibit it from moving in new directions at short notice.

All of these attributes are important to understanding the MSC's behaviourial style. Its approach to the policy field in which it operated has been described as aggressive, opportunistic and interventionist[44]. It has been portrayed as an ambitious body seeking ever to extend its functions and adopt new responsibilities, encroaching upon areas previously the reserve of other bureaucracies. Certainly its history to 1984 was marked by a considerable expansion in both its size and range of activities. Evidence of this lies in the initial take-over of the ESA and TSA by the OMSC (see Chapter 2); the steady self-sought expansion of its brief in the 1970s (e.g. in 1976 'with government consent'[45] to include 'developing and operating a comprehensive manpower policy for Great Britain'[46]); its increasing involvement with training schemes for school leavers, such as YOP and YTS; its incursion into schools curriculum policy in the shape of TVEI; and the intention expressed in *Training for Jobs* for it to come to discharge the function of a 'national training authority'[47]. It would appear that such 'empire-building proclivities'[48] stemmed both from an ambitious organisational culture, and the common bureaucratic concern expressed by Selznick (above) for an institution's own survival, regardless of any objective need for this.

The MSC possessed considerable freedom, on entering the NAFE policy field, to operate without the constraints of an established role:

> as a new institution on the industry side of the industry-education fence it did not share
> education's customary distance from the workaday world, it was not bound by time-worn
> patterns of interaction between institutions and did not have a pre-ordained place in the
> educational policy-making process. These could all have been disadvantages of course.[49]

The fact that they were not is attributable to other characteristics, notably its rapid flexibility and responsiveness to the demands of the moment, with a rigid structure of internal authority which could ensure delivery of its management policies. Thus it was able to follow whichever requirement was in vogue with the government of the day; section 3.5 considers how it did this in the education field in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Characteristic of the MSC style was an emphasis on short-term horizons, an action-based style and the use of purchasing power as an instrument of change. The short-

term aspect of this is evident in the constantly changing form of its policy programmes year to year, an observation made by a whole series of individuals interviewed by the author on the subject. A general view was that the MSC was not given to long-term investments of time or resources in programmes whose achievements could not be evaluated at an early stage; it wanted measurable results, rapidly-achieved. In consequence it was given to sudden policy changes as priorities moved on[50]. This reflects the action style so evident in the tone of the Commission's advertising and publications. These generally tended to suggest a dynamic and speedy approach to problem issues, and an effective trouble-shooting style of dealing with them. The 1980s programme 'Action for Jobs' is a quite typical example of this.

The use of purchasing power as an implementation and policy tool was assisted by the Commission's rapid-delivery style, which made it attractive to a Treasury eager to allocate resources to agencies which could be relied upon to produce results. This made expanding its budget a relatively straightforward affair, even at a time of growing fiscal restraint, and the MSC used this purchasing clout effectively 'as a political weapon'[51] in the pursuit of its objectives. At a time when public money was increasingly scarce, the MSC financial 'honeypot' was a persuasive incentive to toe its policy line. Its possession and use of such power made it unpopular with some commentators, some of whom state that the MSC used public funding, 'its own personal blackmail', as a means of 'ensuring compliance with its directives'[52].

There is, however, an important other side to the use of purchasing power as a means of achieving organisational objectives. Where a bureaucracy does not directly control a delivery mechanism of its own, but instead relies on others to implement its programmes, the use of financial incentive to achieve the desired results depends on this incentive being greater than any countervailing forces. The MSC, as outlined earlier, had no delivery mechanism, instead purchasing implementation on demand of results. The discussion of the implementation of the White Paper *Training for Jobs* conducted in Chapter 4 will demonstrate how this proved a key factor in the frustration of central government objectives which it had believed the MSC could deliver.

In considering this area it is first necessary to clarify which institutions are being addressed in the discussion. As was evident from the analysis of the NAFE policy community in section 3.2, the public sector administrative mechanism contrasts with that for employment and training in that a number of partners are involved in the policy and implementation structure. It cannot therefore be analysed in terms of Weber's definition of a model bureaucracy, for whilst the central component, the DES, does exhibit many of the characteristics listed in Weber's five categories, the bureaucratic structure as a whole is quite different, embracing the whole vertically interdependent public sector portion of the NAFE policy community. The discussion here first examines the DES; and then the wider institutional structure which needs to be taken into account from the perspective of the central Department, an approach justified by the need to present the bureaucracy as it appeared to government strategists as they formulated their 1984 NAFE policy.

The DES had existed in an approximation to its 1984 form since the second world war. In consequence, its practices and institutional culture were rigidly established, as were its links with other bodies in the NAFE field. This culture has been described as 'pragmatic, conservative and evolutionary'[53]. Its gradualist approach may be attributed both to: an institutional style that evolved over a period during much of which its activity in directing education policy was limited (see Chapter 2); and alleged inefficiencies in its own internal policy-making procedures: 'tensions' between its long-term planners and the requirements of its Public Expenditure Survey Committee are an example of supposed inter-branch policy rivalry within the DES[54]. Such factors lent the DES an 'inertia generated by its past impotence'[55]. Salter and Tapper state that

> like all institutions, the (DES) has over time developed its own momentum, and its own inertia, which means that its exercise of educational power runs in certain policy grooves.[56]

Once these grooves become established, any change of general direction becomes difficult, especially in the short term. Consequently its bureaucratic dynamic is 'conservative', its structures 'inflexible'; its historical experience has given it 'an

incrementalist approach' to the acquisition and exercise of educational power. To use the 'mechanistic' and 'organic' terms applied by Burns and Stalker, it is curious to note that whilst the DES was perhaps not as mechanistically rigid in its internal structure as the MSC, it was actually *less* rather than more flexible. In consequence,

it has shown itself less than adaptable in the face of new pressures for educational change.[57]

Whilst supposedly the main state apparatus through which pressures from the economic base were translated into educational policy, the DES had generally proved inefficient at generating fresh policy suited to the imperatives of the economic dynamic.

Partly this was due to the institutional culture of the Department in the philosophical sense. Salter and Tapper argue that as

an established bureaucracy it has goals, needs and an ideology of its own which may well run counter in educational policy terms to the demands of the economy. [58]

Rhodes[59] claims that each government department has a distinct policy style which leads to the creation of a 'departmental philosophy' akin to the type of philosophy earlier ascribed to the MSC. This has been described as the

store of knowledge and experience in the subjects handled, something which eventually takes shape as a practical philosophy.[60]

In the case of the DES this philosophy developed in the era of the post-war social democratic consensus, in which educational policy focused much more upon the social needs of the individual than vocationalist economic imperatives. When such imperatives emerged, therefore, in the late 1970s the DES, given its gradualist operating style, was ill-equipped to offer the type of swift institutional response afforded by the MSC.

To look beyond the boundaries of the central state Department to the NAFE bureaucracy as a whole, it is evident that the DES's difficulties in making a response to new demands were compounded by a lack of firm control over its policy field. The whole system of education including NAFE was decentralised, and it was observed that

many of the administrative lines of control run through the local state, the LEAs, which have clear identities and policy preferences of their own. These may or may not be in tune with DES priorities.[61]

This put the DES in a position of considerable weakness in determining the detailed implementation of its policies. Very often the LEAs were not inclined to toe the DES line, preferring to follow policy routes of their own. When this was combined with the necessities of negotiation with other partners in the policy community, such as the examining and validating bodies and the teaching unions, the overall effect of the complex interdependence was to add more weight to the tendency to inertia already present within the DES itself.

Rhodes believes the educational policy community as a whole to have been characterised by an incremental policy-making style, and suggests after Dror that

of its very nature, incrementalism fosters scepticism of radical change,provides a rationalization for inertia and acts as a bulwark for the status quo.[62]

This view of the NAFE policy community is of considerable importance to the discussion of how the MSC effected its incursion into the field of training in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which is conducted in section 3.5.

Before that, however, in order to more fully appreciate the significance of the central-local relationship which so crucially affects NAFE policy-making and implementation, the next section considers in more depth some historical and theoretical factors which shaped the relationship between central and local government in England and Wales in the run-up to the 1984 White Paper.

3.4 Relations between central and local government in England and Wales

The discussion in this section does not attempt to present an exhaustive discourse on the theme of central-local relations in England and Wales. Rather it is an attempt to identify those theoretical and recent-historical aspects of these which, it is argued, impinged significantly upon the central government's 1984 NAFE strategy. The first stage in this process is an analysis of the functional roles of both, the interests they each represent and the relationships consequent upon these factors. This is followed by an examination of the strategies open to each level in pursuing its interests, and some historical detail about such strategies were pursued in the period leading up to the 1984 White Paper.

3.4 (i) Theoretical aspects of central-local relations

It is important to establish what is meant by the terms 'central' and 'local' government in the context of this discussion. Rhodes observes that the term 'centre' ought to be understood as 'shorthand for a diverse collection of departments and divisions'[63]. The Cabinet can be represented as the linchpin of central authority and decision-making, but it must nonetheless be recognised that there are a range of competing interests within the central government and between its various departments. Rhodes identifies a principal distinction between 'guardians' and 'advocates'. The guardians are in practice the Treasury, whose interest is restraining public expenditure, whilst the advocates are the service spending departments, some of whom will be involved with sub-central government, others not. In the NAFE sector, the DES can be identified as an advocate department with an involvement in sub-central government; the DE has a similar role. In discussing central-local relations in NAFE, therefore, the 'centre' can be understood to refer to the sub-network involving the Cabinet, Treasury, DE and DES, with the DoE as a partner connected by its resource links with sub-central government.

'Local' government, meanwhile, can refer to a number of different types of sub-central authority. In the early 1980s there existed a system of shire and metropolitan

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counties and districts, a two-tiered structure which was echoed by similar arrangements in London and Wales. In the discussion of NAFE references to local authorities are restricted to LEAs, of which there would only be one in any geographical area.

Two principal countervailing factors govern the basic relationships between central and local government: the first is that local government's powers are determined by Parliamentary statutes, i.e. not protected in a constitutional sense from amendment by any central administration; the second is that, whilst the centre is clearly more powerful, local government is backed by an independent mandate from its own electorate, which provides it with a legitimacy to oppose central government policies if its interests are in conflict with these. These factors indicate the centre to be ultimately the stronger partner, having 'a nigh total monopoly of legal resources'[64] but indicate also that local government has a powerful capacity to resist. Thus local government

can and does pose severe obstacles to the policies of the government of the day

one important reason being that the latter is non-executant in nature, i.e. it does not deliver services directly. As a consequence of these factors, any change being introduced in circumstances of intergovernmental conflict is liable to be slow.

The two levels of government carry out different sets of functions. A useful tool in examining this functional differentiation and other key differences is the dual-state thesis forwarded by Saunders[65]. Saunders approaches the issue of these differences, and of how they lead to intergovernmental conflict, by examining the internal and external pressures operating upon both parties along four dimensions: the organisational, functional, political, and ideological dimensions. In terms of organisation Saunders dismisses the 'sterile debate'[66] about whether local authorities are the 'partners' or 'agents' of the central administration, preferring to see them as simply a separate

loci of power which is mobilised in relation to the power exerted by central authority.[67]

In terms of the functional dimension, Saunders indicates that the specific

responsibilities of local government lie in the sphere of consumption. This refers to the provision of such services as social benefits, personal social services, education and housing. In contrast, responsibility for the interests of the production sector - such as infrastructure and public investment in industry - is held by central government. Dunleavy[68] accounts for this by indicating a contradictory central policy which seeks to pursue centralised corporatist-style planning, whilst retaining a measure of ostensible pluralism for the purposes of popular legitimacy. This, he argues, is afforded by vesting social consumption spending in pluralist local government, whose constitutional and fiscal dependency on central government limits the potential for the damaging effects of pluralist decision-making on the centre. Investment expenditure, meanwhile, is kept in central government hands and is thus 'insulated from popular control'[69].

Saunders argues that, in Britain, after a sustained period of expansion in public spending on consumption services, the fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s highlighted the fact that increased spending in this area was diverting funds from government investment in the private sector. At a time of overall contraction in public spending, a decline in the profitability in the private sector created a direct conflict between production and consumption imperatives, which were both competing for the same resources. Since these competing imperatives were articulated through different levels of government, this competition led to intergovernmental conflict as the centre attempted to introduce downward pressure on local government spending on consumption services. The essential point here is that this such conflict is not simply an expression of some ideological or organisational power struggle; it is a direct product of deeper tensions within the state.

In the political sphere, Saunders argues that the fact of local authorities being more open to a range of popular interests which are not expressed at the national level creates tensions between governments over the articulation of these interests in local policy. Whilst ideologically, he argues that in Britain at least, a tension has developed out of a philosophical polarisation between, on the one hand, the private-property oriented market philosophy of central Conservative administrations, and on the other, the principles of collectivism and the rights of citizenship which he claims to characterise local government. These

echo a concern with, respectively, production and consumption issues at each level, and emphasise the functional differentiation along these lines.

Although the dual-state thesis has been criticised as not providing a fully adequate explanation of functional allocation within the state, critics such as Dunleavy believe it does successfully highlight a particular empirical patterning of government, if not for the right reasons[70]. Such empirical accuracy fulfils the present requirement of understanding specific aspects of intra-state relationships which impinge upon NAFE.

Having identified the key sources of inter-governmental conflict, it is necessary to examine some strategies which have been employed by each level in the pursuit of its own interests. The problem from the central government perspective is

> how to secure local obedience to central objectives in the face of resistance from local authorities which have often claimed a mandate for opposing central government policies.[71]

Organisational solutions Saunders outlines to this problem include restructuring and innovation. Restructuring may involve such changes as the redefinition of local responsibilities, the removal or addition of local government tiers, or the spatial extent of an authority's jurisdiction. Innovation involves such actions as the introduction of different management techniques which diminish the input of councillors, or the transfer of powers to alternative forms of delivery agency which are not accountable to local politicians.

Other forms of solution include economic approaches, whereby the centre seeks to curtail local government expenditure, the larger part of which is funded in England and Wales by central grant. Such a strategy is facilitated by the centre's virtually exclusive access to the legal powers to enforce it. Saunders also suggests types of political solution sought, the 'broad strategy' of which is to remove

> key policy-making powers from the democratic sector so as to insulate them from popular pressures and render them more amenable to central direction,[72]

enhancing the role of central actors, 'experts' and private sector interests at the expense

of local elected officials. Clearly this ties in with the organisational strategy of innovation identified above.

Dunleavy argues that in the West such actions are associated in particular with functions which affect the production sector:

> there has been a clear tendency to centralise, corporatise, depoliticise and insulate from traditional representative institutions those areas of policy making which are of direct significance to business interests. There has apparently been a continuous structural pressure on central government to maintain tight social control over policy areas with major implications for capital accumulation and economic development.[73]

Saunders considers the strategies which are open to local government in Britain to resist such central government attack. In all four areas he examines - organisational, economic, political and ideological - he sees few options open to it beyond staunch rearguard attempts to slow the advance of change.

One other factor which should be mentioned in this context is the question of how truly 'local' are the actions of local government in origin, echoing the point made in section 3.2 that LEA policy is largely defined non-locally, principally by the local authority associations. But whatever the influence of wider bodies it seems fair to state that a crucial aspect of the strength of local government derives from a factor which is truly local but operates with the same effect nationally, i.e. its independent mandate. The ability thus conferred to adopt a line opposed to the centre is the necessary condition for conflict to occur in the first place; this is essential to understanding the reasons why the central government's policies are not necessarily implemented in the way it intends.

3.4 (ii) Developments in central-local conflict in the run-up to 1984

Having examined some theoretical considerations which impinged upon the central government stance on NAFE in 1984, it is important now to examine the relevant historical detail which shaped relationships at the time of the White Paper. The actual

experience of central-local conflict in England and Wales in the early 1980s can be examined through the strategies open to the respective partners identified by Saunders.

To take the central strategies he proposes, the organisational approaches noted earlier were restructuring and innovation. Examples of restructuring include the Heath administration's Reorganisation of 1974, which saw a wholesale realignment of local authority structures, responsibilities and areas of jurisdiction. Similarly, the abolition by the Thatcher government in 1986 of the metropolitan counties and the Greater London Council (GLC) can be portrayed as a strategic restructuring move, this one arguably being more specifically related to the particular policy objective of quelling local government opposition to central policy.

Strategies of innovation in England and Wales have included, according to Saunders, a move to corporate management techniques with a consequent reduction in the influence of elected councillors, and an expansion in regional-level, non-elected forms of government. The latter has involved a transfer of former local government functions to new bodies, which include the nationalised industries (councils formerly had responsibilities for gas and electricity supplies), regional Water Authorities, Health Authorities and various development agencies. Dunleavy agrees, stating that

> the number of areas where local authorities are engaged in providing services or making investments has dramatically reduced, especially since the 1940s,[74]

and that this accelerated during the 1970s. These changes, of course, are political as well as organisational strategies, and involve the process outlined above of insulating policy control from popular pressures and placing it in the hands of professional experts and other non-elected interests, particularly in the sector of production and investment.

The economic sphere was the main arena for government strategies to quell local authorities' independent line in the early 1980s. The Thatcher administration came to power promising strict monetarist policies which would substantially reduce public spending. Local government was to be pressured to do the same, and measures were

progressively introduced to force councils to toe the central government's ideological line. First, the 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act introduced the Block Grant to replace the former Rate Support Grant. This was to be distributed on the basis of Grant Related Expenditure Assessments, which were calculated on the basis of a central estimation of local needs. From this was calculated a supposed level of Rates which the local authorities should be levying in order to meet the spending 'target' set centrally, the Grant Related Poundage (GRP). Councils which overstepped their allocated GRP had their Block Grant reduced by the same amount. Defiance on the part of councils (generally Labour-controlled) which continued to 'overspend' led to tougher measures introduced in 1981, which introduced a 'hold-back' system designed to enforce a required cut of 5.6 per cent in real terms from councils' 1978-9 spending levels[75]. This procedure was retrospectively legislated for in the 1982 Local Government Finance Act. Continued local resistance to central government policy saw further legislation, by the second Thatcher administration, in the form of the Rates Act of 1984. This introduced 'rate-capping', a process by which the central government could selectively introduce sanctions against those councils it felt to be excessive spenders, a process which eventually led to the surcharging of councillors in some areas where resistance to central policy was fiercest.

It has been argued by Duncan and Goodwin[76] that macroeconomic arguments do not account for the amount of government attention paid to this area. They point out for example that in 1982/3 local government borrowing was only 4.1 per cent of the public sector borrowing requirement, public borrowing being 'the lodestone of monetarist economic policy'. Their argument centres on the threat posed by local government to the credibility of central economic policies, threatening the government line that there was no workable alternative to its programme. The crucial point here is that the Thatcher governments' attacks on local government did not originate from economic theory alone; rather, they indicated its entrenched ideological distaste for local government in general. The assiduousness of the government in seeking to ensure local compliance with its fiscal policies through several successive pieces of legislation over a short period of time suggests more in the way of a sustained attack than an isolated policy move. Similarly, the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties was widely considered to stem more from central opposition to their political activities (they

were all Labour-controlled) than from any genuine concern to improve the structure of local government. Central policy towards local authorities in the 1980s should therefore be viewed with these ideological considerations much in mind.

The ability of local government to resist these changes was severely limited, for at each obstacle the central government introduced new legal powers to strengthen its hand to enforce its policy. In opposing it, councillors were reduced to strategies of protracted non-co-operation, exploiting loopholes in the legislation until these were progressively tightened up, and in various other small ways slowing down the approach of the inevitable. Saunders notes that in all four spheres of conflict he identifies, local councils in Britain

> have in recent years attempted yet failed to resist central government.[77]

Important to the present considerations, however, is the fact that local authorities have resisted central policies, and have succeeded in using the complexities of the sub-central government system to blunt the advance of central domination. As Rhodes notes

> The diverse and divergent response of LEAs to contraction illustrates the problems of a non-executant centre. Whatever its pronouncements on either new levels for education or levels of expenditure, its initiative is dissipated in a disaggregated policy system.[78]

Regardless of the outcome, the above evidence of fierce economic warring between the two levels of government demonstrates that the dawn of the Thatcher era saw an intensification of central-local conflict, a development which would affect all areas of policy-making and implementation in which both were involved.

To summarise the key points which have emerged from this section, three factors emerge as particularly relevant to the subsequent discussion:

(a) an underlying tension between central and local government in England and Wales consequent upon their primary concern with production and consumption functions respectively, both of which requirements have been

competing for limited resources since mid-1970s;

(b) a post-war tendency for local service functions to be progressively transferred from democratically-elected councils to non-elected government agencies;

(c) a stance on the part of successive Thatcher governments which was clearly antagonistic to local councils, made evident by organisational restructuring and fiscal constraint.

3.5   Theoretical analysis of the rise of the MSC

It is necessary at this stage to unify into a single overview some of the material presented so far. The historical facts concerning the growth and expansion of the MSC in the late 1970s and early 1980s were effectively chronicled earlier, in Chapter 2. Following which, the early sections of this chapter have outlined some theoretical perspectives on the NAFE and employment/training policy networks and the bureaucracies which operate within them. It behoves the discussion now to synthesise these otherwise disparate observations into a coherent vision of the incursion by the MSC into areas which hitherto might reasonably have been considered the preserve of the education service. It does this by considering the history again, with the greater analytical penetration afforded by the theoretical considerations discussed in this chapter.

There are three key related themes. First, the increasing centralisation of education that became apparent in the 1970s; second, the rise of vocationalism with its associated causes and corollaries; and third, the effects of the expansionist dynamic of the MSC upon those areas into which it sought to grow.

The first of these processes is identified by Salter and Tapper[79] as part an overall tendency towards increased opportunities for the centralisation of power into state bureaucracies throughout western Europe after the mid-70s. Education, like other sectors, has been affected by this. It was observed in Chapter 2 that a shifting post-war

balance of power between the DES and LEAs swung back towards the centre during the seventies. It is important now to recognise this as being part of a wider process.

The supposed 'troika' of educational partners identified in section 3.2 were the DES, LEAs and the teaching unions. Rhodes observes that after 1975 the DES sought to reassert its control at the expense of these other partners[80]. Whilst throughout much of the post-war period it had perceived itself as more of a 'mediator'[81] between LEAs and schools and colleges on the one hand, and the Cabinet and the Treasury on the other, it now sought a greater central role for itself in the formulation of policy and the acquisition of educational power. The field best suited to this task was provision for 16-19s - i.e. NAFE, perceived by the DES as the logical 'lever' by means of which the system could be reoriented in such a way that its influence would be increased. The reasons Rhodes cites for this were that, located as it was in the school-work gap, it had not been accorded priority by any of the partners, and thus had fallen under no-one's directive control. In consequence it was 'less hedged around by statutory constraints'[82], making it a rich area for redefinition by the first party to take a major interest in its affairs. A key document in this development is the so-called 'Yellow Book', a confidential memorandum prepared in 1976 for the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan. This criticised schools for not adequately equipping their pupils with the skills necessary for working life, and formed the basis of Callaghan's Ruskin speech which sparked off the Great Debate. Supported by the encroaching economic recession with its spiralling youth unemployment, and persistent complaints from employers about the inadequacy of schools provision, the philosophy of educational vocationalism which emerged in this period became a potentially powerful weapon for those at the DES seeking enhanced influence in the educational policy community.

With the support of a Treasury keen to see its investments in education yield more obviously productive results, the DES set about 'side-stepping its partners in the troika of the education policy community'[83], seeking to expand its policy space in the 16-19 field. Vocationalism proved a powerful force in an era of political re-evaluation, but dangers to its policy existed in that such forces are inevitably open to exploitation by other interests. Expanding into new territory for the DES meant leaving itself 'open to challenge from other policy networks'[84]. It was noted earlier that training had long

been a responsibility of the public sector institutions of the employment and training policy network, i.e. the DE and latterly the MSC. These were

> ever eager to defend their turf 'against the possible "capture" of training by the Department of Education'.[85]

and were likely to pose a challenge to any new DES moves into the sector. If it was to succeed, it needed to show an ability to deliver new, vocationalist policies on the ground more effectively than its rivals.

Early tests of this ability included the formulation of a new policy on post-16 institutional structures, and in making a response to the needs set out by Callaghan for a programme of work experience and training for the young unemployed. In neither case were the results encouraging. The first foundered on arguments over a draft circular issued by the 16-19 sub-committee of the Expenditure Steering Group (Education) of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. The then Education Secretary Shirley Williams had 'wanted a prompt response to (its) deliberations'[86], but criticisms of the draft circular prevented its further progression, a second, political sub-committee being set up to further consider the issue. Progress was slow because 'a consensus did not exist within the policy community'[87], and this reflects the difficulties the DES faced in attempting to force through a policy line. The junior minister responsible for the political sub-committee is quoted as saying of this situation

> for God's sake let's get something decided. For ten years we've been at it and we now need a decision.[88]

Rhodes suggests that this comment could be 'the epitaph of the policy community'[89]. The incident expresses much about DES impotence.

The second example is even more relevant to the consideration of competition for the training policy space, as it involved the MSC and the DES in conflict for the first time. It was noted in Chapter 2 that DES proposals to organise a major programme of youth training and work experience were superseded by a similar scheme (YOP) run under the aegis of the MSC. This major setback for DES ambitions derived largely

from the impact of the Holland Report[90], which convinced the Cabinet that the Commission was best placed to meet the needs of the moment.

These examples illustrate the nature of the conflict between the DES and the MSC for control of the vocational policy space. Both harboured ambitions of acquiring greater responsibilities, but possessed a differing potential to succeed because of the contrasting nature of both their respective policy networks and their expressions of the bureaucratic dynamic. In the previous sections of this chapter a whole series of such contrasts were observed. In terms of the policy networks, these included significant contrasts in the organisational structure, the flow of authority, degree of autonomy and accountability, and financial linkages. Whereas in the employment and training network the public sector organisational linkages were internal to one bureaucracy (the MSC), in the NAFE sector a more complicated structure necessitated negotiation, co-operation and the pursuit of mutually agreed policies before change could be effected. Thus while the DE could issue directives to local level via the tiers of the MSC, the DES was unable to secure the implementation of its policies with any degree of certainty. Whilst the only opposition to the activities of the MSC could stem from refusal to accept its money, the DES frequently met resistance from LEAs who had policies and priorities of their own, and the political legitimacy to pursue them. Whilst the employment/training structure could virtually assure delivery, the central body of the NAFE sector could only guarantee the attempt. A more cynical view of this contrast is contained in the view that

> The basic appeal of the assault of the MSC on the education system is that democracy is inefficient.[91]

Another central factor in the differences between the two bodies, at a time of severe fiscal constraint, was the use of public money. Whilst the MSC could allocate funds from its central budget to local implementation through a simple chain of line management, control over money in the NAFE sector fell into a number of hands, denying the DES the power to determine in any specific way the manner in which it was spent at the local level. Money could be allocated to the MSC with a sure

knowledge of what it would be used for; the same did not apply to the NAFE route. Ranson quotes a DES official on the subject:

'we had ... a serious problem in persuading Whitehall that we could deliver'.
In sharp contrast the MSC

'has a big bag of gold, is a centralised bureaucracy and can deliver the goods'.[92]

And again:

the Treasury is very critical: education has promised and not delivered. If you give £50m to the MSC it will buy you a hard edged reduction in youth unemployment, whereas if you put money in the RSG ... That is why we lose out. The Treasury-Cabinet line is pay money to an organization which will get things done quickly. The Treasury has been a strong controlling influence. The Treasury/MSC link has been a key one. We are trying to gain the same relationship.[93]

The DES was unable to form such a relationship because of resource linkages fundamentally different from those of the MSC.

In addition to the above, there existed strong bureaucratic contrasts. The MSC had a management structure which ensured swift and obedient response to its directives, and an operational culture which was amenable to sudden, wholesale changes of direction. A young body not tied by the allegiances and expectations of longstanding negotiating arrangements with partners in its field, it could adapt as required in a very short time. The DES, in contrast, established in its role for many years, was firmly locked into a procedural culture and negotiation network which severely hampered its ability to respond quickly to any development; it was fundamentally unadaptable. Its approach to policy-making and change was incrementalist, accustomed to gradual development encumbered at every stage by extensive consultation procedures.

Whereas the DES was in the habit of pursuing long-term goals, cautiously implemented over a number of years, the MSC pursued its policies with unashamedly short-term horizons, seeking early results. The horizons of politics being equally limited, it thus perfectly complemented the dynamics of political imperative. Problems

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such as an impending youth unemployment crisis make rapid solutions a political necessity, and the bureaucracy best placed to come up with such solutions is the most liable to attract Cabinet patronage.

Furthermore the MSC had a clearly market-centred, business-oriented philosophical stance, took an economic view of education and training and was thus naturally vocationalist. The DES in contrast was, despite its attempts to expand into the vocational education policy space, philosophically rooted in the era of the social democratic consensus, with all its attention to the needs of the individual. A Cabinet with a newly 'work-oriented' perspective on education was likely to be most convinced by a bureaucracy whose colours were firmly and unequivocally nailed to the vocationalist totem, than by a recent and not altogether convincing convert.

Lastly, there is the question of institutional competitiveness. It was observed above that the MSC was aggressive, opportunist and interventionist in style, keen to expand its policy space and increase its responsibilities. Whilst the DES was also seeking to expand its influence in the late 1970s, the MSC attributes of authoritative command, flexibility, reliability, direct purchasing power and a freedom to reformulate policy at the drop of a hat gave it advantages the DES could not hope to match.

It would however be a mistake to imagine that the MSC or DES were in any way seeking conflict with each other. The case was rather that

> to create new institutions gives rise to the probability that they will clash with existing institutions so that there is an internal conflict within the state bureaucratic apparatus.[94]

The MSC was little over two years old when the influential papers of 1976* staked its claim to a role in the training of young people. Both the Commission and the DES were looking to extend their influence into an area for which no institutional responsibility was defined, neither having any past precedent to draw upon to establish a right of influence. The reason they both moved into the area at the same time was that they were responding to the same political and economic pressures, in consequence of which they

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* see section 2.3 (ii)

found themselves in competition. The institution which would emerge as dominant in the policy area would be that best equipped to answer the imperatives of the moment. The above contrasts between the two bodies and policy networks illustrate the reasons why the MSC was ultimately more successful.

The pressures acting on the Callaghan government to introduce change in the area of youth training policy in the late 1970s were impossible to ignore. Changes in the economy and the associated spiralling of unemployment necessitated a rapid departure from the longstanding equilibrium in education and training. Salter and Tapper note that

> While some kind of gap has always been tolerated between the demands made by the economy on the educational system and the quality of labour supplied by that system, there must come a point where changes have to occur if the mismatch between demand and supply is not to result in unbearable tensions and social fracture.[95]

In this situation,

> The more its bureaucratic dynamic fosters the formation of education policies sympathetic to economic demands the more powerful is an institution.[96]

As a consequence of all the above factors, the MSC was able to present itself as uniquely placed to fulfil the needs of the economy by promoting a system of education and training fit to meet them. Geoffrey Holland, one of the architects of the MSC's rise to prominence, claims it to be

> doubtful that any government department could have been so well-placed as the MSC to facilitate and underpin such developments.[97]

It succeeded where the DES failed; the latter, in the process of attempting to reassert control within its own policy community by redefining the purposes of education, had 'constrained its ability to extend its domain'[98]. Its internal constraints made it 'a victim of the very ideology it had so conscientiously sponsored'[99]. However, as Rhodes points out, it would be a mistake to see the MSC's expansion simply as an incursion

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into the territory of the DES: it has taken over a policy space in which the DES had limited previous involvement and which it aspired to control. It was

> a policy space awaiting occupation not capture.[100]

The DE had long been established in training, and the vocational area for young people was very much on the boundaries of both communities. The surprising feature of the developments which took place is the relative ease with which the MSC became the natural choice to adopt functions which might have been expected to be handled by the NAFE policy community.

After its success in developing YOP, the MSC consolidated its new position. As Moon and Richardson noted in 1984,

> the MSC has, in a short period of time established itself as the focal point of vocational training and has been tremendously effective in expanding its administrative territory.[101]

Through its ability to quickly deliver politically-urgent results without fuss or waste of resources, it acquired the allegiance of the Treasury and the ear of the Cabinet. The initial threat to this position posed by the election of the first Thatcher government with its commitment to cut public expenditure in all areas was met as effectively and astutely as its other challenges. As detailed in Chapter 2, the ploy of the New Training Initiative succeeded in winning a government reappraisal which strengthened the Commission's hand, and saw it receive new responsibilities for the coordination of youth and adult training.

The announcement of TVEI in 1982 marked another major boost to the MSC's pivotal role as a conduit for government action. This initiative emphasised how central was the Commission in the early 1980s to government thinking on youth, education and training policy. Section 3.7 considers how, with this in mind, the strategists of the Thatcher government perceived the potential of the MSC as a tool for securing the desired policy changes as they turned their attention to the next item on their educational agenda: non-advanced further education.

An outline of the governments approach to its 1984 strategy which synthesisies the theoretical perspectives outlined in this chapter is conducted in section 3.7. Before that it is necessary to cover one further theoretical area   crucial to any account of such strategy; that is, an overview of the nature of policy-formulation, decision-making and implementation.

3.6   Policy formulation, decision-making and implementation

The *raison d'être* of the present chapter is to provide a basis for understanding the government NAFE strategy in 1984 - why it did what it did. Previous sections have examined the particularities of the policy networks and bureaucracies which were to deliver NAFE under the proposals of the new legislation. What remains is the need to set NAFE policy-making in the wider context of policy-making generally: how it is formulated, how decisions about it are arrived at, how it is implemented. These questions raise a series of issues about the possibilities within which policy strategists work. To understand the approach of the government's strategists in 1984, therefore, it is necessary to identify the limits to those possibilities. This section undertakes such a task by considering alternative approaches, and adopting one which may be used to characterise the process which occurrred in NAFE, both in the run-up to and the period which followed the White Paper.

For the purposes of this study, theories concerning the means by which policy is conceived, adopted and implemented can usefully be split into two broad perspectives. The first of these embraces a top-down model involving rational decision-making by upper echelon actors; the second views policy-making as a wider and more complex process involving active participation at all levels.

3.6 (i) Top-down approach

This conceives there to be a division of labour between those who formulate and those who implement policy. The former are seen to operate in the upper tier of the policy

process. They carry decision-making authority, set goals, and make rational decisions between alternative policy options according to which is most conducive to the achievement of the chosen goals[102]. The latter's role is to pursue these strategies as effectively as they are able, faithfully following such guidelines as have been handed down to them from above. Thus policy is seen as being a recognisable entity which can be clearly identified by both parties, perhaps enshrined as a piece of legislation, and hence evaluation of the policy becomes a matter of measuring how closely the policy outcomes match the original objectives. The process is portrayed as cyclical. In the first instance there is a period of policy formulation, followed by an implementation phase. This stage includes monitoring and evaluation of policy outputs, the results of which are fed back to the policy makers to inform another round of policy decisions, which in turn are once again handed down to the implementers. Ham and Hill[103] note that this is a prescriptive rather than responsive or flexible approach to policy-making. They state that its position embodies the following: (a) that policy should be made by elected representatives, implemented by subordinate and obedient public officials, and (b) that policy-making involves goal-setting followed by activities in pursuit of these goals which may be systematically monitored.

This approach involves a number of key assumptions. Broadly these concern: firstly, the authority which those in the upper tier of the policy process can exert over what takes place at the lower levels; secondly, the ability of the upper tier to successfully formulate an informed policy which is sufficiently detailed to be applicable at the local scale when implemented; and, thirdly, the very existence of policy as a recognisable entity.

Firstly then, on the question of authority, the top down approach considers the policy makers to be a dominant group, for whom policy is an identifiable piece of property of which they are the owners. Similarly, they are seen to monopolise the decision-making process, with the implicit requirement that substantive decisions relating to the implementation of the policy be referred back up the line for their approval. Any unsanctioned alteration or interpretation of these decisions represents a challenge to the authority of the dominant group. In state policy-making such as that for the public sector NAFE this group is the central government, and in particular its

ministers and their teams, who are accorded superior legitimacy over all other actors in the policy field as a consequence of the government's electoral mandate. Hence, it is at this stage only that ideological imperatives are permitted to enter into the policy process; these in turn require the approval of the electorate at regular intervals. As we have seen this situation can become complicated by the existence of other, independent mandates lower down the hierarchy, but the important principle at this stage is the concept of a distinct decision-making group.

The second major group of assumptions centre on the ability of the above group to adequately formulate policy which is sufficiently comprehensive to instruct the implementers in the details of their activities. For such comprehensiveness to be attained, the decision-making élite is required to be highly informed on a wide range of detailed issues. These include previous practice, the demands and powers of various interest groups at different levels, the amount of resources (in both time and money terms) required to carry out the various phases of implementation, and the likely consequences of alternative courses of action. Naturally it will be the role of the lower tiers to provide such information, it being their responsibility to ensure that the decision-making élite is making rational choices on the basis of as complete a body of information as can be achieved within available resources. The assumption that this is what they in fact do, i.e. that they are not selective in the information they supply to their superiors, is very important.

Furthermore it is assumed that either: (i) the policy handed down by decision-makers is formulated in sufficient detail as to inform the ground-level implementers as to how to respond to contingent local circumstances, or (ii) that where such detail is not built in to the initial policy, that the decision-makers have sufficient time available to deal with any detailed implementation problems that are referred back up to them by implementers who have no personal authority to act independently on these.

The corollary of the above approach is a view of 'implementation' as

those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement

of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions.[104]

This epitomises the top-down view of the policy process, and embraces the idea that

much can go 'wrong' between policy formulation and output.[105]

Extensive work has been done in this area by Pressman and Wildavsky much of whose concern is with the extent to which successful implementation depends on linkages between different organisations and departments at the local level[106]. Their analysis is mathematical in approach, quantifying the number of 'linkages' between these organisations in the implementation of an area of policy and theorising that the greater the number of these linkages, the higher the quality of cooperation required between the various partners to avoid a shortfall between policy objectives and achievements. This notion they identify as 'implementation deficit', a function of the number of linkages, whose minimisation becomes an important goal.

In line with this view is Gunn's perspective, which requires ten preconditions for 'perfect implementation'. These typify the top-down approach, and provide a useful portrait of how it would prefer the policy process to appear. His preconditions for 'perfect implementation' are:

(i)   that circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints;

(ii)   that adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme;

(iii)   the required combination of resources is available at each stage as well as overall;

(iv)   the policy to be implemented is based on a valid theory of cause and   effect;

(v)   the cause and effect relationship is direct, with few if any intervening links;

(vi)   policy is implemented by a single agency which need not depend on other agencies for success;

(vii)   complete understanding/agreement over objectives - these conditions persist throughout the implementation process;

(viii) it is possible to specify, in complete detail and perfect sequence, the tasks to be performed by each participant;

(ix)   there is perfect communication between and coordination of various elements involved in the programme;

(x)   those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience.[107]

Figure 3.3: The top-down model

POLICY FORMULATION

IMPLEMENTATION

SETTING OF POLICY OBJECTIVES

Elected Chambers	Passing of legislation
Commissions	Production of policy statements
Company Boards	Directives issued to lower tier staff

Ideology

Research

Traditional practice

Feedback to inform new policy

ADMINISTRATION OF OBJECTIVES

Organisational framework	Translation of policy statements into day-to-day tasks
Administrative actors at a range of levels, both centrally and locally	Liaison with outside actors
	Referral upwards of interpretative decisions

POLICY OUTCOMES

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Source: Compiled by the author.

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The top-down view of the policy process as outlined in this section can be summed up simply as in Figure 3.3.

3.6 (ii) Weaknesses of the top-down model

There are a number of problems surrounding the top-down model, and these are rooted in its assumptions. Whilst it would be inaccurate to suggest that it it is widely put forward as an achievable goal, it nonetheless is suggested as an ideal to which the efforts of all those involved in the policy process should be aimed. In doing so, it fails to take into account some crucial and basic factors which need to be recognised in order to fully understand the way in which the policy process operates.

Principally, the deficiency of the top-down model is that it overemphasises the distinction between policy-making and implementation. Implicit in this are three erroneous assumptions, referred to above, which to summarise concern:

(a) the power-relationship between the decision-making élite and the lower administrative tiers;

(b) the ability of the decision-making élite to formulate a policy which is sufficiently comprehensive;

(c) the existence of policy as a recognisable entity.[108]

The power relationship referred to in assumption (a) considers the highest policy tier to exercise effective authority over the lower tiers. This fails to consider two significant areas. These are, firstly, the possible existence of other legitimate sources of power within the policy system, and secondly that bureaucrats within the administration will inevitably possess a degree of interpretative discretion in carrying out their activities, to a greater or lesser extent.

To take the first point, in a pluralist society any policy area will embrace a number of interest groups who will independently exert such power as they possess to influence the decision-making process. Trade unions, employers organisations, lobby

groups, trade associations, powerful private individuals or institutions are all examples of such influences, and where the interests of such groups conflict with those of the policy-makers (or indeed each other), decision-making inevitably requires negotiation and compromise between these competing interests. The policy-making élite are unable to force decisions on the policy area concerned without the support of at least some of the major interest groups who are involved in it.

In examining NAFE policy we shall be looking at the national government as the decision-making élite, and Barrett and Hill note that implementation problems arise in such areas due to, firstly,

> the normative assumptions of government - what ought to be done and how

and

> the struggleand conflict between interests - the need to bargain and compromise.

This tension represents

> the reality of the process by which power/influence is gained and held in order to pursue ideological goals.

They emphasise four reasons why compromise is an inherent factor in policy, which are that many policies:

(i)   represent compromises between conflicting values;

(ii)   involve compromises with key interests within the implementation structure;

(iii)   involve compromises with key interests upon whom the implementers will have an impact;

(iv)   are framed without attention being given to the way in which underlying forces (particularly economic ones) will undermine them.[109]

In this context it is further relevant that policy in an area such as NAFE, which requires the local implementation of national decisions, involves a relationship between central and local government which, as noted in section 3.4, is far from a straightforward matter of the latter carrying out the former's instructions. The effects of this in NAFE

are considered in Chapter 4.

The second area embraced in assumption (i) is the notion that administrators are no more than the unthinking tools of the decision-makers, simply the operational 'hands' of the policy-making 'brain'. This view is inappropriate: firstly, administrators cannot be impelled to act in a regulated manner - Hill and Barrett[110] note the inherent difficulty of controlling implementing actors, the process of their day-to-day work invariably presenting them with situations where their response requires a certain amount of individual discretion. Secondly, it is desirable for all concerned in the policy process that they do this: without individuals' responsiveness at the moment of incidence to the detailed complexity of contingent circumstances, any administrative organisation would become inoperable.

At the same time it is important to accept the limitations of the individual's role. McGrew and Wilson draw attention to the

limited information-processing capacity of real individuals.[111]

They cite the notions of Steinbruner[112] who, in making out a case for what is described as 'grooved thinking', argues that as a consequence of these limitations individuals become 'programmed' to respond to particular organisational information flows which shape their basic thinking process.
Individuals thus come to think along certain 'grooves', simplifying complex tasks into crudely defined decisions in individual cases.

Two points need to be noted here. Firstly, that such decisions, however crudely defined, do in fact occur. Secondly, that the above statements apply with equal force to individual actors at the top of the decision-making hierarchy.

This consideration leads on to the second key assumption of the top-down model, concerning the ability of a policy-making élite to formulate a policy sufficiently comprehensive to be straightforwardly implemented. This assumption requires two things of the policy-makers. Firstly, a considerable degree of expertise in the policy

area; secondly a detailed and up-to-date knowledge of the prevailing contingent circumstances under which the policy is to be carried out.

Both of these require the policy-makers to be extremely well-informed, and the assumption breaks down for a number of reasons. We have already noted the limited information-processing capacity of individuals:the expectation that individual actors or small groups in decision-making élites can be equipped with enough knowledge and understanding of an entire policy network to control its most detailed workings is clearly exagerated. Saunders makes this point thus:

> Even in the most rigid and hierarchical of state bureaucracies, those occupying lower-level positions invariably retain some degree of autonomy and discretion in their relations with those at the top, for in no organisation can the formal leadership hope to lay down and monitor all aspects of policy and its implementation.[113]

In addition to this are the time constraints which inhibit policy-makers from concerning themselves with the day-to-day detail of policy implementation decisions, as well as a number of good reasons why it is considerably more practical to leave some decision-making to the implementation phase. Some of these are that:

(i)   conflicts cannot be resolved during the policy-making stage;
(ii)   it is regarded as necessary to let key decisions be made when all the facts are available to the implementers;
(iii)   it is believed that implementers (professionals, for example) are better-equipped to make key decisions than anyone else;
(iv)   little is known in advance about the actual impact of the new measures;
(v)   it is recognised that day-to-day decisions will have to involve negotiation and compromise with powerful groups.[114]

The issue of expertise and where it is located is crucial in this context. In many fields, and in particular those where a large number of professional staff are engaged close to the 'coal-face' of activity, this will be largely outside any legislative élite. In the case of NAFE, where the expertise of lecturing staff and LEA and college administrators is called extensively into play, this aspect is of considerable importance.

A further consideration is that not only do administrators in the lower echelons

participate in decision-making once policy positions have been decided; they also play a contributory role in the initial determination of these positions. This derives from their function of providing the bulk of the information upon which the decisions of the senior policy-makers are based. McGrew and Wilson argue that the policy directorate is not simply a controlling functionary, but that it is in part controlled by the selection of information by those below sending it up, for example in the form of

> feasibility studies which ... define their nominal masters' decision space.[115]

Salter and Tapper claim that the DES bureaucratic élite, for example, is very influential, ministers being unable to master the wide range of areas of educational expertise in which the Department deals. It is therefore difficult for them to challenge the institutional policy agenda they inherit, and must 'make choices *between* policies presented to (them)'[116]. McGrew and Wilson note that at the higher levels of organisation the 'principles by which information is classified and acted upon' become more abstract and purely policy-oriented rather than case-oriented[117]. *Both* are crucial in the fullest development of policy.

The above points have already hinted at the inadequacies of the third major assumption of the top-down model, that policy exists as a recognisable entity which can be handed down in a complete form to implementers. Ham and Hill[118] consider this a dangerous assumption, and also state that it may not make sense to refer to an organisation's goals as if they can be simply stated. At one extreme the form in which policy is handed down may represent no more than a 'stance'[119], which is easy to identify, but much more difficult to turn into policy on the ground. At the other policy may be enshrined in detailed legislation, which may be complex, legalistic and difficult to interpret simply as a set of direct day-to-day guidelines. However, whilst it is here that the formulations produced by the highest tier will be the most comprehensive, it is important to note that (a) such detail will almost certainly have been produced by actors below the decision-making élite (who will have thus delimited their superiors' 'decision-space' as noted above), and (b) that even at this level of detail, such a document will not approach the complexity of the daily tasks routinely thrown up by the unpredictably changing circumstances within which implementers operate.

In view of these considerations it can be concluded, along with Ham and Hill and others, that

> Implementation rarely involves the direct translation of policy goals into action[120]

and that decision-making

> rarely proceeds in such a logical, comprehensive and purposive manner.[121]

3.6 (iii) Alternative view - the policy-making continuum

There is widespread support for the view that policy-making continues into the implementation phase, which may involve

(i)   continuing flexibility;

(ii)   concretisation of policy in action;

(iii)   process of movement back and forth between policy and action.[122]

Noted earlier was Lipsky's stress upon the role of 'street-level' bureaucrats, stated to be very significant policy-makers. The claim is that

> the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the policies they carry out.[123]

They are of crucial significance in determining the allocation of goods and services, making

> choices about the use of scarce resources under pressure.[124]

Their reasons for making specific decisions is unlikely to be politically-motivated or tuned towards any coherent policy goals, related rather more, claims Lipsky, to the

reduction of pressure upon themselves. Which is to say, they are fundementally pragmatists. However, this in no way minimises the implications of their contributory function; their interpretative role in adjusting statutory or other policy requirements in line with local imperatives must be seen as a highly significant aspect of implementation, and of the concretisation of policy in action.

As noted in section 3.2, Lipsky argues that the scope of of discretion exercised by street-level bureaucrats is determined by the degree to which they can be considered professionals. Dunleavy emphasises the potential for policy-formulation by professionals in a field

> through their internal process of ideological development, rather than through the operations of their professional institutions in an interest group mould.[125]

The presence of educationalist professionals in the NAFE sphere, particularly at the LEA and college level is, in this analysis, clearly a significant factor in the development of the sector's policies.

The corollary of the above considerations is that an alternative perspective is required, which recognises the true nature of policy development. Such an approach could usefully embrace the alternative 'bottom-up' analyses, for example the 'backward mapping' forwarded by Elmore[126], but must not fall into the trap of excluding or undervaluing the contribution of crucial upper tier actors in reverse fashion to the top-down model. It must recognise that policy-making is a complex, dynamic and iterative process involving decision-making in every tier of the hierarchy in a given policy field. It must lay sufficient stress on the interpretative role of implementing actors in fleshing out bare policy 'stances' into the diverse and complex form in which policy manifests itself on the ground. It must emphasise that policy develops over time, and can never wholly exist in the form of written statements, however comprehensive their scope. In recognising the point that it is

> hard to identify particular occasions when policy is made[127]

it becomes clear the policy-making must be seen as an organic process in which detail is constantly revised in the context of praxis. The notion forwarded by Barrett and Fudge of implementation as

> a policy/action continuum in which an interactive and negotiative process is taking place over time[128]

therefore emerges as a useful construct. This suggests a process involving two groups, those seeking to put policy into effect, and those upon whom action depends. Such a view emphasises the need to focus on the interactions between actors and agencies in order to better reflect the complexities and dynamics of these interactions. Barrett and Hill[129] argue for an 'action-centered' mode of analysis, a position which recognises:

(a) changing and changeable policy;
(b) complex interaction structure;
(c) outside world which must interfere;
(d) inherent difficulty of controlling implementing actors[130]

These reflect, not 'implementation deficiency', but integral aspects of the policy process.

The policy-making continuum becomes the most useful concept, therefore, in analysing an area such as NAFE where the above considerations unquestionably come into play. It may usefully be outlined in diagrammatic form as in Figure 3.4.

These ideas will be used in Chapter 4 to examine the reasons why the original proposals of *Training for Jobs* became blunted at the implementation stage. Meanwhile, having established a construct with which to analyse the policy-making process in NAFE, it is necessary to turn to the specific considerations which were being made by government strategists in the run-up to the 1984 White Paper.

Figure 3.4 The policy-making continuum

Centre	Locality
Upper tiers	Lower tiers
Legislators	Implementers
Executives	Street-level bureaucrats

concretisation of policy in action

Involvement with/
power over detail

Translation of policy stances
into tasks/procedures

Pragmatism

Monitoring

Power over finance
& law

Ideological input

Generalisation of goals

Evaluation
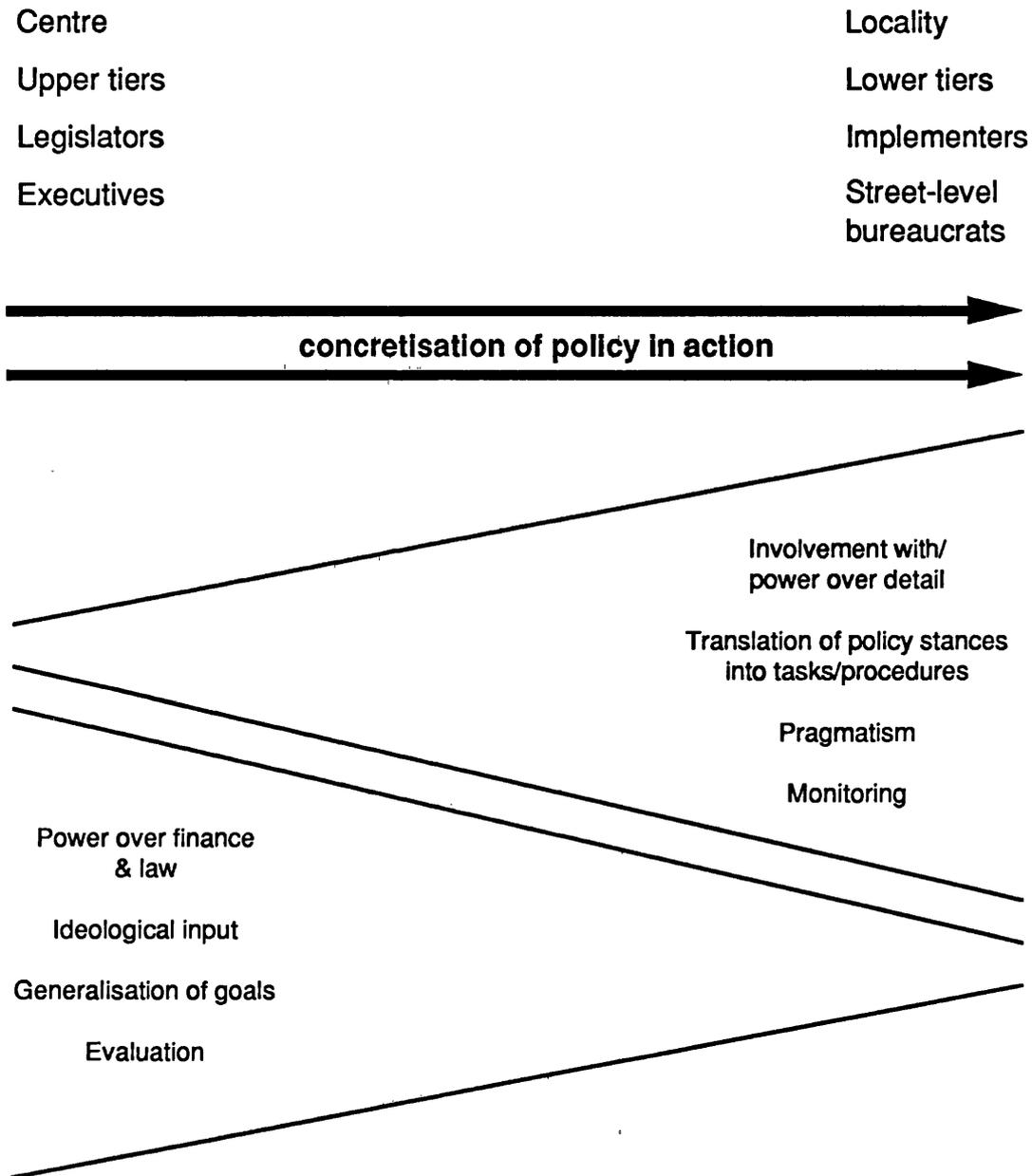
3.7   The Thatcher government's 1984 NAFE strategy

The purpose of this chapter has been to present a central argument of the thesis, that which seeks to account for the intent in the government strategy which lay behind the 1984 White Paper. The previous sections of the chapter have developed a series of theoretical and historical constructs upon which such an argument may be based. This final section seeks to present the argument as concisely as possible by recourse to the ideas thus justified.

The relevant arguments are divided here into four categories. These are:

(i)   The motivating goals and other imperatives which fuelled moves for policy change.

(ii)   The outcomes required of the new policy.

(iii)   The strategic options open to central government to effect the changes it desired.

(iv)   The eventual choice which became expressed by the White Paper.

3.7 (i)   Imperatives for change

In considering the forces which were responsible for the changes proposed in 1984, a distinction can usefully be drawn between the 'open' objectives, and more 'hidden' factors which require more penetrative analysis. To consider the openly-expressed objectives first, these related to issues of what was educationally-desirable in the broad context of the needs of the nation as a whole, and of extensive criticisms of the existing structure of NAFE. They centred on a view that present provision was inefficient, inflexible, unresponsive, and in many instances anachronistically rooted to past requirements and to tradition, for example the continued widespread use of apprenticeships with their restrictive conditions such as time-serving and union-membership. In a pressured economy in which skill shortages were becoming increasingly apparent, and in which the poor showing of Britain's training record against that of its competitors was an increasing cause for concern, greater attention on

the part of NAFE to the needs of industry was widely held to be necessary. Whilst not uncontroversial - LEAs, colleges and educationalists generally staunchly defended the record of NAFE - this view was not particular to the Thatcher government; it had wide currency elsewhere. Therefore at the surface level a new policy attempting to deal with the problem would be popular.

However, it is argued here that the hidden imperatives behind the 1984 policy change were equally important in bringing it about, if not more so. These two can be divided into two areas - the particular ambitions of the Thatcher government; and deeper structural and historical influences operating within the state. The factors peculiar to the administration of the day can be further separated in to two areas, political and ideological imperatives. The conceptual division is that the first of these refers to factors impinging upon the government from outside, whilst the second refers to its own internal dynamic.

In terms of ideology four key areas are seen a significant: the market; public expenditure; the philosophy of education; and local government. The Thatcher administration came to power on a clear platform based on liberal monetarist economics. On the one hand this embraced a deep belief in the value of the market, whose associated forces were seen as the most efficient way of organising public provision. It placed a premium on competition and the provision of consumer choice as a means of improving services and reducing waste. It contrasted strongly with the collectivist view in which state planning sought to create efficiency, and argued for a reduced role of the state, and a reduction in state expenditure wherever possible. This could either be achieved through greater efficiency or cuts in services. The programme which had been in place throughout the first Thatcher government (1979-83) had followed these ideas, and the new parliament continued this approach.

In terms of vocational education, the philosophical view of this was that public expenditure in this area should be considered an investment in skilled labour power, and thus closely in tune with the economic dynamic. It implicitly rejected the notion that public money should be spent on provision aimed at the non-vocational needs of the individual, this latter requirement being seen as very much a secondary consideration

and anyway a matter for the individual to arrange independently.

The other ideological area considered here is local government. In section 3.4 above, which provided outline of the Conservative government's reassertion of central authority over local government, it was argued that this process was spurred by a deep ideological distaste on the part of central government for the institutions of local democracy. In part this can be ascribed to the other ideological consideration which have already been identified - these include : the view that local authorities were very much bound to the old consensus notions in which collectivist- type provision was widely perceived to be the norm; the idea that local government could be an impediment to the introduction of market-based, private-sector service provision; and that local authorities spent an unacceptably large amount of public money. But perhaps the most significant factor is the aspect of Thatcherism which believed in 'rolling back the frontiers of the state'. In this vision, central government had a necessary function in such areas as national defence and the enforcement of law and order; local government, being almost wholly involved with the provision of consumption services, was carrying out a role better left in private hands and regulated by market forces. The ideal saw a small number of key powers invested in a strong central state, with the majority of functions provided by the private sector. Therefore, any Thatcherite policy directed at the local sphere was likely to express the ideological desire to reduce both the responsibilities and the spending power of councils.

This consideration leads on to one of the three major political factors operating on government thinking at the time of the White Paper. That is, its offensive against local government was causing problems because councils were resisting it with considerable public attention. This might not have mattered, given the supremacy of centre over locality argued to be inevitable in section 3.4, had not these councils been mounting a political challenge to government. Many authorities, most notably the large labour-controlled councils in metropolitan areas were offering not merely resistance but an ideological challenge to government policy, threatening, as argued earlier, to drain public confidence in the belief that 'there was no alternative'. Undermining local government therefore became not just desirable but a matter of urgency, and the strength of anti-local authority feeling in the Cabinet can be accounted for thus. The

consequent motivation was either to strip local government of its powers and responsibilities, or to sidestep its opposition.

The other two key political considerations were the continuing problem of unemployment and timing in the life-cycle of the parliament. The rise of unemployment associated with the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and of youth unemployment as a particular extreme aspect of it, was a powerful political force throughout this period. It had become very high profile as a consequence of criticisms of YOP and the summer riots of 1981, which combined public fears of the perils of an unoccupied young workforce with public dissatisfaction over measures to tackle the problem. Although YTS had been introduced as a bold attempt to quench the issue, and a combination of rising employment and demographic decline was later to lower the public priority of the issue, policy-formulation at the time in question here must nonetheless be understood as occurring against a background of considerable political concern over provision for 16-19 year olds. NAFE, as a major provider, was inevitably close to any new thinking in this area. Politically sensitive areas such as this lend urgency to associated policy efforts, and the need for quick results would affect policy in NAFE as it had in other areas involving the youth problem.

The other political factor which should be noted is that seven months before the publication of *Training for Jobs*, the government had been re-elected with one of the largest majorities of any administration for many years. If there was any time appropriate for a dramatic and perhaps risky policy innovation, it was then.

The last consideration in this analysis of 'hidden' motivations behind the government's policy is that relating to structural and historical factors. These largely concern Saunders' dual-state model in which tensions within the state are a product of deep-seated structural factors, and Salter and Tapper's arguments about the centralisation of education. In Saunders' analysis, as described in section 3.4, the principal distinction between national and local government responsibilities is a respective emphasis on production and consumption functions. Whist sustainable and desirable at a time of economic expansion, the fiscal crises of the mid-late 1970s and beyond led to a conflict to interests and a need for central government to invoke its legal

powers to subdue local demands. Thus it is argued that the Thatcher government's attack on local government only served to intensify an existing structural trend towards central-local conflict, adding weight to the influence of this factor in policy-formulation.

The centralisation of education identified by Salter and Tapper is described in section 3.5. Their argument is that the steady centralisation of DES influence in the education policy community evident since the late 1950s was part of a both a wider centralising tendency at work throughout western Europe and an increasingly self-conscious attempt by the DES to gain the upper hand. The appearance of vocationalism had the effect both of giving the DES a potential weapon to increase its influence and exposing its basic inability to do this, because of its entrenched bureaucratic character. The MSC had consequently profited by picking up the vocationalist ball and running with it fast. As such, it was the focus of all attention in education at a time when centralisation of government power was very much in favour with the administration of the day. It had been successfully used to steamroller through a new policy for schools in the shape of TVEI, and could be expected to feature prominently in any new moves to strengthen the power in education of the central state.

3.7 (ii) Intended outcomes

The White Paper's specific objectives are considered much more fully in Chapter 4, which examines its meaning and intentions in more detail. Here, though, as a means of summarising the above sections, it is useful to identify the specific outcomes to which all the above motivations were pointing at the start of 1984. The Conservative government wanted:

- *Major changes in further education* - it wanted the education service to provide at the NAFE level courses which were less costly, more relevant, offered more flexibly, by management structures which were more responsive to the needs of others than to their self-defined priorities. This meant a greater degree of consumer choice, particularly for employers. Old-fashioned forms of provision which did not meet the needs of the moment should not be funded out of the

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public purse.

- *A more appropriately skilled and flexible workforce* - the above conditions were expected to achieve this.

- *Additional tools to tackle youth unemployment* - NAFE would be one of a number of fronts along which this could be tackled; in all of them the political sensitivity of the issue meant desire for quick results.

- *Further centralisation of educational power* - to effect the above policies it was necessary to wrest influence from the lower levels and increase that held by the centre. This issue is picked up again below. This was to be concomitant with:

- *A reduction in the influence over education of local politicians* - as part of the government's overall attack on local government, this was to be one amongst many areas where local powers were to be eroded, in line with a trend stretching back throughout the twentieth century (see section 3.4). This objective was emphasised by the government's interest in taking control of NAFE as a form of economic investment whilst blunting local authorities' capability to invest in NAFE as a form of social consumption. It would also facilitate the desire to remove collectivist influences from education and strengthen the influence of education as an economic investment in labour.

- *The minimisation of public expenditure on NAFE* - in line with government policy on public expenditure generally, NAFE expenditure was to be entrusted to hands which could be relied upon to deliver the central government's objectives to the exclusion of other priorities.

- *The advance of Conservative policy at a time of strength* - an expression of the desire to maximise on the advantages of a large majority in a young parliament to further the aims of the Thatcherite project for a new, market-oriented society.

The above points provide an overview of the strategic objectives which fuelled government thinking in developing its *Training for Jobs* policy. This overview can be profitably simplified by recourse to a model of government intentions which draws upon the notions of 'top-down' and 'policy-making continuum' approaches to the process of government decision-making.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the policy-making continuum, but does not express the relative overall power of the higher and lower echelons. In Figure 3.5, therefore, the model is developed by considering three simple variations of the continuum.

Whilst Figure 3.5 (ii) echoes the earlier diagram, (i) and (iii) illustrate the extremes. In (i), a picture is presented which recognises the inevitability of policy development at all stages of the implementation process, yet in which the centre/top is very much the dominant partner, the parameters for local/lower-tier discretion being very narrow. Conversely, (iii) indicates a position where lower tier actors are more influential, their opposite numbers in the upper-tier having a much reduced role.

The purpose of bringing this model into the discussion at this stage is to characterise with greater clarity the nature of the 1984 policy initiative. It is argued that in *Training for Jobs*, in order to achieve the objectives outlined above, the attempt was being made to move from a position in which local actors (principally in the LEAs) were largely in control of NAFE policy, to one in which the central state had a much more significant influence; i.e., the government was seeking to move from a position akin to that in Figure 3.5 (iii), top one more like that in 3.5 (i). It was seeking to alter the very structure of the policy-making continuum.

It would be ingenuous to suggest that government strategists believed possible a wholesale shift of NAFE control into a few hands at the centre. What is argued here is that they envisaged a decisive shift in that control away from local authorities and towards more centralised decision-makers. Associated with this was a parallel shift, of a *decentralising* nature, of local power from public to private hands, i.e. from LEAs to local employer and business interests. This, as argued above, was a trend characteristic of the Thatcher years and of the ideology which fuelled them.

Figure 3.5: Variations in the policy making continuum

(i) CENTRE/TOP-DOMINATED SITUATION:

CENTRE   LOCALITY

CON CRETISATION

(ii) BALANCED SITUATION:

CENTRE   LOCALITY

CONCRETISATION

(iii) LOCAL/LOWER-TIER DOMINATED SITUATION:

CENTRE   LOCALITY

CONCRETISATION
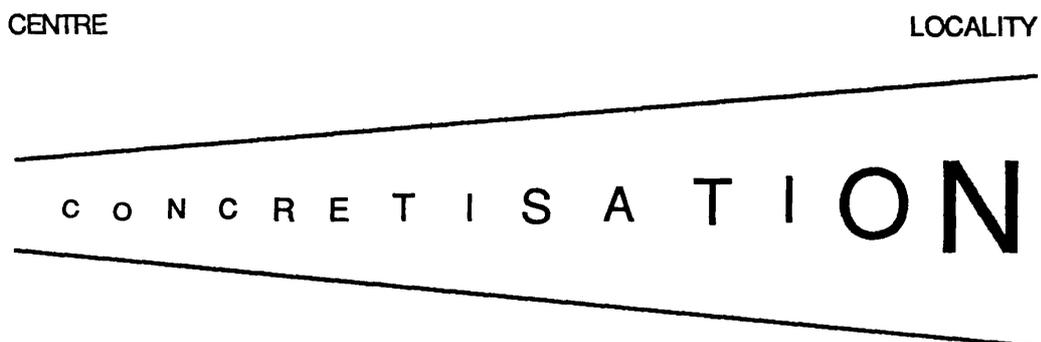
Source: Compiled by the author.

The next section considers how this overall objective became translated into a particular strategy which could be defined, published and pursued.

3.7 (iii) Strategic options

In considering the issue of options open to central and local government in pursuing a policy strategy, Rhodes identifies as many as eleven major approaches[131]. Briefly, these are:

bureaucratic	-	central government using its legal authority to restrain or direct local action;
incorporation	-	cooption and joint decision-making;
consultation	-	involves no commitment to making modifications;
bargaining	-	process of mutual exchange;
penetration	-	local authority seeks allies within the centre;
avoidance	-	no agreement, each follows its own policy;
incentives	-	financial inducements offered to secure implementation;
persuasion	-	by means of rational argument/advice etc.;
professionalisation	-	creation of single-issue policy areas dominated by professionals
factorising	-	simplifying issues through subdivision.

Before considering which of these forms apply to *Training for Jobs* it is worth recalling Saunders' two categories of organisational strategy (outlined in section 3.4), 'restructuring' and 'innovation'. These point to the two options which, it is argued, can be seen as the broad choice facing government strategists as they devised a NAFE policy designed to meet the objectives outlined above. These are:

(i) Legislative intervention in the NAFE policy community;

(ii) Innovation by other means.

To take the first of these, legislative intervention is an approach which fits into Rhodes 'bureaucratic' category. It offered the strategists many difficulties and few attractions. The analysis above of the NAFE policy community and its bureaucratic structure indicate that it was a field where impediments to rapid change were many, and developments were invariably slow. Recent experience with legislation on local government finance had demonstrated the potential for frustration and delay inherent in attempts to compel local councils to follow government policy by means of altering the legal framework. Furthermore, the process of major legislative change which restructures statutory responsibilities is itself very time-consuming, as the long parliamentary passage of the later Education Reform Bill amply demonstrated. For a government keen to see quick developments in the 16-19 field, and with a busy legislative program of radical proposals to squeeze into parliamentary time, a wide-ranging bill which redefined national and local responsibilities for NAFE would not have suited its purpose.

The other broad alternative was to adopt an innovative policy which would somehow sidestep the quagmire of local government responsibilities and effect change by other means. The alternatives Saunders offers include the imposition of new management techniques upon local decision-making - again a potentially slow process - and the utilisation of alternative non-elected forms of sub-central government. The growth of these bodies since the last war was outlined in section 3.4, and the use of such bodies as regional water and health authorities to take on former local government responsibilities was a tried and trusted practise. And in the shape of the MSC, the government had a ready-made candidate for the task which had already successfully made significant inroads into the vocational field. If the MSC was to be used to further government policy, the question now was how. It would have been impossible to simply hand over responsibility for all of NAFE to the Commission without the sort of major legislation already identified as unattractive. The answer lay in recent experience.

A little over a year previously, the Prime Minister had announced to the House of Commons the introduction of a new form of vocational provision in schools, to be funded and overseen by the MSC - i.e. TVEI. The announcement had been preceded by none of the consultation which normally accompanied such initiatives, and the

government had succeeded in steamrollering its policy through without significant impediment. At a time when all public funding was scarce, the attraction of new money was irresistible to many LEAs. The ready involvement the MSC had been guaranteed by the staunch support of its Chairman, David Young, for Thatcherite policies (see Chapter Two). The question now for the government was whether a similar venture be mounted in NAFE. The answer to this question is considered in the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter Three:

1. Richardson and Jordan, 1979.
2. Rhodes, 1988.
3. Cuthbert, 1987.
4. Benson, 1982.
5. Rhodes, 1988, p.77.
6. *Ibid.*, p.82.
7. *Ibid.*, p.87.
8. Cantor and Roberts, 1986.
9. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.
10. Department of Education and Science, 1970.
11. Cantor and Roberts, 1986,.
12. Salter & Tapper, 1982.
13. Rhodes, 1988, p.80.
14. Dunleavy, 1984.
15. Cantor and Roberts, 1986,.
16. Rhodes, 1988.
17. Boyle (1971), quoted by Kogan, 1971.
18. Rhodes, 1988.
19. Bognador, 1979
20. Weber, 1947.
21. Salter and Tapper, 1981, p.8.
22. *Ibid.*, p.57.
23. Rhodes, 1988, p.93
24. *Ibid.*, p.94
25. Burns and Stalker, 1961.
26. Merton, 1957.
27. Lipsky, 1980.
28. Selznick, 1957.
29. McGrew and Wilson, 1982.
30. Perlman, 1976.
31. McGrew and Wilson, 1982.
32. *Ibid*, p.42.
33. Lipsky, 1980.
34. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.146.
35. Benn and Fairley, 1986.
36. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.28.
37. Manpower Services Commission, 1982.
38. Benn and Fairley, p.7.
39. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.26.
40. Green, 1985.
41. Benn and Fairley, 1986
42. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.29.
43. *Ibid.*, p.227.
44. *Ibid.*, p.29 & p.227.
45. *Ibid.*, p.27
46. Manpower Services Commission, 1977 *Annual Report* .

47. *Training for Jobs, Op. cit.*, 1984.
48. Rhodes, 1988, p.266.
49. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.26.
50. For example see Fairley, 1987.
51. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.224.
52. Benn and Fairley, 1986, p.6.
53. Lodge and Blackstone, 1982, pp.33-4.
54. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.23.
55. *Ibid.*, p.4.
56. *Ibid.*, p.23.
57. *Ibid.*, p.24.
58. *Ibid.*, p.22
59. Rhodes, 1988, p.82.
60. Bridges, 1971, pp.44-60.
61. Salter and Tapper,1985, p.23.
62. Dror, 1968, p.272.
63. Rhodes, 1988, p.82.
64. *Ibid.*, p.2.
65. e.g. Saunders, 1984.
66. *Ibid.*, p.24
67. *Ibid.*
68. Dunleavy, 1984, p. 69.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
71. Saunders, 1984, p.32.
72. *Ibid.*, p.35.
73. *Ibid.*, p.78.
74. *Ibid.*, p.54.
75. Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, p.113.
76. Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, p.121
77. Saunders, 1984, p.44.
78. Rhodes, 1988, p.269.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p.258.
81. Kogan, 1973.
82. Ranson, 1982.
83. Rhodes, 1988, p.260.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Rhodes, 1988, p.260, quoting Stringer and Richardson, 1982.
86. Rhodes, 1988, p.261.
87. *Ibid.*, p.261.
88. Ranson, 1982, p.67.
89. Rhodes, 1988, p.261.
90. Manpower Services Commisssion, 1977.
91. Robinson, 1986, p.123.
92. Ranson, 1982, pp. 102 & 103.
93. DES under secretary, quoted in Ranson, 1982, p.124.

94. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.4.

95. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.25.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Holland, 1986.

98. Rhodes, 1988, p.263.

99. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.24.

100. *Ibid.*, p.266.

101. Moon and Richardson, 1984.

102. Simon, 1945.

103. Ham and Hill, 1984.

104. Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975.

105. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.97.

106. Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973.

107. Gunn, 1978.

108. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.95.

109. Barrett, S. and Hill, M., 1981, unpublished, quoted in Ham and Hill *Op. cit.*, p.112.

110. *Ibid.*, p.108.

111. McGrew and Wilson, 1982, p.140.

112. Steinbruner, 1974.

113. Saunders, 1984, p.22.

114. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.106.

115. McGrew and Wilson, 1984.

116. Salter and Tapper, 1982.

117. McGrew and Wilson, 1982.

118. Ham and Hill, 1984.

119. Friend *et al*,1974.

120. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.110.

121. *Ibid.*, p.78.

122. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.106.

123. Lipsky, 1980, p.xii.

124. Ham and Hill, 1984.

125. Dunleavy, 1984, p.77.

126. Elmore, R., 1981, unpublished, quoted in Ham and Hill, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

127. Ham and Hill, 1984, p.11.

128. Barrett and Fudge, 1981.

129. Barrett, S. and Hill, M.,1981, unpublished, quoted in Ham and Hill, *Op. cit.*

130. Ham and Hill, 1984.

131. Rhodes, 1988, pp.92-3.

Chapter Four

The 1984 White Paper *Training for Jobs.*

4.1   Introduction

It has been suggested that:

> it is a well-proven strategy to make a radical policy *announcement* and then return to the logic
> of negotiation. Such a strategy is an indicator of the asymmetric relationships of policy
> communities wherein the centre has structural power.[1]

The publication of the White Paper *Training for Jobs* can be cast as just such an announcement, although whether its intended effects included its own modification through negotiation is open to question. That the White Paper is an attempt to reassert central government priorities upon local authorities was argued in the last chapter. This chapter will indicate how its announcements were indeed radical, and how they were followed by a period of argument, dispute and negotiation which led to the diversion of policy from the government's strategic path. The first section outlines the provisions of the White Paper, and discusses its underlying meaning. Subsequent sections chart the period of dispute and the *rapprochement* which followed; the Agreement which emerged; and the provisions of the amended policy which were to be implemented. It provides an interpretative analysis of these developments, before going on to identify specific areas of enquiry which emerge.

4.2   The White Paper

The White Paper *Training for Jobs* was published on 31 January, 1984[2]. It was presented to Parliament jointly by the Secretaries of State for Employment, Education and Science, Scotland, and Wales, demonstrating its cross-sectoral character. The White Paper's proposals are outlined in the section below; the following section analyses their underlying meaning.

4.2 (i) The proposals

The White Paper covers a number of areas related to vocational education and training (VET). It starts by setting out the Government's broad strategic goals and then identifying 'roles and responsibilities' in VET, before going into detail. This includes discussion of the Youth Training Scheme, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), adult training and occupational skills training, and the comments addressed to these are largely statements of progress so far. The section which deals with NAFE, entitled *New Arrangements within Vocational Education*, appears towards the end of the document, and occupies only 11 of its 56 subsections. It is in this passage, however, that the most significant and far-reaching new proposals are presented.

The section on NAFE starts by identifying a need for greater responsiveness, stating that

> public sector provision for training and vocational education must become more responsive to employment needs at national and local level,

and that for this to be achieved

> the public sector needs a greater incentive to relate the courses it provides more closely to the needs of the customer and in the most cost-effective way.

The White Paper then expands upon the recent growing role of the MSC in carrying out training responsibilities, and the government's intention to develop these further to the point where the Commission would

> discharge the function of a national training authority.

In line with this intention the White Paper unveils the government's plans for NAFE. Noting that current expenditure on NAFE in England and Wales to be 'about £1.2 billion per annum', it claims   approximately £800 million of this to be devoted

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to 'work-related' provision. The MSC is noted to have been already spending around
£90 million as a customer of NAFE courses or services. The new proposal for NAFE
spending is outlined thus:

> We have decided that the amount to be devoted by the Commission to such provision in
> England and Wales should increase to £155 million in the financial year 1985-6, and to £200
> million in 1986-7. The intention is therefore that the Commission should by 1986-7 account
> for about one quarter of the total provision in this area.

However, this was not a proposal for new funding for NAFE:

> The resultant reduction in the need for local authority expenditure will be taken into account in
> settling the relevant rate support grants.

Decisions about which courses were to be supported by the MSC were to be taken
'in consultation' with the education service as well as employers and other parties, but
the Commission was not to be tied to considering LEA provision alone:

> It is envisaged that the great bulk of the resources, *though not necessarily all*, will continue to
> be spent within local authority colleges (my italics).

The importance of the Commission taking account of LEAs' own plans is stressed, as
is the need for 'reasonable continuity of provision'.

Whilst future appointees to the Commission representative of the education
professions and the local authority associations would involve a role for the Education
Secretary, the members would continue to be appointed by the Employment Secretary.

4.2 (ii) Interpreting the White Paper

The language of the above statements is characteristically sedate, but they represent
nonetheless a very dramatic series of proposals. A system of NAFE funding which had
been in place since 1944, and in a similar form since earlier times, was to be radically

transformed by handing over LEA funds to a non-elected national quango which was not even to be obliged to spend the money in the public sector. The proposals had profound implications for the NAFE sector.

The meaning of the White Paper can be understood only by considering the strategic intention of government outlined in Chapter 3. There it was argued that the Conservative administration was moved to define these proposals from a range of motives, only some of which related specifically to the demands of NAFE. As far as the VET objectives were concerned the White Paper's statement about the public sector needing 'a greater incentive' to meet needs cost-effectively indicates the envisaged outcome of a more efficient market-oriented and employer-dominated NAFE system. To bring this about, it was necessary to place a greater degree of ideological control over the curriculum and its management into the hands of central institutions. Therefore, the complementary strategic intention was a radical shift in administrative power away from local authorities and towards the centre, moving from a situation of high local influence to a position more akin to a 'top-down' form of policy-making. The means by which this was to be achieved avoided any attempt at a complex restructuring of the statutory framework, employing instead a strategy of by-passing existing obstacles through existing channels. The method employed, as is evident from the White Paper, principally concerned an innovation in funding arrangements, a potentially deft move which if successful could transform NAFE more swiftly than any intervention in the legal framework.

The nature of this approach can be described by means of Rhodes' categories as a strategy of avoidance and incentive. It did not seek to secure LEAs' or colleges' cooperation for the policy, having not consulted or even informed them about its plans. It simply presented them with a *fait accompli*, in the belief that the attraction of the money now held by the MSC would win out over any attempts to defeat the policy. The steady backing of the MSC for the policy was seen as beyond question: it had a tried and trusted record of delivering whatever the government required of it, an expansionist culture which would thrive on extended responsibilities, and one of the Prime Minister's staunchest supporters at the helm. With an election years away, the possibility of uncooperative LEAs holding out for a change of central government was

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not considered a serious threat.

Figure 4.1 indicates diagrammatically how the funding change was intended to operate as a means of restructuring power relations in NAFE. Following the notions of Rhodes' resource transaction linkages within policy networks[3], the figure indicates the flow of authority between the key bodies of the NAFE policy community in 1984. This authority was inseparably bound up with the resources linkages which connected the same bodies. Part (a) of the diagram illustrates the position prior to the White Paper. It summarises the point established in Chapter 3 that the ability of the centre (represented by the DES) to influence local NAFE outcomes was considerably hampered by the intervention of local democratic autonomy deriving from LEAs' independent electoral mandate. The figure illustrates how this acted as a filter to the flow of central authority. Part (b) of the diagram illustrates the position envisaged by the proposals made in *Training for Jobs*. Here, the problem of local autonomy has been circumvented by introducing an additional, local flow of 'authority' from the MSC to the LEA and its colleges which, being money-based, was not subject to being filtered out by considerations of local political legitimacy.

With its basis in money resources, the use of the term 'authority' in this context is open to question. It is based upon the understanding, held by the government, that the amount of RSG placed in MSC hands was a sufficiently great incentive to ensure that LEAs became subordinated to the need to recoup the money from its new controllers. The concept of 'authority' in this sense, i.e. supposed to stem from power over money rather from statutory legitimacy, is an inherent feature of the chosen strategy of financial juggling over legal restructuring. Given this, the choice of 'about a quarter' of total provision involved a key strategic estimation. That is, it was necessary to balance the shift in resource allocation between RSG and the MSC in such a way that the amount chosen would invest the MSC with sufficient financially-derived authority to fulfil the government's strategic purpose, without being so large as to be counter-productive in terms of political controversy.

The question of strategic balance makes it important to be clear on two points of detail surrounding the funding change, countering the widespread misconception that

Figure 4.1: Change in authority over NAFE envisaged by 'Training for Jobs'

(a) Perceived pre-legislation situation

(b) Envisaged post-legislation situation

Local mandate - autonomy

Local mandate - autonomy
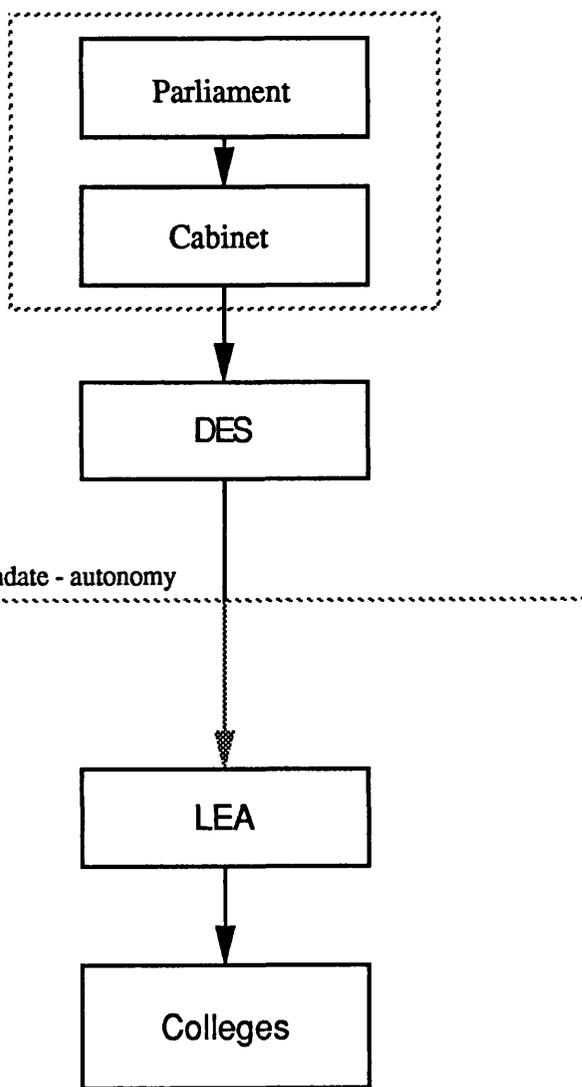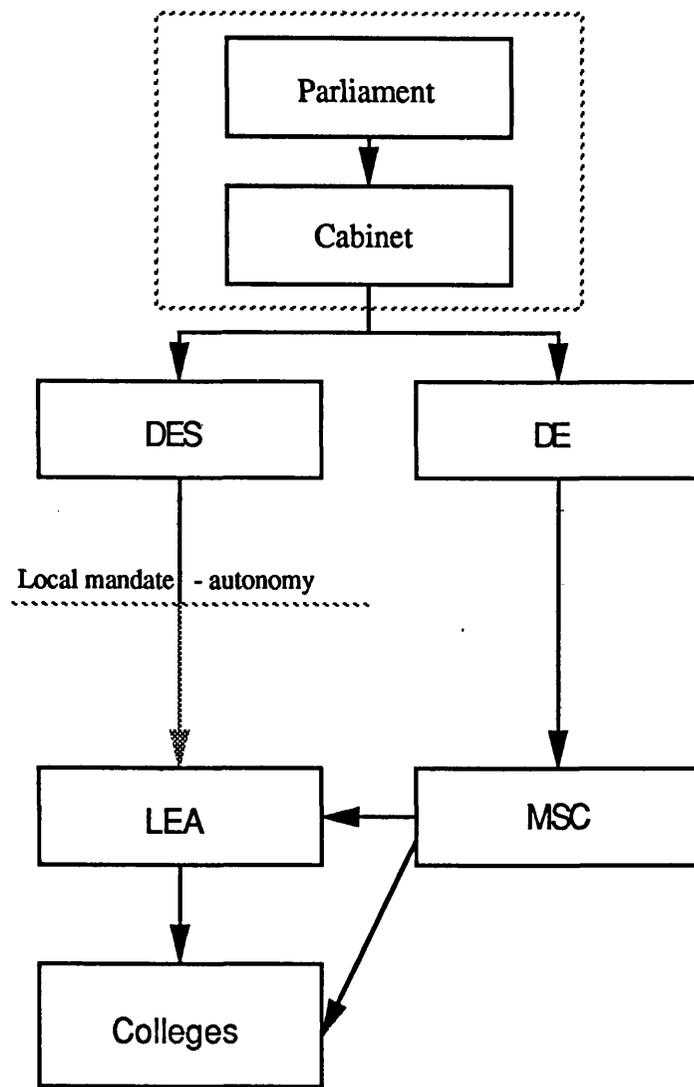
Source: Compiled by the author

→ flow of authority

⇒ 'filtered' flow of authority

25 per cent of LEAs' NAFE-related block grant had been handed over to the MSC under the terms of the White Paper. Firstly, the 'quarter' being entrusted to the MSC was not all new funding. The Commission was already responsible for £90 million worth of expenditure on NAFE. Secondly, the change related only to the funding of *work-related* provision, which itself made up only around two-thirds of all NAFE under the definition being employed in the White Paper. Consequently, the actual *increase* in MSC expenditure was equivalent to only a 16 per cent reduction in the NAFE portion of RSG[4]. However, whilst it is true that the Commission already had a financial input, this took the form of funding placements in such programmes as TOPS and YTS, its role being that of a client much like any other, which sent trainees to colleges and paid the requisite fees. That is, it operated on the *demand* side of NAFE provision. The new role associated with the 16 per cent additional funding was markedly different in nature, in that it covered provision which went beyond its own public sector training programmes, investing it with a role on the *supply* side of NAFE for the first time.

The question of whether the amount of money considered appropriate by government to secure this actually was a sufficient incentive to LEAs revolves around, not just the amount, but the intended use of the money. If the MSC's newly acquired funds were guaranteed to find their way back into LEA colleges one way or another, the Commission's power would be diminished. It is this consideration which is key to understanding the clause in the White Paper which states that 'it is envisaged that the great bulk of the resources, though not necessarily all, will continue to be spent within local authority colleges'. By introducing the possibility that the Commission could look elsewhere for its courses if not satisfied with public sector provision, the MSC was provided with a lever over the whole of provision, not just its 16 per cent share. This level of control provided the degree of centralised authority the government required. Without this authority, the whole strategy might be frustrated. The issue of how successfully it was established in practice is considered in the following section, which discusses reactions to the White Paper.

4.3　The period of dispute, January 1984 - May 1985

4.3 (i)　Reactions to the White Paper

The principal reaction to *Training for Jobs* on all sides was one of surprise. The initiative was announced without warning to the LEA community and, supposedly, very little to the MSC. However, whilst the MSC's Director Geoffrey Holland claimed later that the announcement of the new arrangements was 'totally unexpected'[5], other observers have stated that

> it is hard to see how [the plan] could have been developed without the tacit acceptance (and silence) of the then Chairman [David] Young,[6]

suggesting a collusion on the part of the MSC consistent with the expansionist proclivities ascribed to the institution in Chapter 3.

As with TVEI before it, there had been none of the traditional consultation with educational and local authority interests, who greeted the initiative 'with dismay'[7]. Whilst the MSC immediately set about establishing the appropriate local and national machinery to deliver its side of the new arrangement with customary zeal, those affected in the education community refused to accept the White Paper as a *fait accompli*, choosing instead a course of non-cooperation and resistance.

The local authority associations were in the forefront of this resistance. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the 'local' policies forwarded by councils around the country are in general more accurately seen as national policies developed by the local authority associations, and so it proved in this instance. These bodies vocalised the widespread reaction amongst the LEA community which thoroughly opposed the planned changes. In particular, the associations raised four specific criticisms, which were:

> (i)　the 'lack of prior consultation among the partners in the education service'; *

(ii) the 'implied assertion that LEAs were unresponsive in their provision of work-related NAFE';

(iii) 'the transfer of resources to the account of MSC';

(iv) the 'intervention by government in the powers and responsibilities of LEAs'.[8]

A period therefore ensued during which the MSC was faithfully attempting to start operating the new arrangements, as it had been asked to 'as a matter of urgency' in the White Paper, whilst the local authorities were hampering it at every turn[9]. All LEAs refused to cooperate, and the MSC was left attempting to implement joint arrangements on its own. Whatever the knowledge in the higher echelons, it is clear from interview evidence that MSC local staff had had no more prior warning that they would be required to implement a major new policy than had LEA officials. In this period, LEA staff for the most part would not even talk to their counterparts at MSC Area Offices, which made the latter's task of defining a new role extremely difficult.

The local authority associations sought from the relevant ministers' evidence of the alleged shortcomings of NAFE, and proposed joint action where these could be demonstrated. Meanwhile, negotiations during the spring and early summer of 1984 which were conducted at both elected member and officer level with the MSC proved 'inconclusive'[10]. A very significant factor in this period was the role of the MSC Chairman. As already noted, at the time of the January announcement this had been David Young, whose complicity as either an architect or sympathiser in the formulation of government policy is suggested both in the quotation above and in his subsequent career as Secretary of State for both Employment and Trade and Industry. Whilst he remained in the MSC chair, any deviation from the government line could not be expected. According to one source, in the period between the spring and autumn of 1984, both parties were 'glaring at each other', refusing to concede any ground. In this scenario, David Young was 'a key figure', and the MSC held firm to the government line while he remained chairman through his belief that

LEAs would crumble because of the financial constraints.[11]

That is, to use the terms of the analysis above, he believed the amount of funding transferred away from RSG was sufficient incentive. Throughout this period, therefore, there was little change. The LEAs and their representative organisations continued to refuse to have anything to do with the White Paper's proposals - this was reaffirmed in July 1984 when the Council of Local Education Authorities Conference endorsed a resolution reaffirming the opposition of AMA and ACC[12]. Meanwhile, the government and the MSC held firm, waiting for the local authorities to crack under the burden of financial pressure.

4.3 (ii) Rapprochement

In the late summer of 1984, David Young was awarded a peerage by the Prime Minister, eager to promote him to Cabinet rank. The chairmanship of the Commission passed to a new incumbent, Bryan Nicholson. This represented a turning point. Nicholson did not share Young's staunch Thatcherite stance or his determination to make LEAs toe the government line. Instead, he sought a workable solution that would end the deadlock. This new thinking emerged at a meeting of the Commission in September 1984, at which its members took the view that whilst it had received a clear instruction from the government to proceed with its new responsibilities for NAFE, in complying it should seek to do so in *collaboration* with LEAs, rather than unilaterally. Whilst such a deviation from the government line might normally have been unthinkable - especially given the Conservative administration's notoriously authoritarian style and huge parliamentary majority - the fact that the chairman was new afforded him a certain protection. That is, Nicholson believed he 'would be able to get away with something the government didn't like' whilst he was still a new appointee, 'without having the branch sawn off behind him'[13].

Despite the Nicholson initiative, relations between the MSC and the local authority associations remained tense - there followed 'a further difficult period of consultation'[14] - but eventually the two sides managed to reach some agreement. The

crucial first stage of this was to establish procedures for the transfer of resources to LEAs in 1985-6, the first year in which the new arrangements would apply. The satisfaction of all parties on this required the MSC to return the full amount deducted from the RSG in the first year - 'a blank cheque' according to one observer[15] - with no conditions other than a verification that the money would be spent on work-related NAFE. The second part of this interim agreement was the establishment of a joint MSC/local authority associations Policy Group which would review existing NAFE provision, in the manner the associations had been arguing for, and draw up proposals for the MSC's future involvement in NAFE. This event is described by Cuthbert as a *rapprochement* based upon a reduction in 'goal incongruence' between the MSC and LEAs[16]. Already, much of the original plan's thrust had been diverted, in that the MSC was now negotiating for influence rather than seeking to impose its authority.

The agreement at this stage was nonetheless a fragile one. The AMA's consent to its terms was conditional - it still steadfastly opposed the policy outlined in *Training for Jobs*, and made its ratification of the interim agreement subject to its approval of the Policy Group's proposals. It is significant that the AMA was dominated by Labour authorities, and its fiercer opposition may therefore be attributable to political resistance to Conservative policies. The 'folklore' that allegedly developed in the AMA political community after agreement with the MSC was reached held that

the government could have been defeated but for the ACC authorities giving in.[17]

That is, the whole *Training for Jobs* policy could have been subverted and the money returned to RSG as a consequence of unquenchable political resistance on the part of the local authorities. The ACC officer who outlined this view vehemently refuted the idea. He believed the contrary pressure, that of pressing financial need, was coming close to breaking the LEA unanimity of opposition. Many Labour-controlled authorities in particular were already suffering severe financial restrictions as a result of rate-capping and related policies, and the ACC officer claimed that 'both types of council were wobbling' (i.e. both Conservative and Labour). He estimated that a small number of them, 'about five', were talking directly to the MSC about coming to a separate arrangement. In this view, the interim agreement to establish the Policy Group was the

best the LEAs could have hoped for.

The NAFE Policy Group was in fact the upper tier of a three-level structure. Its membership comprised actors at the political level, i.e. MSC Commissioners and elected members (i.e. from the ACC, AMA and Welsh LEAs), and was chaired by Bryan Nicholson. It met infrequently, its role being to set guidelines and forge agreements, to ratify proposals for the future of NAFE. Below this was an officer level Working Group, chaired by Sir Roy Harding, and it included members from a wide range of interested organisations - AMA, ACC, WJEC, CBI, TUC, NATFHE, B/TEC, MSC, DES, HMI, DE and the Welsh Office. This group was responsible for designing a set of proposals over a two-month period that could be presented to the Policy Group for discussion. Below the Working Group was a Technical Group, containing officers from ACC, AMA, DE, DES and MSC, whose task it was to work on 'small but important' details of the policy under formulation[18]. The direction of policy-making thus involved movement up the hierarchy, the Technical Group providing a range of options to the Working Group, who combined this with other deliberations in presenting options to the Policy Group. The final policy decision was taken by the group of actors who had the least involvement in developing it.

The report of the Working Group was presented to the final meeting of the Policy Group on 28 May 1985, sixteen months after the publication of the White Paper.

4.4   The NAFE Agreement

4.4 (i)   Proposals of the NAFE Working Group

The Working Group had a two-month lifespan, during which time it gathered information and comment on NAFE from a wide range of sources, and explored a range of themes. An early problem was encountered in seeking to define what was meant by 'work-related' as opposed to other forms of NAFE. In finding that it did 'not consider that it is possible to arrive at a comprehensive definition', it decided to keep its working definition 'as broadly based as possible'. One commentator, in emphasising

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this difficulty, suggested that the only type of NAFE provision which could not somehow be conceivably work-related was 'special education for the geriatric'[19].

Moving on from definitions to considering NAFE provision in general, the Working Group found that

significant agreement existed in the objectives sought by all parties for work-related NAFE.[20]

Its overall conclusions cited evidence of much local activity in the development of work-related NAFE, and a high level of responsiveness. Nonetheless, it found the current quality of planning to be 'varied', and whilst there were 'many cases of quick and effective response to employer and individual needs', this was not universally applicable and NAFE was open to improvement. It identified a range of areas in which 'both MSC and LEAs would wish to extend and promote existing good practice'.

The key proposal put forward to the Policy Group was for the establishment of a local planning structure in which both the MSC and LEAs would play a part. This picked up on the White Paper's stress on the importance of MSC's taking account of LEAs' own plans for NAFE. The Working Group's decision was based on the local authority association view that whilst the government and MSC sought greater responsiveness to needs, there was inadequate understanding of what this meant, i.e. there was insufficient information about what the needs were and no consensus on how best to meet them. To tackle the situation it was necessary to systematically review local needs, evaluate current provision and identify good practice where it existed. Only on this firm basis could future strategy be planned. The Group recommended that LEAs produce a three year Development Plan, which would be agreed upon after consultation 'with MSC, local employers, trade unions and other relevant parties'[21]. The Development Plan would cover a three-year period, but each year would be reviewed and extended a further year. The Plan would:

- review the range of existing provision;
- review the arrangements for local consultation;
- review the emergent needs of both the local business community and the student population;

- set priorities;
- identify areas for change;
- give an indication of the effectiveness of the allocation of resources.[22]

The plan would need to be flexible in order to ensure maximum responsiveness.

In addition to the Development Plan there would be an Annual Programme which would identify specific areas of provision, the courses which the LEA proposed to offer during the first year of the Plan. This might include:

(i)   new provision in terms of -

        course development
        staff development
        equipment
        courses;

(ii)   the development of existing provision for example by -

        adapting structures to improve responsiveness
        improving the information base
        developing marketing systems;

(iii)   discontinued provision;

(iv)   a review of resource allocation in the programme as a whole. This would include an
        examination of those parts of the plan where no change was being sought because
        existing provision was agreed to be responsive to identified local need.[23]

The two documents would be a basis for a contractual agreement between the LEA and the MSC. The contract would be signed between the MSC local Area Manager and the LEA, on the basis of which funds could be transferred.

The MSC's most important contribution to the Development Plan would be a supply of labour market information by means of which local needs could be identified and responded to. This was to fulfil the provision in *Training for Jobs* that

it will remain the government's rôle, exercised largely through the Manpower Services

Commission, to assist the flow of information about skill needs, training provision and jobs, especially at local level.[24]

The Working Group recommended the above proposals unanimously. What it could not reach agreement upon, however, was the detail of the funding arrangements necessary to support the proposed Plan and Programme. The basis of the disagreement was as follows:

> In essence, the gap lies between the MSC/DE Officers' view that accountability entails specific rather than general funding, and the alternative view that specificity is incompatible with the development plan approach, and brings with it additional and unproductive administrative effort.[25]

The settlement of this issue was left to the Policy Group, but the Working Group did suggest (a) that financial allocations should be determined at national rather than local level, based on nationally-agreed criteria; and (b) that a proportion of the MSC's NAFE fund be held back to fund national initiatives, in order to facilitate its envisaged role as a national training authority.

Several other key recommendations were forwarded by the Working Group. These included a proposal to establish a national advisory group to continue the work of the Policy Group, and that necessary regional consultations in NAFE could be conducted through the machinery of the Regional Advisory Councils. Perhaps the most significant, however, is the recommendation that whilst LEAs' consultative arrangements should be 'full and wide ranging',

> it would not be appropriate for MSC to be represented *as of right* on each college governing body and advisory committee. (my italics)[26]

This matter is picked up in section 4.4 (iii).

4.4 (ii) The Agreement

The meeting of the Policy Group on 28 May 1985 accepted the report of the Working Group 'almost without modification' - a fact which appears to confirm the notion discussed above of policy-making flowing up, as well as down, the policy hierarchy. What remained to be decided was the still controversial issue of the funding arrangements.

The argument rested on the specificity of funding. The MSC's refinement of the somewhat brief outline contained in the White Paper proposed a form of support which

> would be proportional, varying from course to course and given and withdrawn differently each year.[27]

That is to say it would be a *subsidy* on NAFE, rather than actual funding. The ACC officer interviewed believed that in practice this would have meant support for such 'glamour courses' as IT, but would have left the LEAs in severe difficulties over courses from which the MSC's support was withdrawn or for which it was prepared to offer only partial funding. Whilst the White Paper had envisaged only a 'reasonable continuity' of provision, he observed that NAFE, in contrast to the MSC, had a long history and tradition; it should be regarded as something

> a bit more stable than the MSC is prepared for, or displays itself in its own programmes.[28]

In offering their financial proposals, MSC representatives were apparently

> not too clear on what exactly they would fund.[29]

He argued that the further education service did not need the MSC to tell it, for example, that information technology was important or that engineering and construction courses needed modification. Given this, that both sides could be equally well expected to identify what was required of the system, he questioned the purpose of the MSC's proposed method of allocating funds.

The local authority association members of the Policy Group were not prepared to accept this proposal, and it was rejected. Instead the Group forwarded a proposal of its own. Under this, whilst ownership of the Development Plan would reside with the LEA, the Annual Programme would be a joint document which would set out in detail the courses LEAs would provide in the year it covered. These would be costed, and would identify provision and expenditure institution by institution. This Programme would be the basis of the contract signed between the MSC and LEA, and the flow of work-related NAFE funds from one to the other would be consequent upon evidence of its satisfactory delivery. Such evidence would be provided by a nationally-agreed monitoring procedure. Given satisfactory progress towards stated objectives, the LEA would receive funding phased over the year with payments being made each month. Funding for succeeding years would be determined by discussions between the partners at the start of each three-year cycle. Funding could be renegotiated during the academic year if this proved necessary. It has been argued that these arrangements involved not 'funding' as such, which implies discretion and specific payments, but actually 'an MSC shareholding in NAFE'[30]. That is, the transfer of resources involved the whole sum or none at all, depending on a generalised agreement about the LEA's entire programme. This reduced the MSC's leverage over NAFE by comparison with its own specific funding model.

Having established these proposals, the Policy Group reached agreement and argued their acceptance by all partners thus:

> The group unanimously recommends to the constituent bodies, the MSC, the ... AMA, the ... ACC, that they should consider (these proposals) as presenting a partnership approach to developing work-related Non-Advanced Further Education in accordance with the proposals set out in the White Paper *Training for Jobs.* [31]

It affirmed the view of the Working Group, that it

> was unanimously convinced of the merits of the concept of the collaborative development plan. It would benefit employers and individuals through the opportunities for LEAs to provide, and for MSC to bring its labour market intelligence to bear upon, NAFE relevant to rapidly changing employment needs. It would also allow the two principal agents LEA and MSC, jointly to evaluate the outcomes and ensure their cost-effectiveness.[32]

In accepting the proposals made by the Working Group, the Policy Group recommended the establishment of a NAFE Implementation Group with a constitution similar to its own (i.e. representative of MSC, AMA and ACC at the highest level), and a complementary NAFE Evaluation Group to do 'the day-to-day working out' . These bodies were established, and worked with officers from all the partners to formulate a detailed NAFE policy which could be passed down to individual LEAs and MSC Area Offices in the form of specific guidance. Over the period leading up to the first year in which the new planning arrangements would take place,1986-7, a document entitled *A Guidance Handbook* was put together for despatch to local officers. This itself was a compromise document, held to

> offer the best match between the interests involved although various parties have reservations
> about particular elements.[33]

It expanded on the 'general framework' produced by the Policy Group, and set out in detail what was expected in local planning arrangements. It was followed up by a series of similar documents in subsequent years. This represents further evidence of policy detail being formulated lower down the decision-making hierarchy.

4.4 (iii) Interpreting the Agreement

The Report of the Policy Group states confidently that its proposed NAFE provisions fulfilled 'the requirements of the White Paper'[34]. This view, however, is partly connected with the MSC's concern to appear loyal to government thinking, and very much depends on an interpretation of what the requirements of the White Paper actually were.

In section 4.2 it was argued that *Training for Jobs* was only partly inspired by educational or training motives, and partly from a central government tactic designed to enhance central control over the NAFE curriculum at the expense of LEAs. Quite apart from the government's desire to remove influence from the local authorities for ideological and political reasons, it was perceived that the educational objectives could

only be achieved through enhanced central authority. Without this, the government's aims of a more market-oriented and employer-based NAFE system could become subverted by lower tier actors who did not share its ideological vision.

Earlier, it was noted that an ACC officer interviewed had questioned the purpose of MSC's proposal for a specific funding arrangement, when both sides would be capable of identifying which courses were needed. The answer to this question is that the funding proposals were primarily motivated not by purely curricular objectives but by the intention of providing MSC with greater authority over the NAFE curriculum and its management. In the process of negotiating the Agreement, this key aspect of the government strategy was conceded to the local authority associations. It was observed earlier that the specific funding plan was central to the White Paper's purpose, as it fuelled the possibility that the MSC could look elsewhere for its VET courses if it was not satisfied with what LEAs had to offer, giving it a lever over all NAFE provision. Without such discretion, the central strategy might be frustrated. In the event, it was frustrated: in giving up this point and agreeing to an alternative financial plan, government hopes for powerful MSC control over NAFE were dashed.

In addition to the above, MSC influence was further curtailed by the clear statement in the Policy Group findings, noted earlier, that MSC would not be represented 'as of right' on college governing bodies and advisory committees. That is, the LEAs retained complete authority over their colleges, and any dealings the MSC was to have with them could not be conducted without at least the tacit consent and approval of their LEA.

Having established that the government's NAFE objectives were frustrated, it is necessary to consider why. The explanation lies in the power of the local mandate held by the LEAs. It was argued in Chapter 3 that whilst the local authorities' national organisations were more influential than individual councils, being the key initiators of 'local' policy, their power was nonetheless rooted in the locally-derived electoral legitimacy of individual authorities. It was this factor which enabled the associations to refuse to cooperate with either the government or the MSC on the basis that they did not agree with government policy. In a policy sector where a second source of electorally-

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derived authority did not exist, such resistance would not have been possible.

However, the factor of the mandate, whilst important, does not adequately account for the local authority associations' success. It was also noted in Chapter 3 that local government's ability to resist government was ultimately very limited, because of the centre's hold over the legal framework within which it operated. The best local authorities could aspire to was to retard the implementation of central initiatives by policies of non-cooperation and resistance, as borne out by the experience of local authorities in England and Wales. What was different in this instance was that the central government was not attempting to invoke its legal superiority over local government, instead seeking to bring about a swift policy change by other means. Rather than seeking to compel LEAs to implement its policies, it adopted a 'carrot and stick' approach, taking financial resources away from them and offering them back again, via the MSC, if the authorities were prepared to follow its wishes. It was noted in section 4.2 that the calculation of the size of the financial incentive was a crucial strategic decision. Unfortunately for the central government, it appears that it miscalculated, and found LEAs prepared to risk losing the money rather than agree to central proposals. As a consequence, the policy became derailed.

One other important consideration here relates back to the factor identified in Chapter 3, that MSC did not deliver its own programmes. Not having any implementation machinery of its own, it relied upon purchasing power to persuade other actors to deliver programmes on its behalf. If it was not satisfied it could turn elsewhere. This approach might worked in such a scheme as YTS, where an unsatisfactory managing agent could easily be dropped in favour of another candidate. In the case of NAFE, however, if LEAs refused to follow its plans it was in no position to seek £200 million worth of NAFE courses from an alternative source, because there was no such source to turn to. The scale of the sector foiled its main strategic weapon. Provided LEAs presented a united front of opposition, the MSC could wield no control over NAFE. This was crucial in bringing the Commission to the negotiating table under Nicholson.

To illustrate the effects of the NAFE Agreement upon the original *Training for Jobs*

(b)Envisaged post-legislation situation
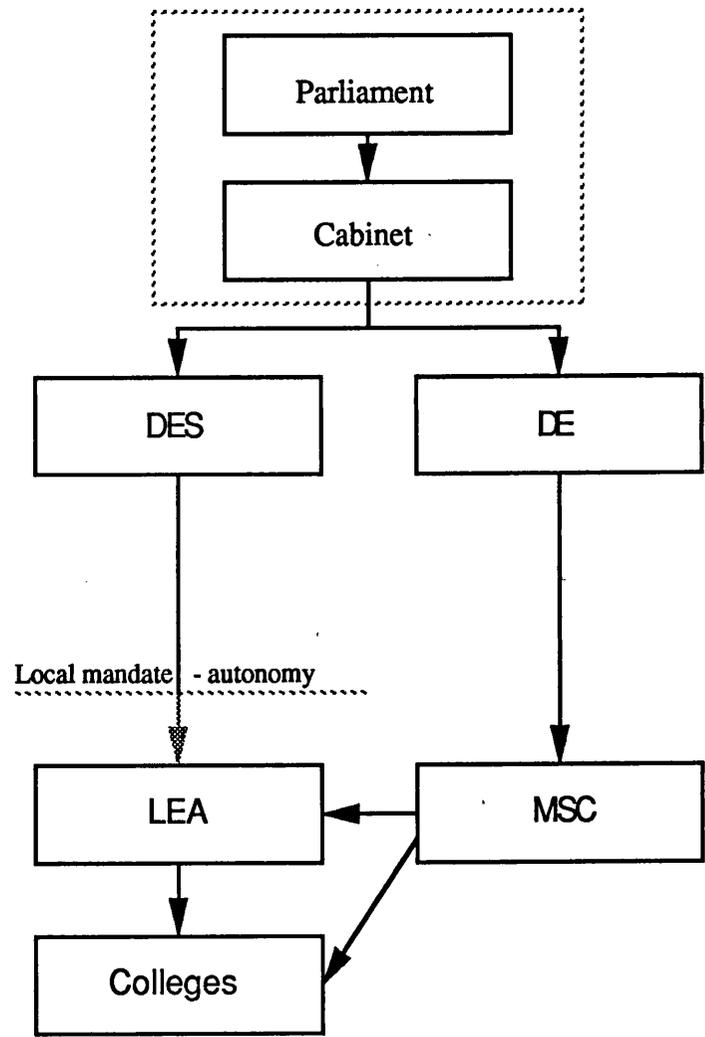
(c) Actual post-legislation situation

Source: Compiled by the author
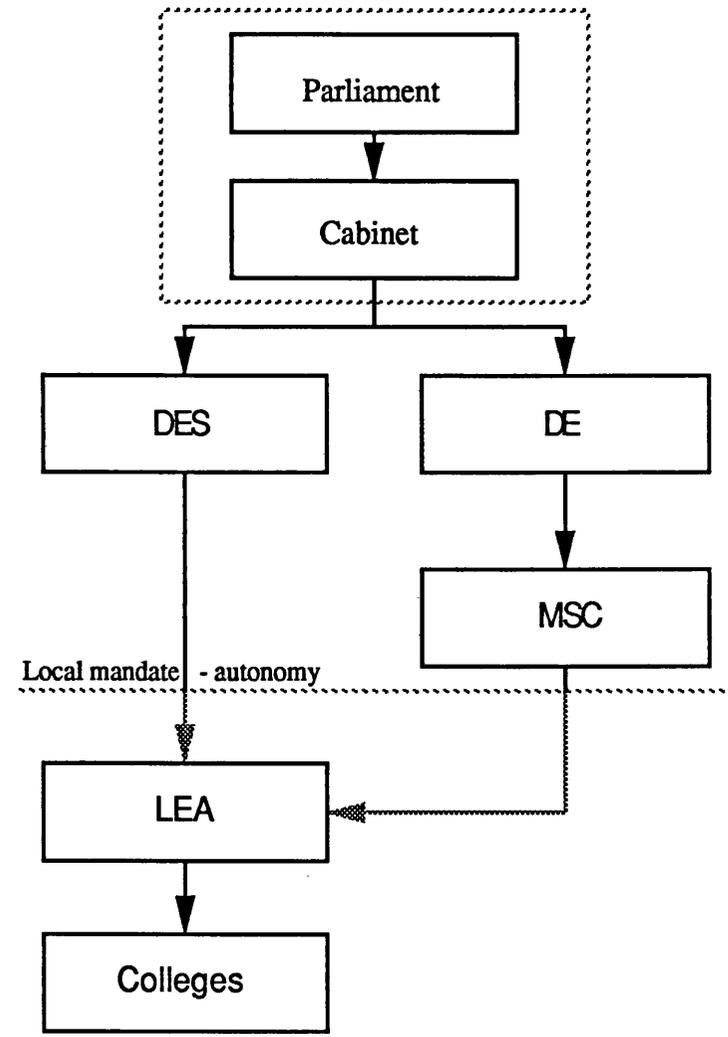
strategy, Figure 4.2 compares the envisaged outcome (as portrayed earlier in Figure 4.1) with the actual one. It demonstrates that in the event the filter of the local mandate succeeded in moderating the influence of the MSC just as it had that of the DES.

The mistake should not be made, however, of conceiving the LEAs as victors in this battle. The outcome was a compromise, and some of the strategic objectives were achieved. The MSC now had a clear role in NAFE, where previously it had had none. If LEAs' plans did not satisfy the Commission, it could still withhold its money. The Policy Group indicated that with its partial funding role the Commission would

> not only contribute to but would influence the decision making *to a very discernable extent.* (my italics)[35]

Whilst the MSC's direct purchasing power had not proved strong enough to overcome LEA opposition, it nonetheless proved more powerful than the statutory interventions of the DES. It was noted above that at the time the various parties eventually gathered at the same negotiating table, a number of LEAs had 'begun to wobble', and were tentatively seeking individual agreements with the MSC. The financial pressure was proving to be a potent force, and had the united front of LEA opposition began to crumble, the local authority associations' demands may not a have been conceded. As suggested earlier, the NAFE Agreement was the best the associations could have hoped for. That is, they were powerful enough to *modify* central policy, but not powerful enough to *defeat* it.

A further important point in this context is the significance of individual actors in influencing policy outcomes. The power of the individual in such cases is always contentious, but the effects of the removal of David Young from the MSC chair at a crucial moment cannot be disregarded. It is a matter for conjecture whether, had he remained in place, the LEAs or the MSC would have cracked first. Either way, both possibilities remain. In recognising the significance of Bryan Nicholson's more conciliatory approach, the absolute power of the LEAs to have resisted government intentions is brought further into question.

Despite national level agreement, the poverty of local relations between LEAs and the MSC at this time should be noted. Quite apart from any ideological differences about NAFE, LEAs were deeply suspicious about the appearance of a rival institution on the scene. It should be remembered that the Commission was at the very height of its powers. Steady expansion through the late 1970s had been followed by even greater influence following the publication of the *New Training Initiative*. In 1984 it had recently acquired responsibility for TVEI, and the number of trainees on the new YTS was still growing. It had been cast by *Training for Jobs* in the role of a national training authority. Now it had been given powers in NAFE, nobody could predict what advances into the education sector might come next. These considerations go a long way to accounting for the ferocity of LEA resistance to the White Paper in the period 1984-5, which might not have been so great had the Commission not been perceived as such a threat.

Despite the MSC-local authority associations *rapprochement* and their forging of the NAFE Agreement, there remained in 1985 considerable suspicion about the future of the MSC in NAFE. In a book published that year Salter and Tapper stated their belief that

> there can be no doubt that the MSC will use (its) financial control to push the curriculum in particular directions.[36]

Also, putting the matter in the terms of inter-network rivalry, that

> the ability of the DES to resist the MSC's colonisation of FE is highly suspect

the restriction of MSC's stake to 25 per cent being very likely 'only a holding operation'[37]. In considering how the new 'partners' began working together, it is very important to appreciate the atmosphere in which they were joined. The question of how relationships between the two developed is given detailed attention in Chapter 6.

Before this, however, it is necessary to turn to the basis upon which the empirical work is founded. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the thesis' methodology, identifying the chosen techniques, the justification for their use, and the manner in

which they have been employed to generate the material discussed in this chapter, and in Chapters 6 and 7.

Notes to Chapter 4:

1. Rhodes, 1988, p.265.

2. *Training for Jobs* (1984), Cmnd. 9135, London, HMSO, p.5.

3. Rhodes, 1988. See section 3.2.

4. Figure derived from interview with officer in MSC Head Office NAFE operations division, 29.3.88.

5. Holland, 1986.

6. Thomson and Rosenberg, 1986, p.24.

7. *Ibid.*

8. MSC/LAA, 1985.

9. The material presented in this section is derived from a combination of sources, mainly the MSC/LAA Policy Group Report and a series of interviews conducted by the author with key actors in NAFE.

10. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.4.

11. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

12. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.4.

13. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

14. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.4.

15. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

16. Cuthbert, 1987.

17. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

20. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.1.

21. *Ibid.*, p.16.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p.17.

24. *Training for Jobs*, paragraph 11.

25. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.2.

26. *Ibid.*, p.18.

27. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

31. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.2.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Nicholson, 1986.

34. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.23.

35. MSC/LAA, 1985, p.21.

36. Salter and Tapper, 1985, p.215.

37. *Ibid.*, p.227.

Chapter Five

Methodology.

5.1   Introduction

The subject area of NAFE planning is very young and in consequence it has a small and limited literature and few sources of good data. Hence the development of new empirical work is of paramount importance. This chapter sets out the methodology adopted in the thesis to provide such empirical work. It considers the factors which led to the choice of the methods adopted, and outlines how the research was conducted.

The first section deals with some general influences on choice of method. Subsequent sections consider the differences and usefulness of extensive and intensive research, the choice of methodology, and the nature of the approach finally adopted.

5.2   Some influences on the choice of method

A number of factors need to be considered in the selection of a research methodology. These include the scale of analysis, the nature of the information required, the number of objects about which it is intended to comment, and the objectives of presentation. In developing a methodology which may suitably interrogate the issues raised by the NAFE Agreement and its aftermath, it is important that these factors be addressed.

Take first the *scale* of analysis. In the instance of NAFE this can be viewed in two ways. In one sense the research is a quasi-national study, considering policy across the area affected by the 1984 legislation enacted in *Training for Jobs*, i.e. it covers the whole of England and Wales. In another sense, however, the thesis is a is a study of local areas, either those covered by local education authorities or combinations of these which made up MSC Areas. These are the component parts of 'a national service, locally administered'[1]. It is necessary that the research design be aimed at both these levels.

Second is the *nature of the information* required. It is necessary to identify as precisely as possible the *raison d'être* of the research enquiry. Massey and Meegan[2] note the importance of addressing this before selecting a methodology, in particular in

terms of the respective emphasis being placed upon patterns and processes. In this instance the research objective is, on one hand, to gather a large body of information which could illuminate the often complex workings of a hitherto under-researched field. At the same time, it seeks to identify the mechanisms which influenced NAFE outcomes. The methodology required, therefore, must allow the collection of abundant new data, whilst permitting a depth of enquiry sufficient to uncover the processes significantly influencing NAFE.

Third, the *number of objects* under investigation imposes practical constraints upon research design: for example, upon whether one can seek realistically to study an entire population, or whether a sample only is feasible. In addition, because of the numbers involved, different hierarchical levels in any system admit of different forms of appropriate analysis, and thus provide the researcher with different sorts of information.

As discussed above, the present study is aimed at two levels, a national perspective combined with the study of LEAs and MSC Area Offices. Each offers different kinds of information on NAFE planning, and the number of objects at each level informs the nature of the methodology to be employed there. Whilst the delivery of NAFE is focused largely at the college and course level, much of the planning and strategy is focused at the LEA and Area Office levels. Since this thesis is primarily concerned with the bureaucracies that determine strategy it is appropriate to select the LEA and Area Office levels as the primary unit of enquiry. This creates some considerable advantages, which lie chiefly in the number of LEAs (104) and Area Offices (48) in England and Wales. This made possible some form of enquiry in the entire population, or at least a significant proportion of it. A survey could be aimed at the whole and face-to-face interviews could be carried out amongst a large and representative sample. At the national level, advantages lay in the practicability of in-depth interviews with key actors and observers who, though less informed about local detail and the variation of characteristics between individual areas, could provide an overview highly complementary to other work which did examine localities.

Fourth, the *presentation* of the findings also has an influence upon the choice of

methodology. An output in the form of a doctoral thesis permits extensive and detailed presentation and discussion of data. The collection and interpretation of this in the NAFE field therefore also affects the selection of the methods eventually employed.

A further consideration of considerable importance to the choice of the thesis methodology is the value of extensive and intensive approaches. The respective qualities of these are considered below, and their usefulness to the objectives of the research are evaluated in the following section.

5.3   Extensive v. intensive research

The debate over the use of extensive and intensive approaches in social science research revolves around their relative merits and their complementarity. The discussion here considers the characteristics, generalisability and explanatory power of each approach, and their capacity to be used alongside one another in a mutually-enhancing fashion.

5.3 (i)   Characteristics

The chief characteristics of extensive research identified by Massey & Meegan[3] are its use of 'aggregate statistics, surveys and statistical analyses' which are commonly used in 'discovering general patterns of spatial change'. They indicate it to be frequently based upon a taxonomic approach

> aimed at identifying pervasive systematic trends in aggregate variables and exploring common features and relationships within these aggregate patterns[4]

Sayer & Morgan[5] note that typical of the extensive methodology is the use of large scale formal questionnaire or interview surveys, either of whole populations or supposedly representative samples, and the use of descriptive or inferential statistics and other numerical techniques, such as cross-tabulations.

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Intensive research, according to Massey and Meegan emphasises abstraction, as opposed to the empirical generalisation they claim to be common in extensive research. They state intensive work to be

> heavily dependent on non-standardised and qualitative analytical techniques

and that it

> is increasingly being used to explore in detail how causal processes work out in specific cases.[6]

Sayer and Morgan describe intensive techniques' use of

> less formal, less standardised and ... mainly qualitative forms of analysis[7]

Examples include interactive, unstructured interviews and ethnography.

5.3 (ii) Generalisability

Whilst extensive research tends to examine a large number of objects, intensive research usually concentrates upon a small number, or even single examples. The former frequently aims to cover entire populations, or samples of a proportion supposed large (and therefore representative) enough to allow the drawing of statistical inferences. The latter is less concerned with representation and more with maximising the depth, detail and understanding of those objects under its scrutiny.

Harré claims a key decision in planning research to be the choice between

> an extensive method aimed at investigating the common properties of a large number of individuals

or

> an intensive method in which individuals are examined, one by one, with no prior assumptions about the similarities or differences between them.[8]

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Theodossin identifies some pros and cons of techniques which reflect these approaches:

> Questionnaires ... have a tendency to impose a 'shape' on ... responses, and may on occasion even 'lead' the recipients, but they have the virtues of being relatively inexpensive, ideally producing a large volume of easily quantifiable data. ... Interviews/discussions (allow) the respondents more opportunities to structure the experience to their own ends and can offer the potentiality for deeper and fuller expression of individual attitudes, but the resulting data is often so diverse as to render tidy quantification difficult.[9]

The two approaches tell the researcher different things about the subject at issue. Extensively-produced data allow generalised statements to be made about the whole population, including those objects not directly studied, on the basis of inferences drawn from the 'representative' sample. Intensive research, on the other hand, allows one to make detailed and highly informed statements about the objects studied, which may or may not apply to those not studied. This is important: whilst it can be agreed with Sayer and Morgan[10] that, though the detailed concrete characteristics of individual cases are not generalisable, the underlying mechanisms and structures can be expected to occur elsewhere, it remains conjecture as to whether or not they actually do.

In selecting a research methodology, it is important to identify the extent to which it is intended to make generalisations from the empirical data about the whole population under study, and to choose one's approach accordingly. The more extensive approach is that which offers the most generalisable results.

5.3 (iii) Explanatory power

The other consequence of the factors which make extensive research more, and intensive research less, generalisable is an inverse effect on explanatory power. In theory it would be possible to employ a methodology which combined wide-ranging representativeness with great depth and detail, but in reality social research entails a trade-off between the two on the grounds of sheer practicality.

Massey and Meegan[11] claim that from the intensive perspective, 'the identification of common outcomes' (as in extensive research) 'cannot be used as explanation'. Peck[12] agrees, stating that a single datum does not 'speak for itself'. Sayer and Morgan note that extensive research

> often fails to indicate what processes have produced the patterns it reveals.[13]

They allow that extensive research does possess some limited explanatory power, noting a usefulness in the initial exploration of data. However they stress its vulnerability to the ecological fallacy when inferences are made about individual cases on the basis of the overall results. They do note the potential for a converse fallacy in the use of intensive findings, but that this is avoided if such findings are not alleged to be representative.

The greater explanatory power of intensive research is rooted in its level of detail, and the responsive flexibility of its more qualitative methods, which avoid the rigid and sometimes inappropriate simplifications which extensive techniques impose upon their subject matter.

To summarise, whilst both extensive and intensive research provide descriptive analyses of the objects under study, they employ different techniques and answer different questions. Extensive research employs formalised, aggregate and often quantitative techniques, and provides data which is highly representative but has low explanatory power. Intensive research is more informal and qualitative, and whilst its findings are less open to generalisation, they do offer data whose explanatory power is strong.

5.3 (iv) Compatibility

Having identified the respective qualities of these two approaches, the issue turns to whether they are mutually exclusive, or whether they may be used together in a complementary fashion.

Massey and Meegan cite as apocryphal the notion that the different methods are applicable at different levels of analysis,

the extensive at the macro-level, say, and the intensive at the micro-level[14]

This vision, they point out[15], fails to recognise that the differences lie not in their analytical scope but in their explanatory frameworks. In considering the possibility of using both approaches in a single piece of research they then pose the question:

does one (the extensive) set the agenda for the other (the intensive) ?[16]

For this to be possible it is required that the extensive and intensive techniques being employed are compatible - something which cannot, according to Massey and Meegan[17], be assumed. Sayer and Morgan note that the two methods 'define their objects and boundaries differently'[18]. Their approach to explanation is frequently very different, extensive techniques tending to favour the notion of 'additive causality' in contrast to the structural interdependence seen as central to intensive approaches[19]. It is not necessary to enter this matter here in detail; the important point is that extensive and intensive approaches cannot necessarily be employed together, and that to do so with validity requires in each case the careful construction of a compatible framework for their use.

Sayer and Morgan[20] concur in claiming that complementarity between the two approaches is possible in principle. Their view is that whilst intensive research is primarily explanatory, extensive data is 'primarily descriptive and synoptic', and that both can be present a single methodology under the right conditions. These hinge on the homogeneity of the population and the relevance of the categories used in the extensive analysis to define the characteristics of the sample or population. Their notion is that extensive techniques may be used to discover the incidence and extent of mechanisms or processes identified by intensive research.

Massey and Meegan claim that extensive research may in some circumstances 'set

the agenda' for intensive analysis; Sayer and Morgan that extensive research can be used to illuminate intensive findings. Peck indicates the usefulness of the extensive approach in highlighting patterns which require explanation through more detailed analysis[21]. Movement from one to the other in either direction is therefore being forwarded variously by these authors, and it seems valid to argue for a dialogue between the two approaches at different stages of research, where appropriate.

5.4 Choosing an approach

In the above sections some of the requirements of the methodology of the thesis have been outlined, and some alternative methods considered. This section examines how the choice of approach has been made, in the light of the identified requirements, on the basis of different techniques' respective merits.

The requirements identified in section 5.2 above may be summarised thus:

(a)   a need to aim at both local and quasi-national levels;

(b)   a lack of abundant data and secondary material in a new and under-researched field entailing a need to collect a large amount of data representative of the whole field;

(c)   a need to go beyond descriptive analysis and provide data which has high explanatory power;

(d)   a requirement for detailed and wide-ranging analysis and presentation of findings consequent upon the thesis format.

On the one hand these factors are the bases for choices over the use of extensive and intensive research methods; on the other they form the components of a case for adopting an 'iterative' approach to the research. These ideas are outlined in turn below.

5.4 (i) A combination of extensive and intensive methods

The four factors (a-d) above indicate a clear case for the use of both intensive and extensive analysis in the present research. The requirement for both 'depth' and 'breadth' of coverage suggests, whilst not pretending that the differences between the two types of research can be reduced to a banal simplification, that the use of both approaches will provide the required perspectives in a way that constriction to one or other would not allow. In practice, the particular methods actually applied are a combination of questionnaire survey and interview techniques.

However, the necessity has been noted of carefully constructing a framework which allows a complementarity to be developed between the two approaches. This cannot be assumed to exist, and must be addressed here before any combination of approach can be justified.

5.4 (ii) An iterative approach

The need to construct a complementarity of approaches is tackled here by the adoption of an 'iterative' approach to the research design. This is an attempt to avoid the use of a unidirectional strategy which employs extensive work as a means of simply 'setting the agenda' for subsequent intensive analysis, or identifying processes through intensive work which may be 'tested' through extensive verification. Rather, as argued for in section 5.3 above, there is an attempt to establish a dialogue between the two approaches in which each informs the other in a mutually-supporting fashion at different stages of the research. This does involve agenda-setting and attempts at verification, but importantly this is attempted in both directions, extensive work at one stage being at the same time instructed by, and the guiding basis of subsequent, intensive analysis.

A further advantage of an iterative approach is its value to the researcher as a progressive learning exercise in the field of study. Intelligent interrogation of one's subject matter requires an informed understanding which is only available as a product

of research. The potential vicious circle here is avoided if one adopts a stage-by-stage investigation, in which each new sortie into the field is (a) of a depth and detail enhanced by the findings of the previous stage, and (b) the basis upon which subsequent investigations may be more informed still.

5.5   The methodology of the thesis

The outcome of the above considerations is the research design finally chosen. The task here is to first introduce the methods applied in the thesis, and subsequently to explain their nature both in terms of their position in the intensive-extensive analysis and the manner in which they respectively contribute to the thesis' aims.

The empirical work carried out can be subdivided into the following three broad areas:

(i)   a series of unstructured interviews with actors at local and national levels throughout the course of the research;

(ii)   a national questionnaire survey of LEAs;

(iii)   a series of semi-structured interviews with MSC staff.

In terms of the intensive-extensive division, the above can be understood as a balanced combination of both. The informal interviews of the first group represent an intensive-style approach, whose actual intensity and depth varied in a manner described in the relevant section below. The questionnaire survey of LEAs was a clear example of extensive research, although it did contain some open-ended elements more associated with intensive work. In the final group, the semi-structured interviews mostly involved an intensive form of enquiry; extensive components were present nonetheless, intended to broaden the scope of the final results.

In line with the iterative approach outlined above, this was adopted in the sense of

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the semi-structured interviews being guided by the findings of the LEA survey, which in turn had been instructed by the evidence gained from informal interview work. Furthermore, the informal interviews themselves had reflected a stage-by-stage progression reflecting an expanding body of research knowledge which the process was generating.

All these points are taken up in more detail in the following sections, which outline the important features of the three broad research components.

5.5 (i) Informal interviews

The first of these was a process which both pre-dated and succeeded the work carried out in the other two. It can usefully be split into three sub-categories as follows:

(a) early 'trawling exercises' designed to expand the researcher's knowledge of the NAFE field. This allowed that subsequent work could proceed with the benefit of an enlightened grasp of the concepts and issues involved, providing a depth and contemporaneity of understanding not available from any literature review. The subjects of these interviews included officers at the MSC's head office in Sheffield; national level officers at the Further Education Unit (FEU) and the Association of County Councils (ACC); LEA officers involved in NAFE at the local level; college staff involved in planning at the institutional level; and academics specialising in further education research.

(b) substantial interviews with a selection of the above group, which explored the important themes and issues identified earlier in more depth and with a greater focus on the particular research goals of the thesis. Of particular value here were members of staff at the FEU and ACC at the national level, and local officers in LEAs and MSC Area Offices around the country. In three localities staff from two or more involved parties (i.e. the LEA, the MSC Area Office and in one case local college staff) were interviewed in an attempt to provide the emerging picture with a wider and more representative perspective.

(c) a round of interviews carried out with the specific aim of developing the national questionnaire of NAFE officers and the series of semi-structured interviews with MSC staff. Initially a process of refining and editing the series of questions identified as important in earlier investigations, the latter part of this exercise involved a process of piloting the questionnaire in the format devised, testing its suitability and its propensity to yield a sufficiently rich and utilisable bank of data. The same process applied to the development of the MSC semi-structured interviews.

As is apparent from the above, this approach involved contacting and meeting a number of officers in different positions on a series of different occasions. It is important here to draw attention to the value of this process in establishing a relationship of mutual trust and confidence which allowed an exchange of ideas and information on the subject which would not have been achievable given a more distant or formal approach. Information gathered in this way represented a very valuable source in the extent to which it allowed meaning to be inferred from what might otherwise be rather sterile facts had they been derived wholly from questionnaire or cursory interview methods.

It can be noted that the above approach of informal interviews is best seen as an example of intensive research, although caution should be exercised here given that some of this work will have been, in the initial stages of the research, carried out at a level fairly close to the surface of the problem. Nonetheless, it has been very significant for the thesis: the whole process has been one of increasing involvement at progressively deeper levels of discussion, notably with those subjects referred to with whom good contacts were established and subsequently consolidated. The end product of the informal interview process has been a considerable intensive exploration of the subject matter under interrogation.

5.5 (ii) National questionnaire survey of NAFE officers

It has been noted above that, among other things, the thesis' required a wide-ranging source of new data referring to the NAFE planning experience of local areas. As a

result it was decided to conduct a piece of extensive research in the form of a quasi-national questionnaire survey across the whole of England and Wales. This was to be despatched to NAFE executive officers in local authority education departments. These were the actors most fully involved in the planning process within LEAs. The decision to aim the survey at the education side of the LEA-MSC partnership followed from the fact that NAFE was, via colleges, a local authority-delivered programme. It also reflects the MSC's insistence that 'ownership' of the Development Plan and Annual Programme lay with the LEA.

The survey aimed to pose questions on a range of issues, whose broad thrust was developed in the early stages definition of the of research topic, but whose detailed content and orientation had to be developed through a combination of literature analysis and the informal interviews referred to above.

The literature analysis involved, in addition to general reading in the fields of education and local government, the examination of various government White Papers, MSC publications, and statements made by a series of organisations at the time of the NAFE Agreement in 1985. There was some examination of secondary literature in the form of research papers dealing specifically with NAFE, but it emerged that little in the way of detailed research existed. The bulk of the information required was therefore derived from direct approaches to the actors in the field.

The first round of interviews geared to this objective were conducted with individuals who were highly informed observers or actors involved at the national level. These included staff at the Head Office of MSC, the headquarters of the ACC, the FEU, and academics at more than one university, as referred to in section 5.5 (i) above on informal interviews. The interviewees were able to provide a feel for the issues which were important, and a national overview of what one might be seeking in such a survey.

The next stage involved interviews with the local actors themselves: some of the LEA officers to whom the questionnaire would be sent. This involved meeting five LEA NAFE officers in different parts of the country: a London borough, a northern

metropolitan borough, a Midlands shire and two further shire authorities in the east of England. This variety was intended to be representative of the various LEA structures that would be included in the analysis. Further local discussions involved meetings with MSC Area officers, in one case in the same locality as one of the LEAs visited, in order to provide a dimension of balance in the preparation of the questionnaire's subject matter.

By means of the above combination of primary and secondary sources, a set of questions was defined and the format of the survey established through a series of drafts. These draft questionnaires were modified through a process of further deliberations on the part of the author, discussions with the thesis supervisor and other colleagues and further discussions with some of the national level interviewees referred to above.

This process led to a final stage of preparation which involved the draft questionnaire and the proposed covering letter being subjected to a pilot with three of the LEA officers previously visited. This pilot produced the last revisions before the drawing up of the final nine-page document, a complete version of which is shown in Appendix B.

The survey mainly involved the respondents giving answers by means of ticking boxes opposite a range of response options. This reflected an aim of making the resultant set of survey data comparable and hence manageable to analyse. It allowed the returns to be synthesised into an overall perspective. However, respondents were also encouraged to write in answers of their own to each question where they considered relevant. Also, a number of open-ended questions were provided. It was hoped that these provisions would to some extent offset the drawbacks of the formal check-list of survey-led responses that could provide the advantage of generalisability at the cost of a distortion of local variation. Nonetheless the data set derived from this work represents a largely formal source of research information.

The strategy of sending the questionnaire to the full population of 104 LEAs anticipated the strong likelihood that there would *not* be a complete response. The

intention was rather to gather a sample which was as large and representative of the whole as possible. The alternative approach of targeting a selected sample would have had the advantages of providing for a representatively even distribution of responses. However, this approach was rejected on the grounds of maximising the response rate in order to gain as high a proportion of the total as possible. The higher the response rate, the more justifiable would be any conclusions and generalisations made from the data. The problem in this strategy was the need to iron out biases caused by the possible over-representation of some types of authority or region over others. The manner in which this problem was tackled is outlined below.

The discussions undertaken to refine the surveys content had also been used to investigate the optimum timing of the survey's despatch and collection. Factors determining this included the ebb and flow of respondents' workloads at different stages in the NAFE planning cycle and academic year, and the need to avoid a coincidence with other surveys in the field.

As a result of these deliberations, the finalised survey was sent to the 104 LEAs of England and Wales on June 20, 1988. The date by which respondents were requested to make a return was July 25. An additional request was made for respondents to include copies of their authority's Development Plan and Annual Programme and any other information which they might be able to provide that could enhance the value of their response.

Various follow-up stages ensued before the collection of the survey was complete. These were aimed at tackling the problem of providing an even representation of respondents that would echo the balance of the full population. This required: a similar proportion of: (a) different authority types - shire counties, metropolitan boroughs etc.; (b) authorities in each of the nine standard regions in England and Wales; (c) authorities of different size; (d) variations in LEA type within the above groupings - e.g. between inner and outer urban boroughs, highly populated and sparsely populated shires, core and peripheral areas.

The means by which this requirement was pursued was as follows. Firstly,

attempts were aimed at maximising the total number of responses: a reminder letter was issued on July 26 to all authorities who had not sent a response by the first closing date; further reminder letters accompanied by fresh copies of the survey instrument were despatched to non-respondents on October 3. By October 14 a total of 64 completed surveys had been received, at a response rate of 61.5 per cent.

At this stage, attempts were made to match responses to the required proportions of each type. The intention was to contact LEAs of types under-represented among the respondents and make special requests of them to respond. The danger of introducing bias through this process was addressed by contacting all authorities of the type required, on the assumption that only some of them would be persuaded to respond. Fortuitously, however, the responses collected already had been fairly well balanced anyway, and the problem of under-representation was largely confined to central city and Welsh county authorities. Both these groups were contacted, and further responses were obtained from some LEAs within them.

The most problematic area in assessing representativeness was in group (d) above, because judging which areas are 'peripheral' or 'densely populated' is a somewhat subjective process. The acceptance of the final sample inevitably entailed some interpretation on the part of the author, one largely based on the analysis of a developing map of responding authorities, which appears in its final form here as Figure 5.1.

The survey was closed on 17 November 1988 and no further responses sought after this time. By this time, 70 completed questionnaires had been received, at a response rate of 67.3 per cent.

The balance of the survey against the population in the various categories referred to above is indicated in Figures 5.2 - 5.4, and the accompanying tables. Table 5.1 indicates LEAs by type*, as a proportion of both the population as a whole and of the survey sample. Figure 5.2 illustrates these figures graphically. The final column in

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* LEA 'type' is used here to distinguish between shire, borough and district authorities.

Figure 5.1: Map of respondents to the LEA survey

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Responding Authorities
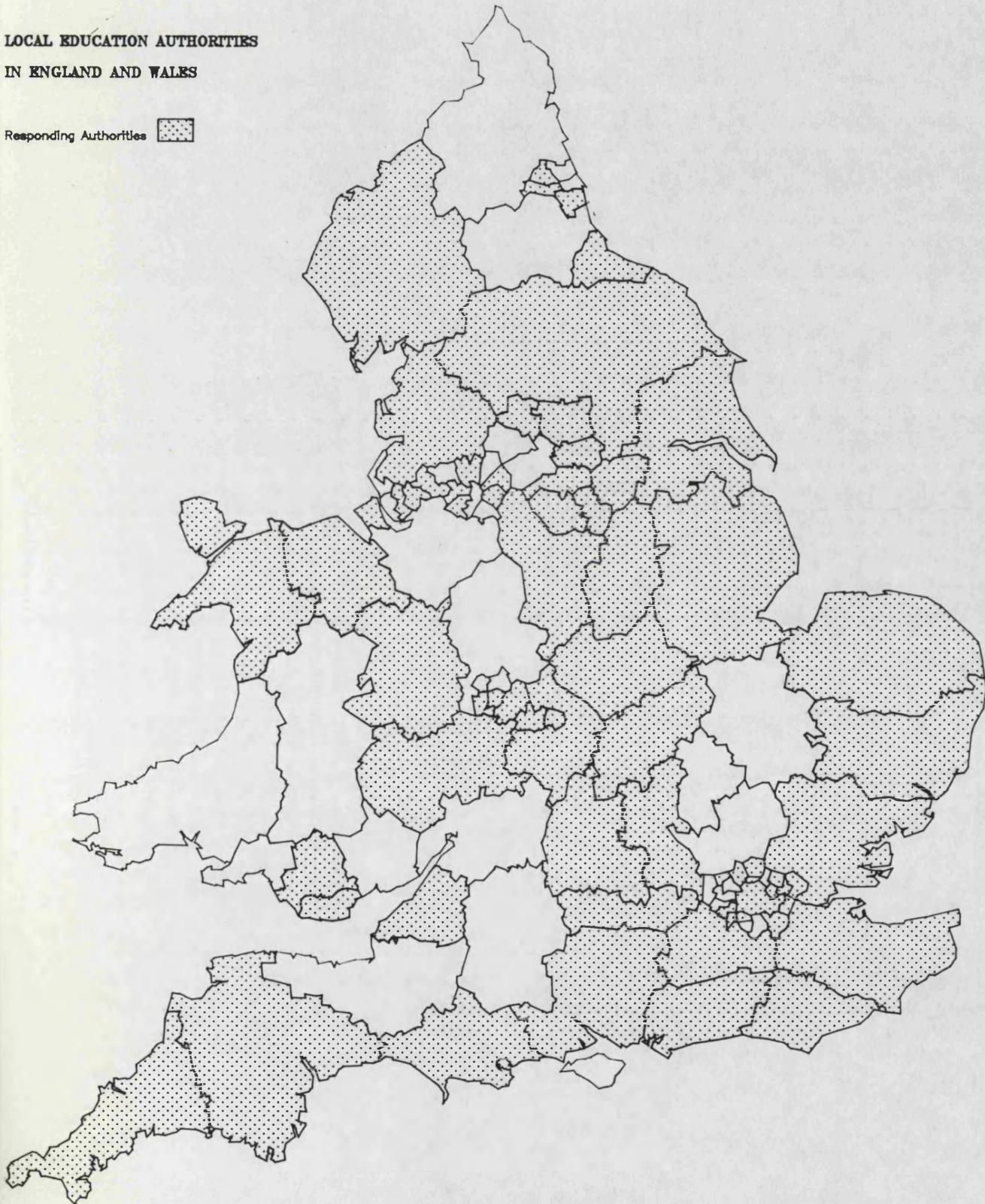
Table 5.1: Respondents by LEA type

LEA type	Total LEAs	LEAs in sample	% Total	% Sample	% Difference
London Boroughs (inc. ILEA)	2 1	1 4	20.2	20.0	0.2
Metropolitan Boroughs	3 6	2 4	34.6	34.3	0.3
Shire Counties	3 9	2 9	37.5	41.4	3.9
Welsh Counties	8	4	7.7	5.7	2.0

Average: 1.6

Figure 5.2: Respondents by LEA type

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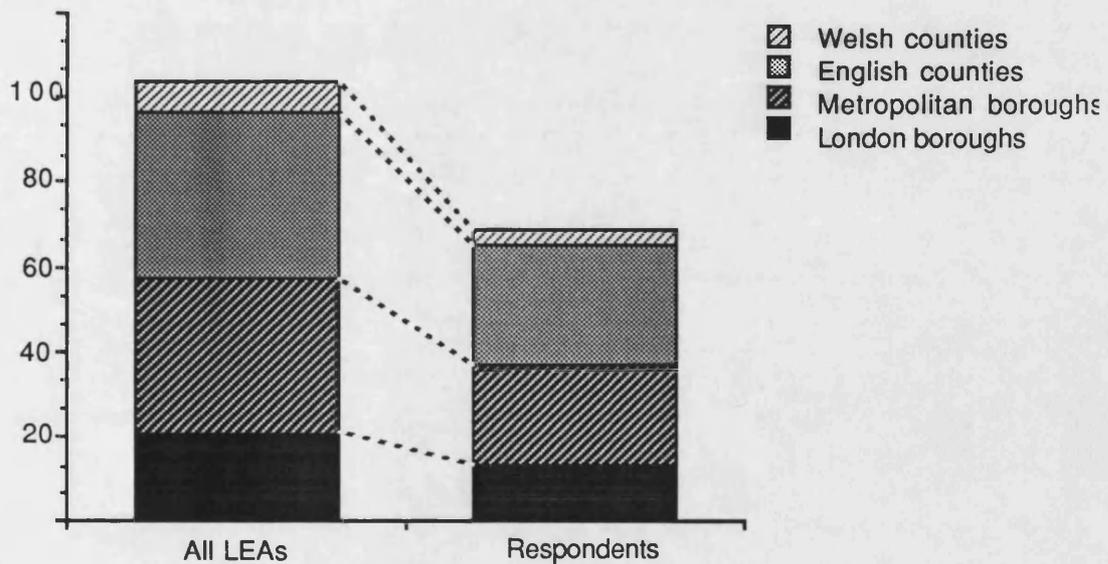
Table 5.2: Respondents by region

Region	Total no. LEAs	Total respondents	% Total	% Sample	% Difference
Yorks/Humberside	1 1	9	10.6	12.9	2.3
W.midlands	1 1	8	10.6	11.4	0.8
Wales	8	4	7.7	5.7	2.0
South West	7	4	6.7	5.7	1.0
S.East (inc. London)	3 2	23	30.8	32.9	2.1
North West	1 8	1 1	17.3	15.7	1.6
North	8	4	7.7	5.7	2.0
E.Midlands	6	5	5.8	7.1	1.3
East Anglia	3	2	2.9	2.9	0

Average: 1.46 %

Figure 5.3: Respondents by region

175
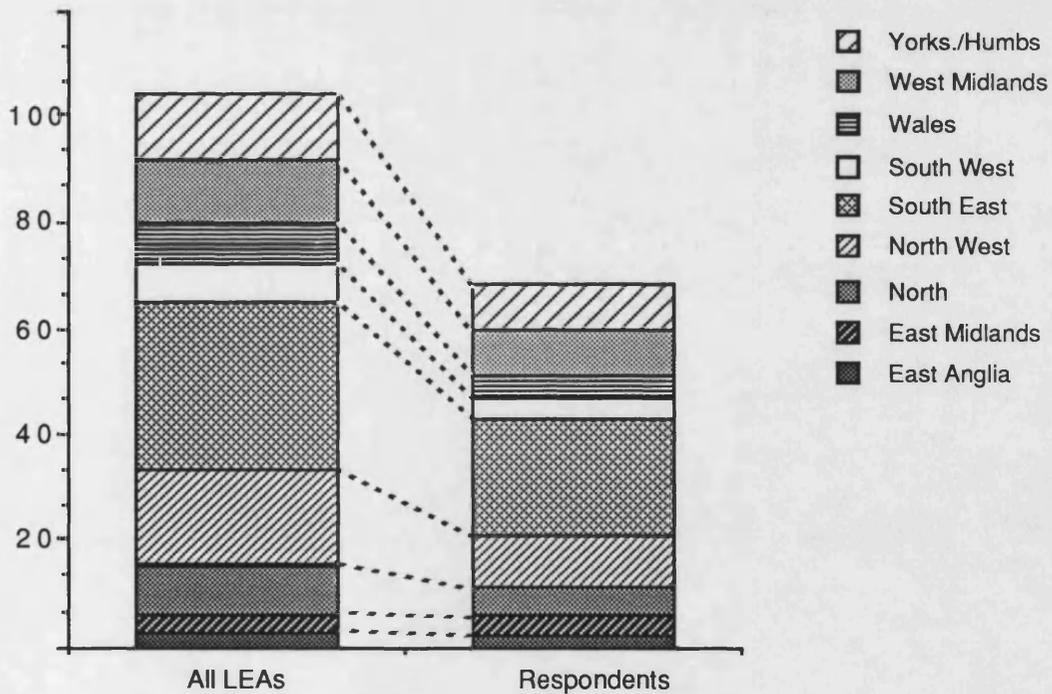
Table 5.3: Respondents by LEA type

LEA size	Total LEAs	LEAs in sample	% Total	% Sample	% Difference
1 - 3 institutions	50	29	48.1	41.4	6.7
4 - 6 institutions	21	17	20.2	24.3	4.1
7 institutions or more	25	18	24.0	25.7	1.7
No data	8	6	7.7	8.6	0.9

Average: 3.4

Figure 5.4: Respondents by LEA size

176
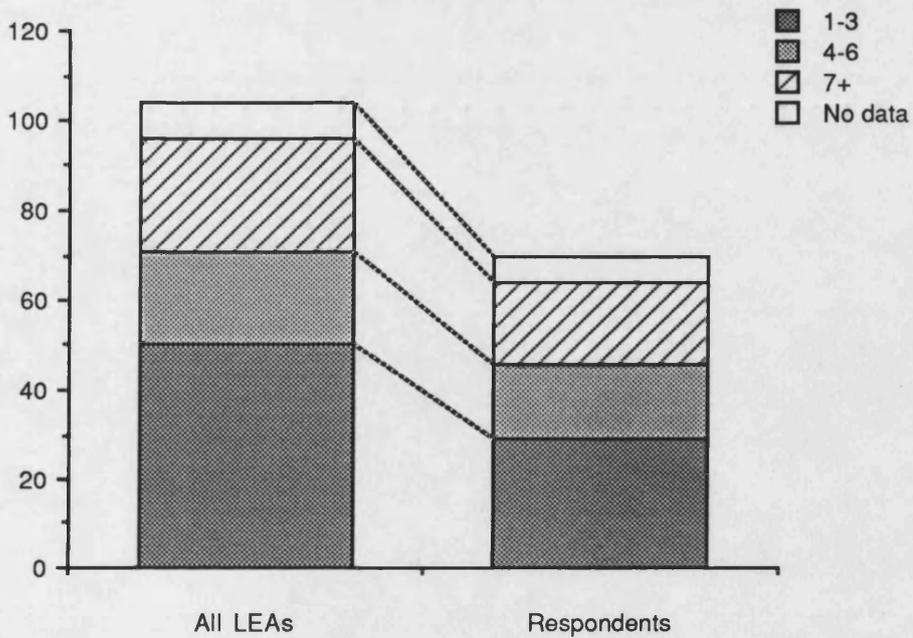
Table 5.1 indicates the percentage difference between population and sample for each type. It demonstrates that, with a maximum variation of only 3.9 per cent from the mean in the 'shire counties' category, and variations of less than 1.0 per cent for London boroughs and metropolitan districts, that the sample is closely representative by LEA type, the average variation being only 1.6 per cent.

Similar evidence is found in the case of LEAs subdivided by region, as illustrated in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.3. For the nine regions in England and Wales, the maximum percentage variation between the population and sample is 2.3 per cent, and the average 1.46 per cent, again providing a closely representative picture.

A third subdivision of LEAs considered is that by LEA size. This refers to a division of the LEAs into groups according to the number of NAFE institutions within their jurisdiction. These groups are 1-3 institutions, 4-6 institutions and more than 7 institutions. The figures shown in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.4 were derived from the *Municipal Yearbook* of 1987 *22. Here there is a greater margin of variation, the average being 3.4 per cent and the maximum 6.7 per cent. These figures are nonetheless low enough to confirm, along with those above, that the survey is highly representative of the full population of LEAs in England and Wales.

5.5 (iii) Semi-structured interviews

The required balance of extensive and intensive techniques argued for earlier necessitated that the major MSC-based enquiry offset some of the rigidity imposed by the earlier LEA work, whilst retaining a degree of representative comparability between MSC Areas. The approach taken was to use semi-structured interviews with a sample of the Area Office population. This retained the advantages of the questionnaire approach whilst adding a new dimension. The approach recognised the value of using the LEA survey as more than just a model for a complementary replica, realised its

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* The available data required some interpretation, as it was not collected in a uniform format for the *Yearbook*; in 8 cases there was no data on NAFE institutions. Some marginal distortion is possible as a result.

potential for providing an authoritative descriptive overview, and signalled fruitful avenues for further, more detailed work. The semi-structured interviews were therefore able to fulfil the task of providing a set of data which could be compared against the LEA responses for the purposes of triangulation and verification, whilst also going a stage further. That is, they were able to provide an opportunity for deeper investigation at a more meaningful level into the issues which had become established or suggested by the earlier work, fulfilling the terms of the 'iterative' approach outlined earlier.

There is a degree of academic debate about the relative merits of formal and informal interviews. The advantages attributed to the former generally refer to objectivity and scientific rigour, whereas flexibility and depth are claimed on behalf of the latter. The lack of each advantage is used as criticism of the other.

Deutscher[23] is cited by Brenner[24] as a proponent of formalised interviews. Deutscher argues for 'the desirability of socially sterile conditions in the interview situation' which he claims to reduce the possibility of researcher-bias in the responses gathered. Sayer and Morgan[25] also cite this as the rationale behind standardised interviewing, along with the idea that it allows 'controlled comparisons' to be made.

However, Sayer and Morgan claim that the cost of this pursuit of 'representativeness' is a loss of explanatory penetration:

> Extreme standardisation which disregards the different types of respondent can in fact make comparisons rather meaningless, because they fail to register the fact that different questions can have a vastly different significance (for different respondents).[26]

Brenner accepts that the interviewer will

> influence the situation of action in the interview by means of (the interviewer's) own performance

He argues, however, that social interaction with the interviewee is inevitable:

> The interview constitutes an interpersonal encounter. Hence, attempts at measurement in interviewing take the form of fleeting social relationships which resemble those of everyday life,[27]

i.e. they have an ethnographic element.

Sayer and Morgan argue for the acceptance of this truth, and for a positive response on the part of researchers. This would seek to use such interaction consciously in order to maximise the flow of information, rather than continuing to pursue standardisation -

> an awkward and often distorted form of (non?) communication.[28]

The response to these issues adopted in this thesis is to take on board the idea of interactive interviewing, whilst not abandoning a structured element. In the context of the present work, the term 'semi-structured interview' is being used to mean the following: a set of predetermined question areas put to each interviewee in a manner approximately similar to that put to the other interviewees in the study (the exact choice of words being made by the interviewer at the time); whilst attempts are made not to let the interview slip into irrelevant areas, the interviewee is allowed to tackle each question as he or she feels appropriate.

The use of the same question areas, and in many instances the same questions, provides for a set of answers which may be compared with other responses and synthesised in subsequent analysis. The open-ended nature of the interviewees' response provides a flexibility which allows a large volume of relevant information to be elucidated.

This describes the manner in which the interviews with MSC local officers were carried out. The development of the question areas was based heavily on the format of the LEA questionnaire (to allow a strong element of comparability), but also involved a series of informal interviews with national and local MSC actors to establish what other or deeper issues would be appropriate to address.

The choice of interviewees was also intended to enhance comparability with the LEA survey. In one sense this entailed the choice of the LEA respondents' opposite numbers as the point at which an interview was sought, i.e. the NAFE HEO employed at each MSC Area Office. In another sense it involved the choice of the Area Offices themselves.

This choice was based upon two factors: a desire to interview MSC staff in those areas from which a response had been received from one or more corresponding LEAs; and the importance of representativeness, in terms of region, urban/rural nature, core-periphery location, the number of LEAs covered by the Area Office, the nature of the LEAs, and so forth.

Nine Area offices were eventually chosen for the study. These included an office in each region in England and Wales bar one, with two offices being visited in one large region. Area Offices which were chosen covered: a single midlands county authority, the office being located in its largest city; two northern metropolitan boroughs; two counties in the east of England; one large and one small LEA in the south of England; a single county authority in the north-east; two LEAs in south Wales; five London boroughs; a densely-populated shire in the West Midlands; and three metropolitan boroughs in a north-western city. A more explicit revelation of the location of these offices is prevented by the need to preserve confidentiality, an important element in persuading interviewees to be confident and forthright in their responses. Thus they are referenced in the text by means of alphabetic labels, which are detailed in the List of Interviewees at the end of the thesis.

The nine Area Offices visited were responsible for dealing with a total of 29 LEAs. Of these, 15 had been respondents to the LEA survey. Of the non-responding LEAs, only one was the Area Office's sole authority, the others being in 3- and 5-LEA metropolitan Areas and a 2-LEA shire county Area. This provides considerable justification for crossover and comparative analysis in the use of the LEA and MSC survey data.

5.6   Use of the data

The results from the empirical work outlined above are described in the chapters which follow. It is not intended that they be presented in a format based on the manner in which they were gathered. Rather the intention is that they be presented in a thematic way, and in a manner which flows from the discussions raised in the earlier chapters.

This chapter has attempted to concentrate upon the thinking and methodology behind empirical work and the manner in which it was carried out. This has been done in order to facilitate understanding of how the material presented in the remainder of the thesis was derived, and clarify the basis upon which statements attributed to its empirical analysis have been made.

Notes to Chapter 5:

1. DES, 1982a.

2. Massey and Meegan, 1985.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Sayer and Morgan, 1985.

6. *Op. cit.*, p.6.

7. *Op. cit.*, p.150.

8. Harré, 1979.

9. Theodossin, 1986, pp.89-90.

10. *Op. cit.*, p.154.

11. *Op. cit.*, p.10.

12. Peck, 1988.

13. *Op. cit.*, p.152.

14. *Op. cit.*, p.7.

15. After Sayer and Morgan,*Op. cit.*, and others.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Op. cit.*, p.8.

18. *Op. cit.*, p.145.

19. Massey and Meegan, 1984, p.8.

20. *Op. cit.*, p.150.

21. *Op. cit.*.

22. *Municipal Yearbook* , 1987.

23. 1972.

24. Brenner *et al*, 1978.

25. *Op. cit.*

26. *Op. cit.*.

27. *Op. cit.*

28. *Op. cit.*

Chapter Six

The restructuring of the NAFE bureaucracy.

6.1 Introduction

The importance of bureaucratic restructuring as a strategic tool of central government policy implementation was stressed in earlier chapters. These discussions presented a critical analysis of the NAFE and employment and training policy networks, and an outline of the strategic objectives behind their linking in the proposals of *Training for Jobs*. This chapter is the first of two chapters which present the thesis' main empirical findings. It examines the impacts of *Training for Jobs* and the subsequent NAFE Agreement on bureaucratic arrangements in both policy networks, and the relationships which developed between them as a new, more extensive NAFE policy network emerged. These findings are derived from the extensive survey and interview work detailed in Chapter 5.

The particular focus of this chapter is on bureaucratic arrangements within the key institutions involved, i.e. the MSC and LEAs. There were identified as being the primary points of enquiry in Chapter 5. Section 6.2 below considers the MSC's institutional response to *Training for Jobs* and the NAFE Agreement*. Section 6.3 examines the response of LEAs. Section 6.4 considers the nature and quality of relationships between the MSC and LEAs as they developed in the period 1984-9, and the problems encountered along the way. Together these forge a portrait of the new NAFE policy network which had developed by 1989.

6.2 The institutional response of the MSC to the NAFE initiative

In examining the institutional arrangements established by the MSC to administer the NAFE Agreement, this section presents much new research information on the internal workings of the MSC hitherto unavailable in the public domain. It considers in turn the organisational set-ups at national, regional and local level, and the intra-office relationships both between levels and between different offices at the Area level.

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* Hereafter referred to (where jointly) as the 'NAFE initiative'.

6.2 (i) Arrangements at national level

The national-levels of the MSC's operation were conducted from its Head Office at Moorfoot in Sheffield. Its broad structure, indicated in Figure 6.1, comprised the appointed Commission beneath which operated a large and complex executive, divided into a number of operational sections. These varied in their detailed composition over the years, a reflection of the MSC's fluid bureaucratic character; Figure 6.1 illustrates the structure which existed prior to the removal of its responsibilities for employment services and the subsequent abolition of the Commission during 1988. At this time NAFE was administered as part of the Training Division.

The detailed internal Head Office structure varied considerably during the period of study, especially during 1988, and it is an unnecessarily complex procedure to illustrate it at each stage. More important to note is the structure of the FE branch, which was more constant through this period. This was divided into four sections, numbered FE 1-4. FE 1 dealt with NAFE policy, a staff of twenty dealing with strategic considerations, issuing guidance and liaising with other parties, notably the local authority associations. FE 2 dealt with projects covered by the Development Fund**, whilst FE 3 was an advisory section coordinating regional NAFE advisors. FE 4 was responsible for administration and monitoring, and for general liaison with the field operation of NAFE. It gave advice on performance indicators, financial questions and 'the routine business of keeping the show on the road'[1]. These division are illustrated in Figure 6.2. The role of Head Office in NAFE as articulated through these divisions was seen as twofold by a senior officer within the FE branch[2]. The first job was policy advice, steering local officers in the form of both formal and informal advice. The first of these was covered by the *Guidance Handbook* and its annual updates, the latter conducted through *ad hoc* contact as and when problems arose. The second task of the Head Office operation was 'making sure what we are trying to do is acceptable in LEA eyes'. This meant regular liaison with the local authority associations, the DES and the Welsh Office. Formal contact of this type was conducted

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** see Chapter 7.

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Figure 6.1: MSC internal organisation

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
┌──────────────┐    │ MANPOWER SERVICES   │    ┌──────────────┐
│ MSC COMMITTEE│────│    COMMISSION       │────│ MSC COMMITTEE│
│  FOR WALES   │    │     (Chair)         │    │ FOR SCOTLAND │
└──────────────┘    └─────────────────────┘    └──────────────┘
                           │
                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  DIRECTOR   │
                    └─────────────┘
```

| TRAINING DIVSION | EMPLOYMENT DIVSION | SKILLS TRAINING AGENCY | TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE UNIT |

| PERSONNEL AND CENTRAL SERVICES DIVISION | PLANNING AND RESOURCES DIVISION |
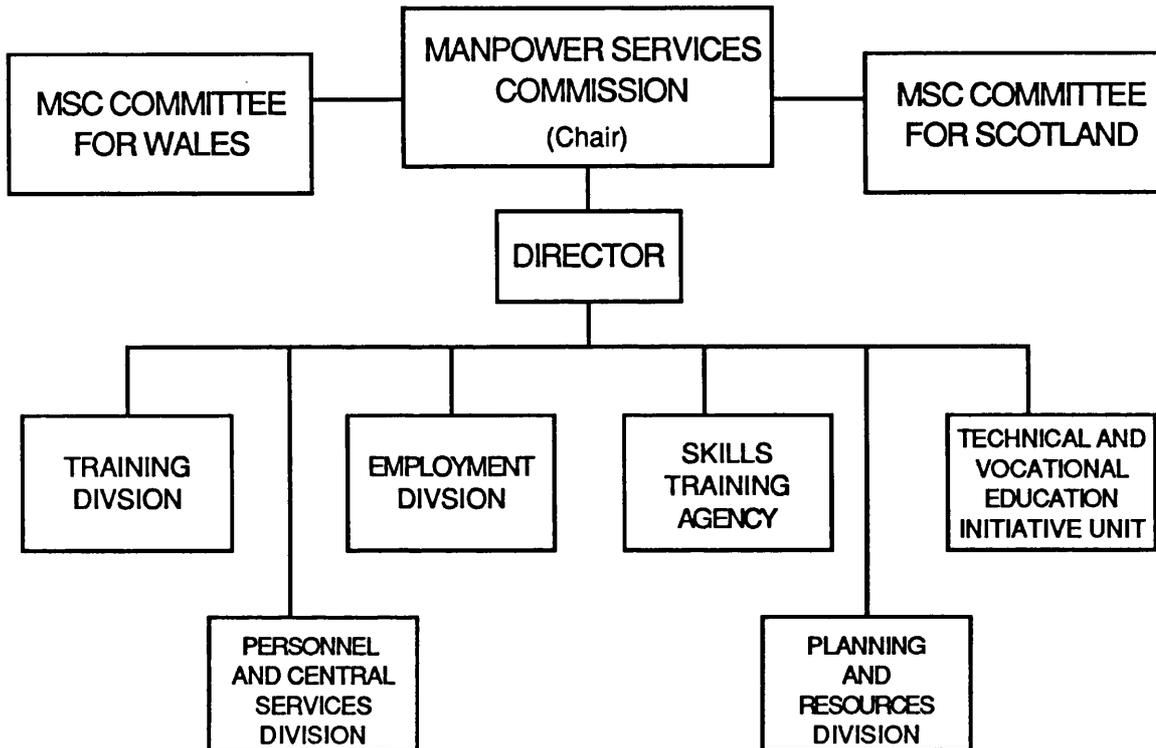
Source: A user's guide to the Manpower Services Commission,
Thomson and Rosenberg (1986), p.29.

Figure 6.2: MSC internal organisation for NAFE

NATIONAL : REGIONAL : LOCAL

DIRECTOR GENERAL

TRAINING DIVISION   OTHER DIVISIONS

Others   DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMES   DIRECTOR OF FEILD OPERATIONS

Others   Others   REGIONAL DIRECTOR Grade 5   AREA MANAGER Grade 6

FURTHER EDUCATION BRANCH Head - Grade 5   Asst. REG. DIRECTOR Grade 6

FE:1 - Policy Head - Grade 7   FE:2 - Dev. Fund Head - Grade 7   FE:3 - FE Adviser Dev. Head - Grade 7   FE:4 - FE Admin./Monitoring Head - Grade 7   REGIONAL FE ADVISER Grade 7

SEO ?   SEO   ? → LINKS TO LEA

REGIONAL HEO NAFE   AREA HEO NAFE

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Source: Compiled by the author.

at the highest level through the Joint Consultative Group, which comprised four Commissioners (including the chair), local authority association politicians, and representatives from the DES and NCVQ. The presence of four Commissioners meant that the group was 'very influential'. Below this were some officer-level groups, the NAFE Advisory Group (which succeeded the NAFE Implementation and Evaluation Groups referred to in Chapter 4) and a group overseeing project work, the MDF Officers Group. All of these groups fell with the Commission in late-1988, to be replaced by informal liaison procedures.

6.2 (ii) Arrangements at regional level

At regional level the NAFE work of the MSC involved 3-4 principal actors, these being:

- the Regional Director and/or the Assistant Regional Director;
- the Regional Further Education Adviser (RFEA);
- an HEO dealing with NAFE at the Regional Office.

The RFEA was the principal actor among these. This was a part-time post appointed on a three-year basis, and was occupied by an officer with a long experience in the field of further education, typically a retired college principal. The RFEA's role was intended to provide, in a complex field, a dimension of educational expertise which the MSC would otherwise lack, thereby permitting more informed judgments by MSC staff in dealing with LEA statements and submissions. Recognising the fence-crossing involved in this sort of appointment one MSC officer described the job as being akin to that of a 'poacher turned gamekeeper'[b]. In particular the RFEAs' job broadly comprised:

(a) giving advice to Area Office staff, and to LEA staff should they require, drawing on their wider experience of the field;

(b) commenting on LEA Development Plans and Annual Programmes, suggesting amendments/improvements where necessary;

(c)   providing a regional overview of NAFE which would be lacking from a purely local perspective.

However it is important to note that within these broad parameters the actual activity of the RFEA varied quite considerably from region to region, depending upon the individual approach of the officer in post. That is to say, it appears to have been in the nature of the job that there was much room for discretion and interpretation on the part of its occupant to conduct it as he or she thought best.

Working directly beneath the RFEA at the regional office on NAFE was usually an HEO devoted full-time to coordinating regional activity in the field. The HEO's task involved backing up the RFEA, dealing with Area Offices on a day-to-day basis and with Head Office where necessary, issuing guidance, discussing any problem areas and dealing with queries and work connected with Development Fund projects. This officers role was likened to a 'post-box' in the context of communication up and down the administrative line [a,3]. The division of labour between the RFEA and the HEO NAFE was not tightly defined, and would vary from one Regional Office to another, but it appeared that the RFEA devoted more time to educational issues, whereas the HEO's role was more managerial.

Of the other two posts mentioned, that of Regional Director and Assistant Regional Director, the first of these was ultimately responsible for the delivery of all activity in the region, and in this sense therefore a significant part of the NAFE line management. The latter of the two may or may not have been involved in NAFE, depending upon the Region. One or other of the two would commonly attend high level MSC-LEA meetings, and perhaps chair any regional conferences. In general however, there was very little involvement on the part of these officers in NAFE as compared with other MSC programmes, except where an individual opted to take a particular personal interest in it.

In one local interview[d] a regional SEO was indicated to have been involved in NAFE; this had occurred where for some time there had been no RFEA in post. No other interviewees cited an SEO role in their region, however.

Finally, apart from the above posts there would be some administrative and clerical support staff backing up the HEO.

The senior national-level officer interviewed indicated the role of the Regional OFfice in NAFE. It was there 'to add a little weight at times', for example in formal meetings; to provide a coordinating force; and to add some form of overview where there were boundary problems[4]. He suggested that the precise role would depend upon the interpretation of the individuals concerned.

6.2 (iii) Arrangements at local level

The role of the Area Office in NAFE was indicated as having responsibility for establishing relationships with LEAs, for day-to-day discussions, and for taking action where change was required[5].

The routine administration of NAFE activity conducted in MSC Area Offices can be divided into two broad areas. One was the mainstream activity of negotiating each LEA's Development Plan and Annual Programme, and monitoring their implementation. The other was the overseeing of projects carried out by authorities or colleges which were financed out of a central MSC budget. Whilst the latter is dealt with in Chapter 7, the former involved:

(a)   at the start of each planning round, issuing national Guidance to each LEA;

(b)   supply of labour market intelligence to LEAs and colleges;

(c)   negotiation of Plan and Programme content;

(d)   monitoring;

(e)   issuing of payments to LEAs every two months, subject to evidence of the Programme being satisfactorily delivered.

Beyond these formal requirements, there generally occurred much informal contact and information exchange between Area Offices and LEAs.

The staff structure in Area Offices was based on civil service grades, in descending rank from the Area Manager who would normally be a Grade 7 (former Principal Grade) officer, supported by an Assistant Area Manager. Below this would be a small number of Senior Executive Officers (SEOs), a larger number of Higher Executive Officers (HEOs), with a larger number still of Executive Officers (EOs) and Administrative Officers (AOs) making up the lower ranks.

The total number of staff in the Area Offices sampled varied from as low as 60 to as high as 150, the average number in post at the time of enquiry being 103 (although an average derived from the designated cadres would be a little higher).

The number of SEOs was typically 3, there being one example each of an office with 2 or 4 SEOs. Of the SEOs, one would carry some responsibility of NAFE, this constituting the line management link between the Area Manager and the NAFE HEO. NAFE typically represented a small portion of this SEOs duties, which commonly included such other responsibilities as strategy and resources, coherence, TVEI issues, and, most commonly in the sample, YTS (in 4 cases out of the 6 for which such information was detailed).

The HEO level was that in which almost universally the spadework of NAFE was carried out. The number of HEOs in the Area Offices sampled ranged from 11 to 20, the average number being 17. Of these, it was most common that only one would be engaged in NAFE work.

In those Area Offices sampled the amount of HEO time devoted to NAFE ranged from 40 to 100 per cent. In 7 out of 9 cases the full time equivalent or near equivalent of one officer was engaged in this work. In 2 of the 6 cases this meant two HEOs devoting 50 per cent of their time to NAFE. In these and the remaining 2 cases the HEO's remaining time was taken up by work on labour market intelligence (LMI), the two parts of the job occupying roughly half the officers' time. In another example this had been the case until six months previously.

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In one Area Office there were two HEOs devoting 50 per cent of their time to NAFE, one dealing with mainstream and the other with project work. Another example saw two HEOs spending 50 per cent of their time each on NAFE and LMI, one officer being devoted to each of the Area's two LEAs.

Two interviewees, whilst dealing mainly with NAFE, identified other minor responsibilities in TVEI and programme coherence, one of them having additional responsibilities for youth development projects. Only two interviewees claimed to work exclusively on NAFE.

It appeared untypical for EOs to be very much involved in NAFE work. There were two cases only [h,i] of substantial involvement, these being of an EO devoted 50 per cent time to NAFE, one in an office whose HEO spent only 40 per cent of her time engaged in NAFE work, the other being additional to a full-time HEO. One other case[d] saw an EO doing 'some shadowing', and a third[c] indicated an EO having been involved 10 per cent in NAFE until six months previously, when the HEO previously engaged in a combination of activities switched full-time to NAFE. As one interviewee[c] pointed out, it was important that MSC staff not be too junior, as dealing with LEAs often meant liaising with fairly senior and experienced staff there, and meeting like with like became important.

The officers interviewed were asked if their posts had been created especially for the purpose of delivering NAFE, and if so when. What emerged was that:

(a)   reorganisation, post-splitting and alteration had occurred in most Area Offices, suggesting very fluid arrangements in staff deployment;

(b)   most Area Office NAFE posts were held to have existed since shortly after the White Paper, in four cases [c,d,e,g] having been established for the specific purpose of NAFE delivery, and in one case[h] a definite case of responsibility-shuffling;

(c)   in two cases [c,d] the posts were identified as having come into existence later, when the actual process of working with LEAs first began in late 1985.

Interviewees were also asked about their length of tenure in the post, and the number of other officers who had occupied it. Two of the officers interviewed [d,e] had been in post since planning began, but in all the other cases there had been staff changes. Three Area Offices [a,b,c] had seen two appointees to the post, and one each had seen three[f] and four[g] appointees. Another sole appointee[h] to the post had only been in it since early 1988, taking over from an SEO-delivered job.

The NAFE section was the smallest section in all Area Offices, seeing much less input than such other MSC programmes as Employment Training and YTS. The amount of time devoted to it overall appears, from the evidence outlined above, to have been quite limited. In general it comprised a single full-time HEO post supported by occasional EO involvement, minimal SEO time and a degree of administrative support at the clerical level. On top this would be the input of the Area Manager, which would depend very much upon the interest taken by the individual concerned. In two cases this had clearly been significant: one interviewee[c] noted the importance of his Area Manager's role in establishing the Area Office-LEA relationship, and his continuing devotion of around 12 full days per year to NAFE. Another[d] described her work with a previous Area Manager as a kind of 'double-act' in NAFE, although the present occupant of that post was less involved. Other cases saw much less involvement, one officer[g] describing her Area Manager's input to NAFE as 'minuscule'. Where Area Managers were involved it was likely to be in attending key meetings with LEA staff, or intervening to add weight to the MSC position where senior LEA staff or politicians became involved. The signing of the Contract and ultimate management responsibility for NAFE delivery in the Area were the most important tasks allocated to this post.

In one case the Area Office's notional allocation of staff time to NAFE was provided[g]. The proportions of time supposedly spent at each rank on this work were identified as follows:

    SEO - 0.3
    HEO - 1.5
    EO   - 0.1
    AO   - 0.1

The notional total of full time equivalent staff was therefore 2. In practice, however, there was little staff time available above one full time HEO. Here, as elsewhere, it must be remembered that in the early days of NAFE, the refusal of LEAs to become involved with the MSC left designated NAFE staff in the Area Offices without a function, and so they became linked to other responsibilities before planning got underway. One officer noted that Area Offices had much discretion over their distribution of responsibilities, and that there was frequently much cross-over of tasks.

The level of knowledge and understanding on the part of the remainder of Area Office staff about what NAFE was and work it involved appears generally to have been very limited. Education work was apparently perceived as an activity distant from the mainstream of MSC endeavour. Two officers [b,6] spoke of a 'mystique' surrounding their activities within the office. This was claimed to be a product of at least two factors. First, the comparatively small scale and low level of staff involvement. The other was sensitivity to wary and resistive LEAs which had demanded caution, especially in the early days, a need to 'use kid-gloves'. One officer[c] pointed out the initial need to keep the MSC staff small and discrete so as not to crowd out meetings and thereby intimidate those LEA opposite numbers who originally had no desire or mandate to cooperate.

This low level of MSC staff commitment appears to have been maintained throughout the planning process to the time of the interview survey. There appeared at no time to have been significant extra resources envisaged for the expansion of MSC NAFE activity in Area Offices.

6.2 (iv) Relationships between different levels of MSC over NAFE

The significant relationships at issue here are those between the Area Offices and Regional and Head Office respectively.

This varied from one Area Office in the sample to another, but in general contact between these two bodies appeared to occur quite often, typically at least as often as once a week, and in some cases almost on a daily basis.

The amount and nature of this contact appeared to be in part dependent upon the nature of the RFEA in each region; in two cases [g,h] it was indicated that a new Advisor had recently been appointed and that in consequence the level of contact with the Area Office had risen sharply.

Not surprisingly, geographical distance between the two offices had some effect on the nature of contact between their staff. Whilst in some cases they were located in the same city or even the same building, in others the intervening distance could be over 100 miles, a clear influence on the practicability of frequent personal contact. Those more distant from the Regional Office had to make up in telephone contact and correspondence what they lacked in frequent face-to-face discussions.

Whilst some Area Offices made extensive use of the Regional Office for advice and a wider perspective - one officer[d] stated that Regional Office operated 'like a consultant' for her office - others were less likely to involve Regional officers heavily as a matter of policy.

In addition to the above there occurred regional meetings of MSC officers in some form in all the Areas sampled, bar two [g,j]. In one of these a recently-appointed RFEA had taken to more frequent field visits instead[j]. The nature of such meetings varied from regular monthly formal gatherings of all MSC officers in the region discussing a range of issues and engaging in staff development activities, to occasional meetings, perhaps twice a year, convened to discuss new project or planning guidance. The formality of these meetings varied from one region to another, as did the range of staff attending.

Contact between Area Offices and MSC Head Office at Moorfoot in Sheffield appeared to be very limited. It was in the nature of the Commission's institutional character that internal contact between centre and locality was conducted in a disciplined manner along the channels of line management[7]. This meant Head Office dealing largely with Regional Offices, and Regional Offices in turn with Area Offices. Reasons indicated for this were that otherwise Head Office 'would get swamped' with requests for information or advice from Area Offices, and that it would be difficult for Regional Offices to maintain an informed overview[8].

Nevertheless, some contact did occur. Such as it was, this appeared to be mainly in the form of specific questions which local officers wished to pose to staff in the NAFE section at Moorfoot. The advantage of direct contact over queries included a quick response from central staff who had expertise in the field at issue, where a more formal approach might slow the whole process down. Interviewees indicated that they kept their Regional Office informed of such contacts, often getting advice from the Regional HEO or RFEA on whom best to contact at Moorfoot.

The subject of such queries would often be related to Development Fund projects, rather than policy or programme issues, for it was in the former area that any required expertise might be more likely to reside outside the experience of local or Regional officers. Even given the above, it appeared that most local officers took any questions they may have had to Regional level where the RFEA was likely to provide an adequate response.

An additional form of involvement noted by one interviewee[d] was as a part of the MSC's internal NAFE User's Group, a body on which a selection of officers from around the country were periodically represented to share experience from their areas.

There appeared to be very little direct contact between Head Office and Area level instigated from Moorfoot. One interviewee[d] described it as 'an event' for such a thing to happen when compared with the contact occurring over other MSC programmes.

Occasionally, officers from central departments would visit Area Offices for specific purposes, perhaps as a staff development, evaluation or information-gathering exercise. Aside from this contact which would occur fell into two camps:

(i)   research and development project work;

(ii) contact by mail - guidance and requests for information.

The other kind of written contact involved requests for information, including numerous questionnaires on a variety of issues. All officers interviewed noted the preponderance of these and the heavy workload they engendered; several suggested a lack of foresight or sensitivity in the timing of their despatch, which they claimed often coincided with peak periods in the planning cycle. One interviewee in particular described these questionnaires as 'a real bugbear', and local officers cited several reasons as to why they caused problems:

(i)   poor timing - and a suspicion that this was traceable to ministerial pressure to garner information;

(ii)   volume of work required, especially where local staff were asked to provide information on issues which they had not been required to obtain from the LEAs;

(iii) repetition of requests for the same information;

(iv)   oversimplification - often the questionnaire instruments would contain series of tick lists giving such options as 'good/adequate/inadequate' to questions which in some cases embraced highly complex and politically-charged issues which were not amenable to such treatment. In such cases the quest for simplicity was held to obfuscate an accurate assessment. Again, ministerial requirements were suggested as possible motivations for this approach.

6.2 (v) Contact between Area Offices

Within Regions, contact between Area Offices appeared to vary in frequency, and to depend to a fair extent on interpersonal relationships between particular NAFE HEOs. Between regions, contact appeared to have be negligible.

Seven of the nine officers interviewed indicated that they met colleagues from other Area Offices at regular meetings convened by the Regional Office. Other, less formal types of contact appeared to be comparatively rare in most cases. Two officers (b,e) indicated regular contact with a number of other NAFE HEOs in their Region. Two more noted regular contact with one or two other HEOs in particular, one[f] putting this down to proximity and common interests, the other[c] to the development of good personal links. One officer[h] claimed not to have time for such contact outside formal meetings, NAFE representing as it did only 50 per cent of her duties. For most officers, contact with colleagues within their region seemed to be largely issue-based, occurring when needs arose. One interviewee[d] stated that she was much more likely to seek advice over a problem from Regional staff than from her opposite numbers at Area level.

One officer[f] indicated that contact was fairly likely to occur accidentally, as a combination of duties sometimes entailed NAFE HEOs meeting whilst operating under other hats.

Another officer[c] noted the difficulties thrown up when one's nearest colleague was based 40 to 50 miles away, a factor mitigating against adequate liaison through face-to-face exchange of information and experiences. On top of this, two officers (c,e) made the point that NAFE was very much Area-based and often very locality-specific. Two corollaries were claimed to emerge from this: one was that the experience of different NAFE officers may not be usefully comparable; the other was that HEOs tied up in the affairs of their own 'patch' had little time to spend worrying about what might be going on elsewhere.

Another point, made by three separate interviewees (b,c,g), was that NAFE staff

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became rather isolated within their Area Offices. Often the only members of its staff dealing substantially with NAFE, where their work was shared it was commonly done so with no more than one other officer. Unlike in other MSC work the NAFE staff were not dealing with the delivery of a specific programme, their contact with field activity being remote, via the LEA and college implementors. And it was pointed out[c] that whereas, for example, YTS staff in the office may have as many as five or six direct colleagues based in the same room, NAFE officers' colleagues were usually based in other cities. A consequence of this pointed out by two interviewees [c,d] was that NAFE HEOs had a closer interaction with their LEA counterparts than they did with colleagues in their own organisation. Even less contact was evident between Area Offices in different Regions.

Several officers believed it unfortunate that there was not more inter-regional contact, that advantages were to be had from this. One officer[c] stated that within his Area Office, other MSC Regions were regarded as 'foreign territory', and his seeking to foster links across regional boundaries would be considered 'strange'. In some cases the drawing of Regional boundaries could be extremely obstructive: a case in point concerned two cities 20 miles apart whose NAFE institutions took students from each others' population, but which were separated by a MSC Regional boundary and administered quite separately[c]. A Regional officer interviewed[a] identified an existing Regional Office role in resolving boundary problems between Areas within its region, though admitted there was less attention paid to such matters between Regions. This, he emphasised, was in the nature of a regionally-structured organisation. There apparently were meetings between NAFE HEOs from the various Regional Offices from time to time, but these did not appear to address localised inter-regional matters.

The overall network of intra-MSC contact over NAFE, both within and between its different levels, is indicated by Figure 6.2 above. The Figure is based upon the situation that existed at the time of the survey of local MSC NAFE officers in 1989, but reflects fairly accurately the situation throughout the period of joint planning. It identifies the interface at which the MSC met LEAs over NAFE, a matter which is explored more fully in section 6.4.

6.3   The institutional response of LEAs to the NAFE initiative

The organisational structure of local education authorities typically involved a number of operational and support divisions overseen by a Chief Education Officer (CEO) or Director of Education. Unlike the MSC, there was no rigid standardisation in the titles of posts or departments, but LEAs nonetheless tended to commonly reflect a broadly similar grade and divisional structure. Examples of LEAs' divisional structures included one which had two operational divisions (one each for Schools and FE) and two support divisions (on curricular and advisory matters respectively); and another whose four sections dealt with Schools, FE, Common Services, and Development and Buildings. Schools sections were generally the larger of the operational divisions, and FE was not necessarily treated as a separate area, some LEAs having sections on, for example, all post-16 provision.

6.3 (i)   NAFE staffing arrangements

A typical LEA grade structure would have been, in descending order from the Chief Education Officer or Director; Deputy Director of Education; Principal Education Officer; Senior Assistant Education Officer; Assistant Education Officer, and so on. Since no systematic use of titles was made, however, the LEA survey asked respondents to identify the grades of those officers responsible for the NAFE task in each LEA by means of their rank position within the authority, the CEO being ranked 1. Table 6.1 indicates the results of this question. It emerges that the great bulk of the NAFE task was carried out by officers of ranks three or four, these being cited by respectively 33 and 37 of the sample of 60 respondents who answered the question.

The overall number of officers engaged in NAFE in LEAs was also explored, the results of this enquiry being shown in Figure 6.3. It provides clear evidence that most LEAs had very few staff devoted to NAFE work, the majority (51 per cent) having only one, the average being 1.6. Another indication was sought by asking respondents to indicate the total staff time, expressed in terms of full-time equivalent weeks per year, devoted to NAFE planning within their authority. Responses fell in a range from

Figure 6.3: Number of NAFE officers in each LEA
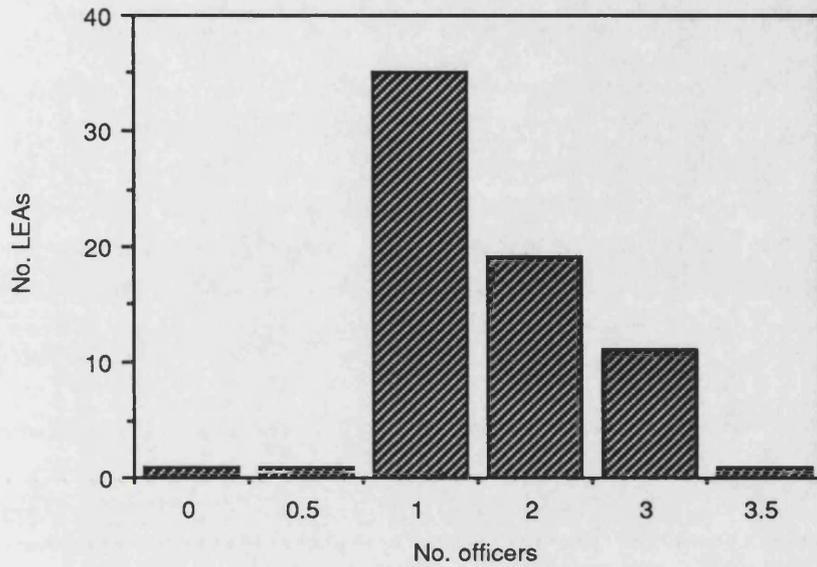
sample: 68 LEAs

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

Table 6.1: Number of staff employed in NAFE at each LEA grade

Grade	2	3	4	5	6
No. times cited*	11	33	37	6	1

* note that some respondents cited more than one grade

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

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Figure 6.4: LEA staff time devoted to NAFE

No. staff (full-time equivalent)
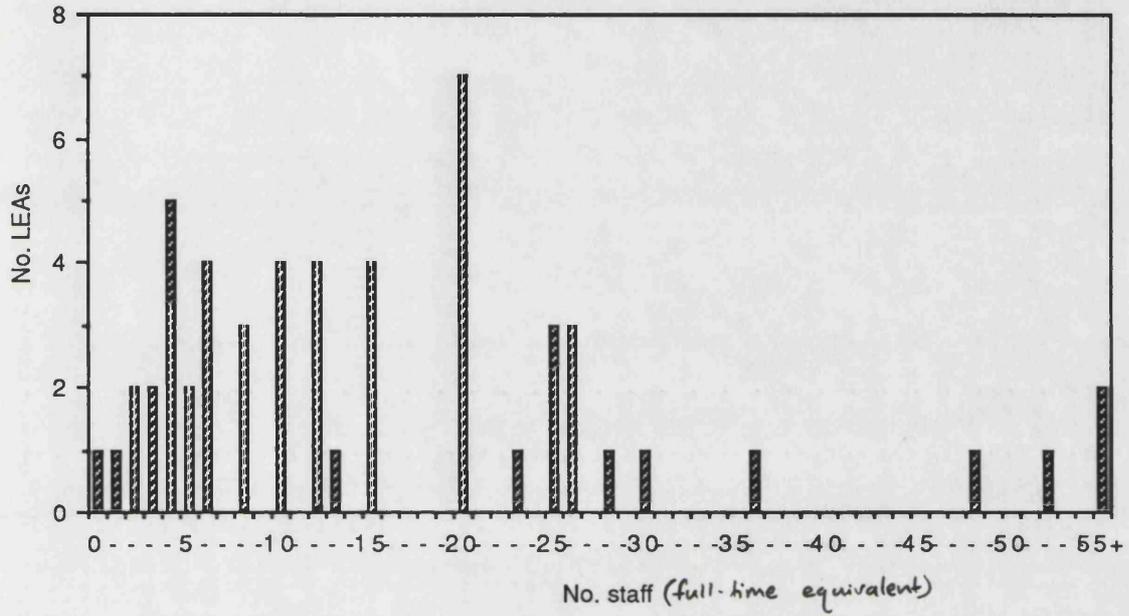
sample: 55 LEAs

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

0 to 200 weeks, with an average of 20 weeks. The distribution of staff time is indicated in Figure 6.4. The evidence suggests that on average LEAs actually devoted less than half of one full-time post to the NAFE task.

Further exploration was made of LEA staffing arrangements considered new appointments made by LEAs in direct response to the new work generated by the NAFE Agreement. As indicated in Table 6.2, as many as 42.9 per cent of respondents indicated that there LEA had made no significant alteration in its staffing arrangements in response to the new demands, whilst 38.6 per cent had appointed new posts and 24.3 per cent had redistributed staff responsibilities within the LEA to meet these. A majority of authorities - 54.3 per cent - were indicated to have responded to the NAFE initiative by *either* appointing new staff *or* redistributing responsibilities. Breaking down the figures by LEA type* indicates that larger authorities and shire counties took either of these steps in more cases (75.0 and 72.2 per cent respectively) than either medium-sized/smaller authorities (52.9/44.8 per cent) on the one hand or metropolitan districts/London boroughs (45.8/30.8 per cent) on the other. A picture therefore emerges of a greater devotion of resources to NAFE on the part of LEAs in larger, usually county, authorities, a finding which backs up claims by smaller and less well-resourced LEAs that they were most stretched by the demands of joint planning.

6.3 (ii) The role of other authority departments

In seeking to investigate the institutional arrangements made within LEAs the survey sought to establish the involvement of other authority departments, in addition to the education department. The question asked respondents which departments supplied the education department with information over NAFE, which actually participated in planning, and whether the relationship between the two had strengthened since 1984. The results are shown in Table 6.3, and indicate that the most significant relationships were with the planning, treasurer's and economic development departments, which supplied information on NAFE in 75.7, 45.7 and 38.6 per cent of

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*   For an explanation of the divisions made by LEA type and size, see Chapter 5.

Table 6.2: New NAFE-related staffing arrangements at LEAs

The following number of respondents indicated that in their authority:

		%
New staff posts have been created centrally at the authority since 1984 specifically for work on the NAFE...	27	38.6
Staff duties at authority level have been redistributed specifically to facitlitate NAFE planning	17	24.3
There has been no significant alteration in LEA staffing arrangements as a consequence of the NAFE Agreement	30	42.9

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

Table 6.3: Involvement of other local authority departments

The table indicates for the listed authority departments (a) the nature of any participatory role they may have had in the preparation of the Plan, and (b) whether their relationship with the education department had strengthened since 1984:

Department	Supplies information		Participates in planning		Relationship strengthened	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Planning	53	75.7	8	11.4	7	38.6
Chief executive's	13	18.6	1	1.4	5	7.1
Treasurer's	32	45.7	7	10.0	11	15.7
Economic Development	27	38.6	6	8.6	16	22.9
Personnel	3	4.3	1	1.4	2	2.4
Social Services	4	5.7	0	0	1	1.4
Other	3	4.3	3	4.3	4	5.7

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

cases respectively. Actual participation of other departments was generally low, the highest figure being 11.4 per cent (for planning departments). The strengthening of relationships was most evident in the same three departments, although the highest figure was again for planning departments. Whilst in the overall totals the figure for this was a minority at 38.6 per cent, the figure for shire counties was a majority, 53.6 per cent, with metropolitan districts showing 41.7 and London boroughs only 15.7 per cent. Again there appears to have been greater support available for NAFE in the larger county authorities.

Another interesting discrepancy appeared in the supply of information to education departments by economic development departments as analysed by LEA size. Whilst larger authorities were indicated to engage in this in 33.3 and medium-sized authorities in 23.5 per cent of cases, smaller authorities indicated this in as many as 82.8 per cent of cases, higher even than their indicated frequency of receipt of information from planning departments (72.4 per cent). It would thus appear that economic development departments are an important source of support for smaller LEAs in NAFE.

The main finding on the involvement of other departments however is that education departments retain strong control over their NAFE work, the greatest involvement of other departments being in the supply of information rather than significant participation.

A related question investigating whether any council committees other than the education committee took on some direct responsibility for compiling the NAFE plan found this to be so in only three cases, indicating that this is clearly not a significant factor in NAFE.

6.3 (iii) College arrangements

The LEA survey investigated the involvement of college staff in the NAFE planning process, both prior to the announcement of *Training for Jobs* and at the time of the survey. It asked respondents to indicate whether senior college management,

departmental heads, lecturing staff and inter-collegiate staff committees were involved in a participatory or consultative capacity in both years, the results being shown in Table 6.4.

The figures indicate that senior management had become much more involved in planning since 1984, its participatory role rising from 45.7 to 71.4 per cent of cases. Departmental heads were less involved, but their involvement had risen from 17.1 to 41.4 per cent of cases. Whereas lecturing staff and inter-collegiate staff committees had no or virtually no participatory involvement in 1984, the role of the latter had risen to over one fifth (22.9 per cent) of cases by 1988. Lecturing staff remained fairly isolated from the process.

Figures broken down by LEA type indicate that whilst the participation of senior management remained fairly stable in both metropolitan districts and London boroughs (rising from 62.5 to 66.7 and 61.5 to 69.2 per cent respectively), in shire counties it rose dramatically, from 28.6 to 71.4 per cent. A similar pattern was evident by LEA size, the largest LEAs showing an even more dramatic rise from 16.7 to 83.3 per cent whilst medium and smaller authorities showed less change, retaining participation rates of between 47 and 65 per cent throughout the period. The largest authorities also showed the greatest increase in the participatory involvement of departmental heads through the period, with a rise from 0.0 to 50.0 per cent.

These results are of considerable interest, as larger authorities may have been expected to be better placed to plan without the participatory assistance of senior college management, given their greater resources. These figures would therefore suggest a decision on the part of such LEAs to involve college staff for the enhancement of Plan quality, this being a more important factor than the employment of college resources where LEA resources were limited.

The survey also enquired as to the creation of new staff posts within colleges specifically for work on the NAFE Plan. Only 10 per cent of respondents indicated that this had taken place within their authorities, suggesting that this was not a highly significant form of response to the NAFE initiative. The evidence suggests that the bulk

Table 6.4: Participation of college staff in planning, 1984-9

| | 1984-5 | | | | 1988-9 | | | |
| | Participatory | | Consultative | | Participatory | | Consultative | |
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
(1) senior management	32	45.7	38	54.3	50	71.4	27	38.6
(2) departmental heads	12	17.1	30	42.9	29	42.9	31	45.7
(3) lecturing staff	0	0	10	14.3	7	14.3	13	18.6
(4) inter-collegiate staff committees	1	1.4	8	11.4	16	11.4	9	12.9

The table shows which of the following members of the LEA's colleges' staff were currently, or in 1984-5, involved in the compilation of the LEA's NAFE Plan (respondents indicated whether they played an active, participatory role, or merely a consultative one).

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

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of newly-resourced activity has gone on at the LEA rather than college level.

6.3 (iv) Influences of the NAFE initiative on LEA-college relationships

A number of interviewees in a variety of positions suggested that the NAFE initiative had increased LEAs' directive power over their colleges. An ACC officer interviewed argued that, prior to the 1984 legislation, the LEA role in NAFE was generally a matter of *control* rather than *management*, involving the setting of expenditure ceilings and enrolment targets. Within such requirements colleges were largely free to manage their own affairs. The NAFE Agreement had altered this position by giving LEAs greater management responsibilities, and with them a greater influence over college work[9]. An LEA interviewee confirmed this, stating that his authority, having formerly been 'typified by autonomy at all levels', was now undergoing a change to a more corporate style of management, involving planning and rationalisation which retained only the stronger elements[10].

The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed indicated that some LEAs had welcomed the change, some 'who'd lost control' had seen it as opportunity for strengthening the LEA hand, perceiving the MSC as a lever to their advantage[11]. In line with this, one respondent to the LEA survey noted that 'MSC involvement has led to colleges being more responsive to the LEA'.

Another LEA officer indicated that the new conditions had assisted rationalisation within his LEA by means of its having produced 'an attitudinal change in colleges' in favour of this. The NAFE initiative had produced an excuse for change, and some tools to facilitate it[12].

6.3 (v) Influences on other relationships

The main other relationships in question here are those between LEAs, those between LEAs and Regional Advisory Councils, and those between individual LEAs and the

local authority associations. With regard to the first of these, the NAFE initiative appears to have acted to a limited extent as a spur to inter-LEA contact within regions. Some evidence emerged of inter-LEA contact in regional fora from face-to-face interviews with LEA officers, more than one interviewee noting the value of sharing experiences comparing notes on what each was being told by its local Area Office[13]. However, a question investigating this for the whole population of authorities in the LEA survey found the following results:

Table 6.5 Involvement of LEAs in mutual regional consultations

	% LEAs
Heavily involved	4.4
Actively involved	26.5
Little involvement	47.1
No active involvement	22.1
(sample: 68 LEAs)	

This indicates that only a minority (30.9 per cent) were actively or heavily involved in such discussions, most LEAs having little or no involvement in such consultations. One MSC local officer interviewed claimed that relationships between her two LEAs were less good than their respective relationships with the Area Office[14]. Another interviewee pointed out that regional LEA groupings are not always completely harmonious, individual authorities with diverse political backgrounds and sometimes conflicting interests being unable truly to speak with one voice, but they did provide some form of consultative body which could facilitate NAFE at the regional level[c].

Regional Advisory Councils had been identified by the Policy Group as a potential source of coordination between LEAs over NAFE, but do not appear to have played a significant role. Only one interviewee or survey respondent even mentioned these bodies, and then to indicate that they were more concerned with advanced further education and therefore not very relevant.

The local authority associations, having been highly instrumental in developing the NAFE Agreement, continued to play an important national role in coordinating LEA NAFE activity. Very significant in this regard was the NAFE Officers Liaison Group, established on the initiative of the ACC officer interviewed. Its role was to bring together local and national officers to boost understanding and identify genuine problem areas, as well as to provide back-up for local authorities in a form which could match the back-up available to MSC Area Offices from the upper echelons of the Commission. The group brought together national negotiators with local officers, enabling forms of feedback and monitoring not easily available through long distance contact[15].

One LEA officer noted the ACC's usefulness as 'a watchdog' over local MSC NAFE officers who would sometimes portray national guidelines and suggestions as 'cast iron rules'[16].

A survey question investigating the involvement of individual LEAs in the NAFE Officers Liaison Group produced the following results:

Table 6.6 Involvement of LEAs in NAFE Officers Liaison Group

	% LEAs
Heavily involved	18.3
Actively involved	23.2
Little involvement	25.0
No active involvement	33.3

(sample: 60 LEAs)

As can be seen from these figures there is evidence of considerably more LEAs being involved in the national forum than with each other (as indicated in Table 6.5), 41.6 per cent being heavily or actively involved, and only a third indicating no involvement. The suggestion which can be inferred is that vertical interdependence (between individual LEAs and their national associations) was a more significant factor in inter-authority relationships than horizontal contact (with other individual LEAs).

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Figure 6.5: LEA internal NAFE administrative structure

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┌──────┐   ┌──────┐              ┌──────┐
│ LAAs ├───┤ DES  ├──────────────┤ DoE  │
└───┬──┘   └───┬──┘              └───┬──┘
    │          │                     │
    │          │          ┌──────────▼──────────┐
    │          │          │    FULL COUNCIL     │
    │          │          └─────────────────────┘
    │      ┌───────────────────────────┐
    │      │ EDUCATION    DEPARTMENT    │
    │      │ ┌─────────────────────┐    │   ┌──────────────────┐
    │      │ │ EDUCATION COMMITTEE  │    │   │ OTHER COMMITTEES │
    │      │ └─────────────────────┘    │   └──────────────────┘
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    │  ┌──────────────┐  ┌───────────┐  │   ┌───────────┐
    │  │FE Sub-Committee│ │Other ed. sub-│ │ │Other sub- │
    │  └──────────────┘  │committees │  │   │committees │
    │                    └───────────┘  │   └───────────┘
    │  ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐   │   ┌──────────┐
    │  │  NAFE    │      │  OTHER   │   │   │  OTHER   │
    │  │EXECUTIVE │      │EDUCATION │   │   │EXECUTIVE │
    │  │ SECTION  │      │EXECUTIVE │   │   │SECTIONS  │
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    │                    └──────────┘   │
    │
    │          ┌──────────────┐
    │      ? ──┤   COLLEGES   │
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LINKS TO MSC OVER NAFE

Linkages
involving
financial
transfers

──────▶

Other
linkages

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

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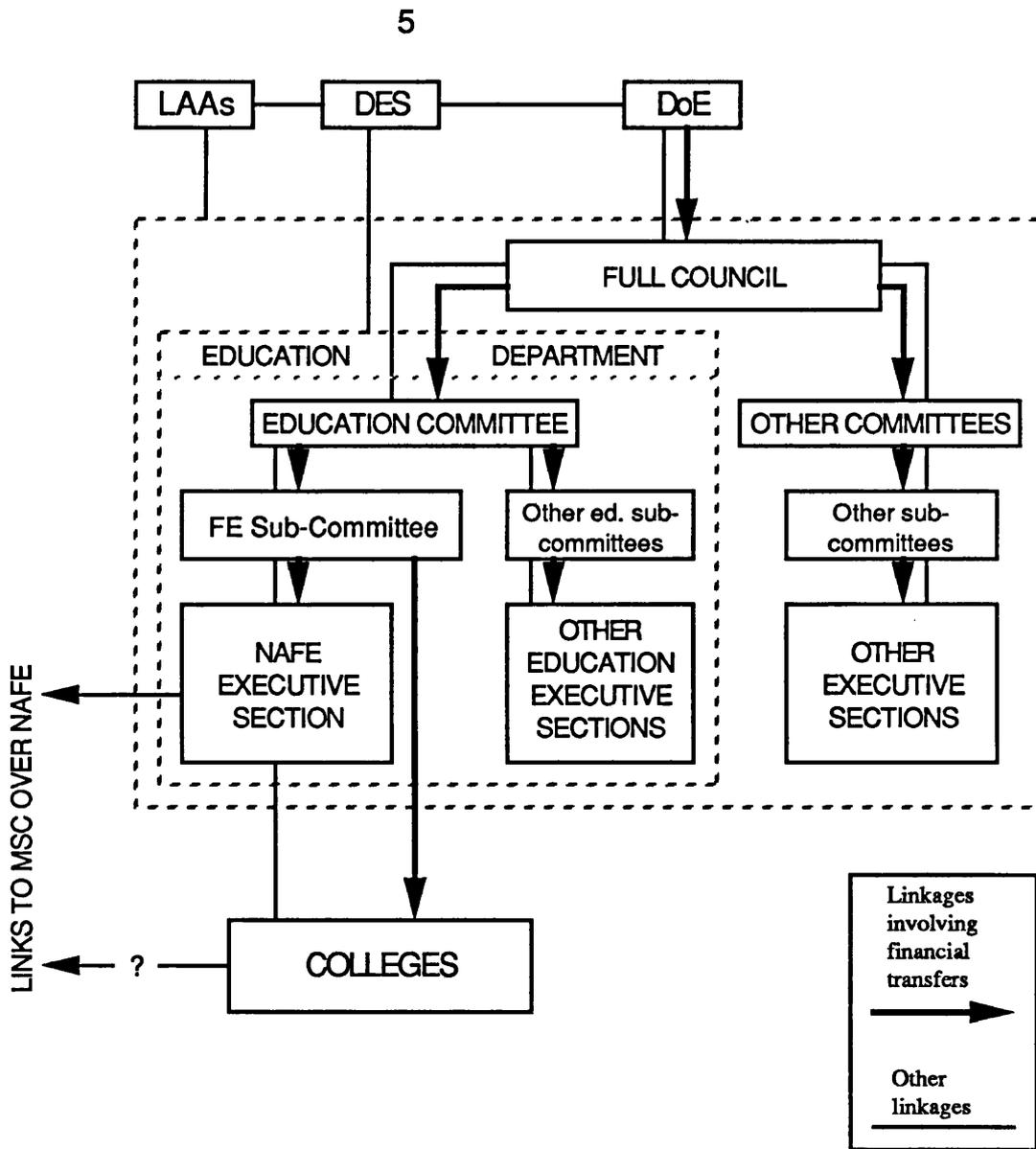
Figure 6.5 summarises the internal LEA links which pertained to NAFE. It illustrates financial and 'other' linkages, the latter being a term for various administrative links involving such activities as liaison, consultations, information exchange and mutual participation. It represents the education department's role and its connections with 'other departments', which as noted above were principally likely to be planning, treasurer's and economic development departments. Links to the MSC were mainly conducted by the officers of the FE section, and possibly by colleges themselves. This latter issue is addressed in the next section.

6.4   Relationships between the MSC and LEAs

This section considers MSC-LEA relationships under four headings, which concern:

- their overall structure;
- their quality, and changes in this 1984-9;
- the use of MSC sanctions against LEAs;
- problem areas affecting relations.

6.4 (i)   Structure of MSC-LEA relationships

The structure of relationships between the MSC and LEAs can be usefully examined at three broad levels, national, regional and local.

National level links

National level relationships were largely based on the NAFE Implementation and Evaluation Groups, representative of both the MSC and the local authority associations, which became replaced by the NAFE Advisory Group in 1988. These conducted ongoing negotiations on the development of the NAFE Agreement from one planning year to the next.

The Commission's Head Office dealt almost wholly with the national associations - contact between Moorfoot and individual LEAs was very limited, according to all interviewees who commented on this, and indeed appeared to be discouraged by the MSC, who preferred to keep LEA dealings to local level where possible.

Regional level links

Regional contact did occur, however, in the regional MSC-LEA fora already identified. These met occasionally, perhaps two three times per year, to seek a regional overview compatible with the wishes of both the Commission and the region's LEAs. On an individual basis, contact between Regional Offices and LEAs varied. In most cases it was held by Area officers to be no more than occasional, sometimes exceptional. One intervieweed indicated that her LEAs might occasionally contact Regional Office to confirm or check something, and a regional officer spoken to said he might from time to time go straight to an LEA with a particular point if the Area officer was unavailablea. In one instancef at least, however, it was clear that the Regional Office had a very heavy involvement with its LEAs, and that a significant amount of MSC-LEA liaison in that Area took place without the involvement of the Area Office.

Normally the Area Office would be informed about any significant involvement of Regional Office directly with LEAs, although in one or two Areas there were exceptions to this, occasionally leading to problems*.

Area Office - LEA links

The major MSC-LEA interaction, however, was between individual authorities and Area Offices. Earlier sections identified the NAFE HEO at the Area Office, and an education officer of grade 3 or 4 to be most typically the principal actors at each, and it is contact between these which was the most frequent and significant. In addition to these, more senior officers would be involved in official meetings and more junior officers in the more routine administrative aspects of interaction. The LEA survey

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*   see section 6.4.4

explored the possibility that some authorities may have appointed an officer specifically to liaise with the MSC over a range of programmes, including NAFE. The responses showed that 30.0 per cent of LEAs had such an officer, from which it can be concluded that whilst such appointments have established themselves as common, they had not become typical of LEAs as a whole.

Both the LEA survey and the survey of MSC NAFE HEOs investigated the frequency of contact between Area Offices and LEAs over NAFE. From the MSC-derived evidence, contact between MSC local officers and LEA NAFE staff appears to have been both frequent and to have increased over the period of planning. Seven of the nine interviewees indicated that they were in contact with LEA officers more often than once a week, some on an almost daily basis. Even the officer with the least contact with his LEAs[f] met with or spoke to his counterparts there more often than once per month. There was evidence of variation within Areas as well as between them, local officers meeting staff from some LEAs more than from others.

Under the terms of the Contract signed between them, all Area officers were required to hold formal meetings each year with their LEA counterparts, these being supplemented by informal contact. Often these involved senior Area Office staff. Largely a provision made at a time when LEAs were very reluctant to spend time dealing with MSC, these meetings appeared in general to be of decreasing significance, as there was clear evidence of a shift away from formal towards much more informal contact. In several cases Area Office-LEA contact had evidently become very intimate and familiar, the staff of each coming casually and routinely into informal contact [a,c,d,e]. One officer claimed that both parties sometimes became 'stuck for things to talk about' at some of the formal meetings[f]. Symptomatic of this development appeared to be the national proposal current at the time of enquiry that the following year only one formal meeting would be required to take place[17].

The evidence of the LEA survey is presented in Figure 6.6. In contrast with the MSC evidence it suggests that frequency of contact was more commonly less than weekly but more than monthly, a finding more plausible given the higher sample. This still represented a degree of contact well in excess of the few formal meetings required

Table 6.7: Frequency of Area Office-LEA contact over NAFE

Respondents indicated the frequency of contact between MSC Area Office and the authority education department over NAFE planning:	No. LEAs #	%
(1) day-to-day	6	8.7
(2) more often than once per week	17	24.6
(3) more often than once per month	35	50.7
(4) more often than once every three months	10	14.5
(5) less often than once every three months	1	1.4

(sample: 69 LEAs)

Figure 6.6: Frequency of contact between LEA and MSC officers over NAFE

(categories as in Table 6.7)
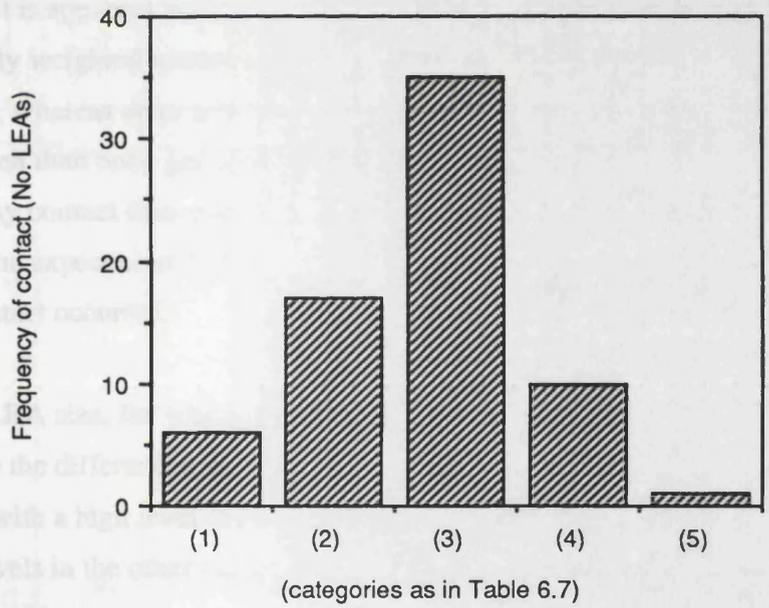
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

under the Contract.

When the results are broken down by LEA type and size some significant patterns emerge. LEA type was particularly significant in this context, because MSC Areas were partly based upon this criterion. London boroughs were served by Area Offices which covered 5 LEAs; metropolitan districts were generally administered by the MSC in groups of 3 (occasionally 2 or 4), whilst shire counties were frequently dealt with by an Area Office covering no other LEAs - at most they shared an Area Office with one other. These factors inevitably had important implications for extent to which frequent contact was possible - an MSC NAFE HEO dealing with a single county authority would clearly have more time to develop links than a counterpart dealing with five London boroughs.

The results broken down by LEA type are shown in Figure 6.7*. The line graph has been used as a means of comparing authority types against one another in a simple manner. It is apparent from the data that London boroughs and metropolitan districts are heavily weighted towards the centre (with high percentages in category (3), 1 week-1 month), whereas shire counties show a much higher level of contact than these in the 'more often than once per week' category. Shire counties show much more evidence of day-to-day contact than the other two groups, London boroughs the least. These results support the expectation that the less authorities an Area Office had to deal with, the more contact occurred.

By LEA size, for which data is shown in Figure 6.8, a similar pattern emerges, only here the differences are even more marked. Larger authorities show the greatest contact, with a high level in the day-to-day category (22.2 per cent) steeply falling away to low levels in the other categories. Medium-sized LEAs show no evidence at all of

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*   The graphs for Figure 6.7 and 6.8 have been produced by means of weighting the percentage figures in each category geometrically to reflect the nature in which the frequencies in each category vary. That is, percentages for category (5) in Table 6.7 were multiplied by 1, (4) by 2, (3) by 4, (2) by 8, and (1) by 16. Because these weightings are in a sense arbitrary no figures have been attached to the axes on the graphs, which are meant to be indicative only. On the y-axis 'Incidence' refers to the number of LEAs cited in each category, the x-axis showing relative frequency. However, the graphs retain the rigour of the exact figures used to generate them; the points marked show the weighted scores for each of the five categories. Figure 6.8 indicates the data in the same fashion but this time broken down by LEA size.

Figure 6.7: Frequency of contact by major LEA types (weighted figures)

Legend:
- Lon. boro
- Met. boro
- Shire co.

Incidence

High ——— Frequency ——— Low
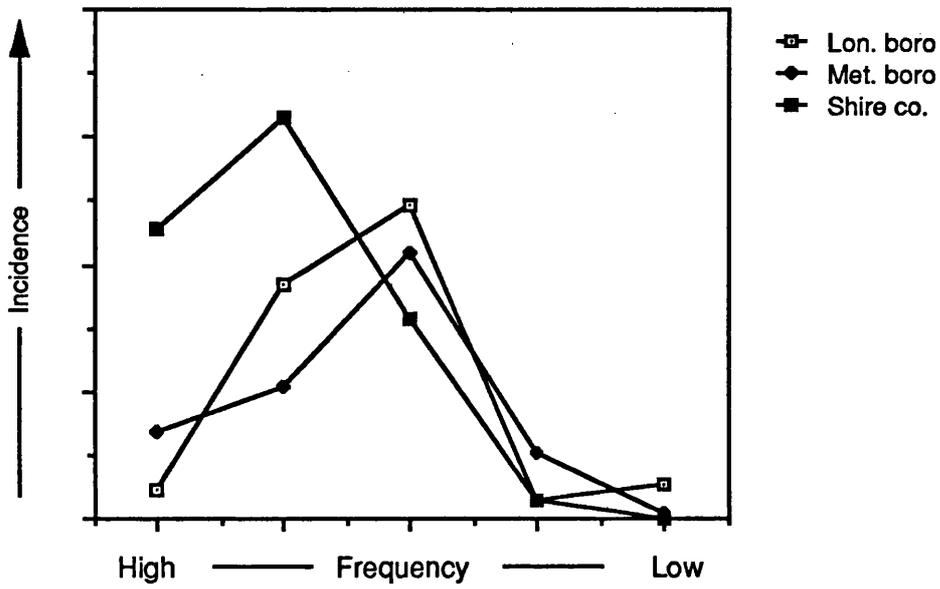
Figure 6.8: Frequency of contact by LEA size (weighted figures)

Legend:
- Smaller LEAs
- Med. LEAs
- Larger LEAs

Incidence

High ——— Frequency ——— Low
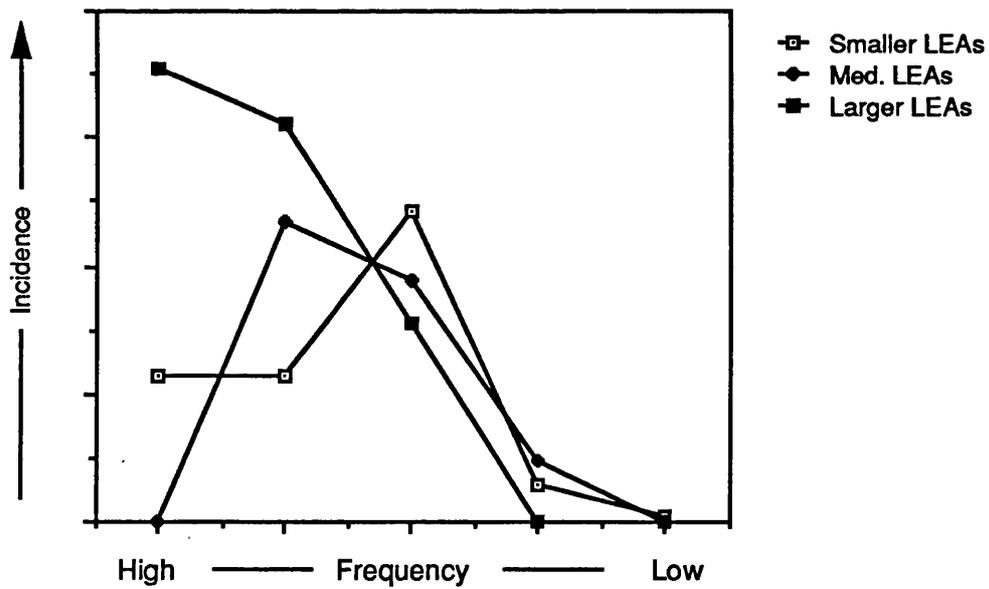
day-to-day contact, whilst smaller authorities show a figure of 7.1 per cent, although in category (2), 'more than once per week', medium-sized LEAs show a higher figure than smaller authorities (29.4 per cent as against 14.3 per cent), although both are still below the figure for larger authorities (38.9 per cent). Reasons for this would have been strongly connected to those given for differences by LEA type, i.e. the administrative structure of the Area Office network. However, the differences being more marked suggest other factors at work. Possible causes include bigger staff contingents at larger LEAs allowing more time to be devoted to contact with the MSC. Also, an important factor would have been that the more colleges in an authority, the more work was required to develop a NAFE Plan, and consequently greater would have been the need for liaison between the two bodies.

From the MSC survey, four factors emerged .   which appeared to influence or determine the frequency of contact:

(1)   the quality of the relationship between the Area Office and the LEA - how close and cooperative, and the degree to which the LEA was prepared to involve the MSC;

(2)   geographical distance between the Area Office and the education offices - a constraint on the nature of contact (whether face-to-face or otherwise) rather than the amount. Clearly important here would be the urban/rural nature of the locality in question as an influence on this distance;

(3)   the time of year, in relation to the stage in the planning cycle, contact varying with this. One officer[h] identified a pattern in which the period February - June saw much contact over negotiation and drafting of the Development Plan and Annual Programme, followed by a summer lull, which was followed in turn by much monitoring and steering committee activity once the academic year got underway in September.

(4)   the number of centrally-funded projects current in the Area, and the amount of work being generated by these. Two officers specifically stressed the

importance of this factor [d,h].

One other factor which should be mentioned is the degree to which MSC NAFE officers were engaged in other work which may have brought them together with LEA staff under other hats, e.g. LMI work. In one case in particular[e] the local county was described as being very 'tight', the officer interviewed indicating that the same people were likely to encounter one another in a whole series of settings, some quite incidental to NAFE.

It was claimed by one MSC officer[c] that Area Office contact with local authority officers was much more frequent over NAFE than for any other MSC operation. An LEA officer, on the other hand, considered MSC often spent more time on other programmes in which less money was involved, and believed the Commission ought to devote more time to NAFE[18].

To summarise the main conclusions on frequency of contact:

- The bulk of contact between LEAs and MSC Area Offices on average occurred with a frequency between once every week and once every month, with a significant proportion of contact in the frequency ranges of more than weekly and between one and three months.

- There were, however, marked variations within these figures. Different types of authority showed varying levels of contact, shire counties showing the most, with London boroughs and metropolitan boroughs well behind. The nature of the MSC's Area Office structure, assigning different numbers of LEAs to a single Area Office, undoubtedly had a strong impact on this.

- The figures diverged even more markedly by LEA size, with larger authorities showing by far the most frequent contact. Possible reasons included the greater workload dealt with in larger authorities, and the more abundant staff likely to reside within their education departments.

Both surveys also investigated staff secondments between LEA and MSC Area Offices. Four of the nine MSC officers surveyed indicated that their Area Office and the LEA had seen exchanges in the form of staff secondments of one form or another. In one case the extent of this was a week spent by a MSC NAFE officer at an LEA Open Learning Unit[b], whereas in another a local MSC officer had been seconded on a regular basis to an LEA to assist in its data-collection activities, a function which occupied 10 per cent of her time[d]. In another instance, whilst the officer interviewed had not personally been seconded, he indicated that an officer from the most local of the two LEAs had shadowed his SEO for a few days and that reciprocal involvement of other MSC staff had taken place.

The LEA survey found evidence of only 14 LEAs who had seen MSC staff seconded to them, and even fewer Area Offices, 7, having hosted LEA staff. Secondments do not overall appear to have been a very significant form of MSC-LEA interaction.

Area Office-college links

Under the terms of the NAFE Agreement, MSC was given no direct access to colleges over NAFE except with LEA consent, either tacit or explicit. Different experiences on what happened in practice emerged around the country. For example, one LEA officer interviewed indicated that his Area Office sought 'much more' college involvement, and did not necessarily go through the LEA in approaching colleges[19], whereas another claimed there was no contact, and that this would be 'strongly discouraged' if mooted[20]. Again, an MSC HEO who indicated difficulties in dealing with his somewhat recalcitrant LEA noted it had no objections to the Area Office talking to colleges[i]. Only one MSC officer interviewed perceived LEA opposition to her contact with colleges as a problem, in a case where the single-institution authority in question was both ill-inclined to involve itself in its college's planning and obstructive to MSC attempts to do the same[d]. In consequence the Area Office and the college had got together on an informal basis independently of the LEA and worked things out together. LEAs generally appeared to be happy for MSC staff to go into colleges and deal directly with college staff: a question in the LEA survey found that 39.4 per cent of

LEAs welcomed such contact, 39.4 per cent taking no view and only 21.2 per cent actually discouraging direct contact. However, interview evidence suggested LEAs generally preferred be informed. It is clearly important nonetheless to recognise considerable local variation on this aspect of NAFE links.

To consider one form of this variation - the frequency of Area Office contact - on the basis of the MSC survey, this appeared to vary both between and within MSC Areas. Two interviewees [f,g] stated college visits were very rare, and another had no contact with colleges in one of her two LEAs[d]. In other cases NAFE HEOs were frequent visitors to particular individual colleges. The two main factors which appeared to influence the frequency with which a given officer would visit a particular college appeared to be (a) whether a specific piece of work was being conducted there, such as a Development Fund project or a monitoring study, and (b) the personal connections of the officer concerned with the college's staff. Some officers interviewed were well-known throughout their Area, having worked there in various capacities for some years [e,h], and could drop in and out of most colleges with familiarity. Others had well-established links with some local colleges but not others - in one case[b] an example of the latter was caused by an LEA reorganisation under which the introduction of a new tertiary system had caused a wholesale change in senior college management. Another officer[h] indicated that after a year in post she was still only starting to get involved with the colleges in one of her three LEAs, in contrast to much better contacts developed in the other two.

The number of colleges in an Area was of some importance. This varied widely, the number being an important possible constraint on the practicability of visiting all colleges frequently.

One officer[c], who now had frequent and open contact with all his Area's colleges, stressed that this situation was a very new development, and that as recently as twelve months previously such contact would not have been possible. He claimed that having once been seen as an outsider he had now achieved something much more like colleague status now, and much of the former unwieldy correspondence had now been replaced by face-to-face contact. He cited the loosening of formalities between the

LEAs and the Area Office as an important factor in this development. He also noted that the demands of the new ERA legislation* had persuaded LEAs of the value of greater MSC involvement in their colleges' activities at a time when much was being required of LEAs without new resources being made available.

Frequency of contact between Area Offices and colleges was also explored in the LEA survey. Figure 6.9 shows the results of this enquiry, illustrating that, as in the case of AO-LEA contact, contact most commonly occurred more often than once per month but less often than weekly, with very little evidence of frequent contact, there being evidence of none at all on a day-to-day basis. Figure 6.10** compares frequency of contact of both LEAs and colleges with Area Offices, clearly demonstrating that contact took place more frequently with LEAs than colleges.

A more detailed enquiry into the nature of MSC-college contact sought to identify the most significant linkages. Respondents to the LEA survey were provided with a matrix, along one side of which were listed various MSC posts, along the other three tiers of college staff. Respondents were asked to tick the box where these categories coincided if the contact in question occurred in their authority. The results are shown in Figure 6.11.

The general pattern evident from these results is that the level contact was (a) in the case of colleges directly proportional to the rank of the staff, and (b) in the case of the MSC indirectly proportional to the remoteness of the staff from the NAFE process. That is to say, in colleges the most MSC contact occurred with senior management, and the least with college lecturers. At the MSC, college contact mostly involved Area Office staff, least involving the Regional Director.

The most contact of all occurred between senior management and Area Office staff, which was indicated to occur in 78.2 per cent of cases. Contacts between senior management and TVEI staff were high at 65.5 per cent

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* see Chapter 2.

** see note to Figures 6.7 and 6.8 for explanation of this Figure's construction.

Figure 6.9: Frequency of Area Office NAFE contact with colleges

sample: 62 LEAs
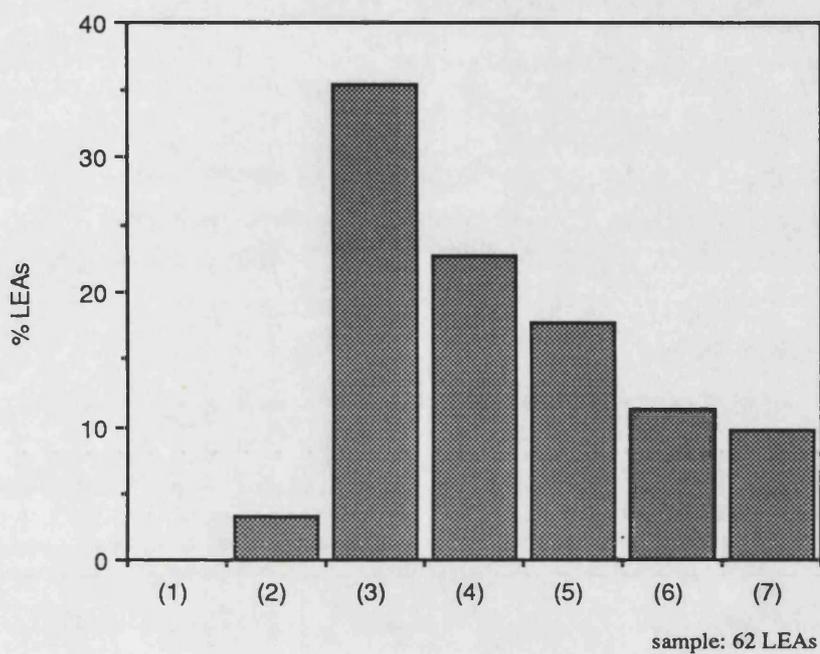
Categories:

(1)   day-to-day

(2)   more often than once per week

(3)   more often than once per month

(4)   more often than once every three months

(5)   less often than once every three months

(6)   no contact

(7)   don't know

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

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Figure 6.10: Frequency of MSC NAFE contact for colleges and LEAs (weighted figures)
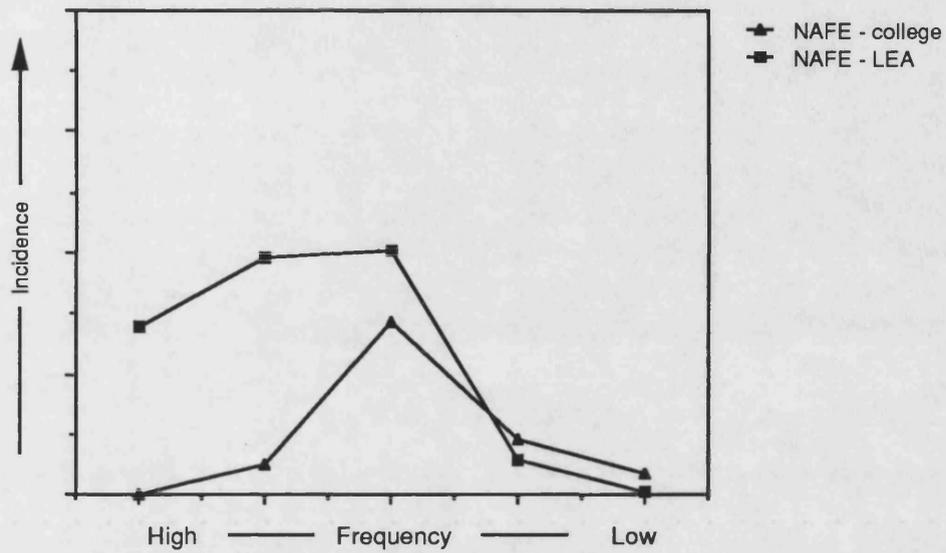
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

Figure 6.11: Level of contact between different MSC and college staff
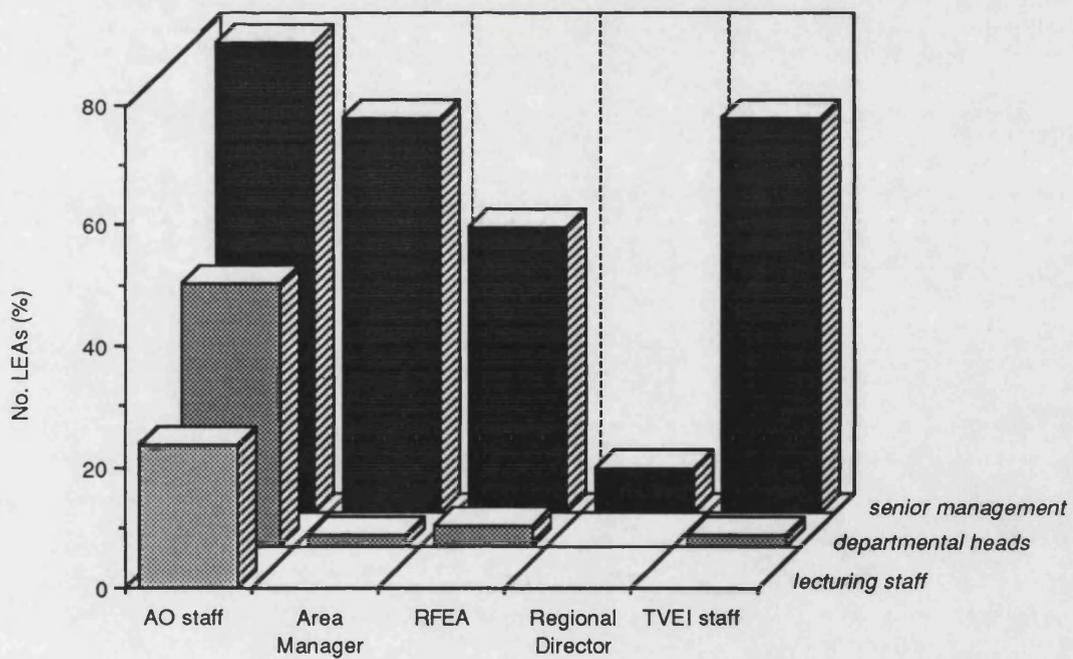
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

The same figure (65.5 per cent) is evident for contact between MSC Area Managers and senior college management. After this the only significantly widespread contacts were those between Area Office staff and college departmental heads (43.6 per cent) and between Area Office staff and college lecturers (23.6 per cent), other figures being below 5 per cent.

6.4 (ii) Quality of MSC-LEA relationships

The period of dispute and non-cooperation outlined in Chapter 4 indicated that the MSC-LEA relationship over NAFE did not get off to a good start. This section examines how relationships developed, at both national and local level, to a position by 1989 where relations had substantially improved.

A senior MSC officer interviewed, referring to the period in 1984 when the local authority associations had refused even to negotiate with the MSC until the proposals of *Training for Jobs* were modified, claimed it to have been very difficult to set up a new operation under such circumstances[21]. Progress had been made, he claimed, by the attempt of the MSC chair (Bryan Nicholson) to take 'soundings' and build up personal relationships. This officer drew a distinction which emerges as central to understanding the MSC-LEA relationship, that between the personal and the formal. Whilst, he claimed, personal relationships became close and cooperative 'fairly rapidly', even at the time of the interview (1989) there remained things the local authority association representatives 'can say to us easily informally, but have difficulty in saying formally'. The rapid achievement of the cooperation which led to the NAFE Agreement occurred because 'both sides wanted to make it work', neither relishing the alternative situation of attempting to carry on without agreement. Put more simply, the LEAs wanted the MSC money, and the MSC wanted a cooperative partner. He claimed the obstacle to this had been the White Paper's specific proposals, and the NAFE Agreement had paved the way for mutually-acceptable progress. As a result, national-level relationships had improved 'immensely'.

The local officers interviewed in the MSC survey gave a picture of a very tense

period in the early stages, in which relationships were frosty and distant, LEAs in general disdaining any more contact than was absolutely necessary for the recoupment of what they still regarded as their money. Not all the officers interviewed had been in post long enough to give an accurate indication of the position in 1985 when joint planning first began, but most were able to offer some information on this. A Regional officer interviewed stated that initially the MSC was perceived by many LEAs as an 'enemy', treated with 'suspicion, uncertainty and apprehension'[a]. Having originally refused to speak to the Area Office, the financial 'carrot' eventually 'brought them reluctantly around the table'[a]. One local officer claimed both her LEAs had been 'difficult' at the outset[d], and another, whilst not having been in post at the time, understood that the early relationships had been very problematic[h].

In one Area, where there had been a well-developed relationship between the Area Office and the LEA prior to 1984 because of high take-up of MSC schemes in recession, there had nonetheless been jibes in response to the White Paper, claims that the Area Office was 'holding an axe over' the LEA, objections about interference, and a clash of personalities between the Area Manager and the Chief Education Officer[e].

In only one case did an interviewee, a comparatively recent appointee, claim that the Area Office-LEA relationship had been good from the outset, although in one of his two LEAs this referred to the point at which the LEA had appointed a full-time officer to deal with NAFE planning, a short time after the Agreement[f].

Several officers indicated that progress towards improved cooperation was slow, although one claimed a thaw had occurred rapidly, a strong pre-existing relationship between the Area Office and the local authority having caused the initial stir to subside rapidly[e]. This officer made the point that whilst many colleges were as suspicious as LEAs, some were familiarised in dealing with MSC through its various schemes, and links there helped provide a foundation upon which to build bridges to the LEA as a whole.

One local MSC officer claimed that early encounters had been the scenes of 'some real blood-on-the-carpet meetings' which, she claimed, were the most difficult that she

had had anywhere with anyone[d]. Nonetheless, these had cleared the air and paved the way for less adversarial discussions later on. It appears that following the White Paper most Area Offices and LEAs went through a difficult period, the duration of which was considered by one officer to have been around 18 months[d]. During this period the officer claimed to have had to be 'careful with every word spoken' to LEA staff. After this time, however, it appears that relations began steadily to improve. One officer emphasised that the relationship had to grow in its own time, that progress had been gradual as officers from each side began to consider and understand each others' positions[c]. This officer described the improved position he was now able to work within as having been hard-won, the Area Office having had to 'woo' the LEAs over a prolonged period.

Across the 9 Areas surveyed, it appeared that by the time of the survey relations with the LEAs were generally fairly good, and in some cases very good. There was a widespread view that LEAs had come to see the advantages for them in the planning relationship, rather than it being no more than an unwelcome imposition [a,c]. One officer stated that both sides having come to understand each others' positions, aims and objectives, now saw that these were not so very far apart[b]. The MSC represented an extra resource. For many LEAs, a Regional officer claimed[a], the Area Office had come to be seen as 'an ally' rather than a foe. It seemed certain that the MSC had become viewed in a much more positive light than might have seemed possible in 1984-5. Several officers had developed very close personal links with LEA staff, and had reached the stage of dropping casually into each others offices in the manner of colleagues [a,e].

The most important development of all appeared to have been an increase in trust between the two parties [a,b,c,g]. Initial LEA suspicions about the MSC's motives, amidst talk of hidden agenda involving the gradual take-over of education by the Commission's employer-based market philosophy, placed a mental barrier in the way of confident LEA acceptance of the Area Office, the idea that the MSC wanted 'to impose its thinking on education', which one local MSC officer claimed was 'not what we're about at all'[b]. Whether or not there was originally any such intention underlying the motives of the 1984 government proposals, local MSC officers, whose task it has

been to implement procedures instigated elsewhere, appeared to have been much more concerned with the pursuit of straightforward and openly stated administrative objectives than the ideological manipulation of education. This well reflects the points made in Chapter 3 identifying the role of street-level bureaucrats in the routinisation of policy goals into day-to-day procedures. The absence of a 'hidden agenda' was now accepted by LEAs, according to one interviewee[b], it being a prerequisite of the mutual trust which had developed.

More than one officer confirmed the view that there existed a difference between formal and informal relationships. One drew a distinction between the political and functional or executive branches of the LEAs[b]. Whilst in the former there still occurred a degree of antagonistic 'posturing' - at the time this officer claimed that 'some public relationships are hanging by a thread' - behind the scenes at officer level the degree of cooperation was very good. She stated of politically contentious matters that their LEAs 'did not take it out at officer level'. Other officers noted that the majority of the politicians' attention was in any case devoted to schools provision[c], the great attention given to FE after the 1984 White Paper being the aberration. This meant NAFE work could go on for the most part unhindered by councilors' intervention. It was rare, in any case, for Area Office staff to come face to face with the politicians[b].

A contrast in attitudes at different times could occur at the officer level too: one Regional interviewee stated that there was still much passing of 'snide remarks' about the MSC at meetings by officials who, off the record, were happy to acknowledge the benefits of the relationship[a]. Another officer[e] indicated that there was still much 'banter' involving continuing complaints about interference, but that this did not substantially interfere with a healthy and positive working relationship.

Not all LEAs and Area Offices got on as well as might be wished for - one single-institution LEA in the south of England still maintained a very distant relationship with the Area Office[d], another in a large northern city insisted on keeping contact at a very formal level[h], and others simply did not keep much contact at all of any kind with the Area Office above that to which they were committed under the terms of the Contracts. One officer, though stating his own Area Office-LEA relationship to

be a very good and unproblematic one, claimed this was not the case elsewhere in his region. His LEA, in fact, 'stuck out like a sore thumb' by contrast with Area Offices' experience in neighbouring LEAs[e].

Whilst describing the attitude of his local LEA as having developed positively from a 'hands-off' view to a very 'pally-pally' relationship, the officer noted that it still involved ups and downs: it could best be described as 'a love-hate relationship'[e]. The LEA was very proactive and had many ideas of its own, so at times it would inevitably become irritated by the MSC's intervention. The development of a good working partnership in this case had meant becoming familiar and comfortable with each other, learning where each other stood, without necessarily being in complete harmony all the time. It was 'like a marriage'.

Despite relations being generally good, it was clear that they could still be very sensitive. One officer claimed that her very good relationship with a particular LEA was very reliant upon specific personal contacts, and that a sudden turnover of staff could upset the delicate accord[d]. Another claimed to have had good relations so far, but to be uncertain of what might happen should a confrontation occur; of what would be the outcome of, say, an LEA 'digging its heels in' over a point of dispute[h].

Another interviewee cited an instance where apparently good relations were suddenly and unexpectedly threatened by a problem relating to the LEA's displeasure over a budget cut imposed nationally[b]. Once again, as in the early days, threats had been made to withdraw cooperation and cease dialogue with the MSC, and the situation was for a while in danger of deteriorating substantially. In this instance the problem had been overcome without a major rift. The sudden fracturing had its root cause outside the Area Office-LEA officer arrangements, in this case in a combination of national policy-makers and local politicians. A different MSC interviewee[h] stated that her generally cooperative LEAs were still, 'deep-down, very wary' of the Commission. Clearly, despite relationships between the MSC and LEAs locally being generally very good, there did appear to exist an underlying fragility which necessitated constant attention to their maintenance.

The overall view from the MSC survey interviews of generally good relations between Area Offices is confirmed by the evidence of the LEA survey. This investigated the quality of working relationships between local MSC and LEA staff, and how this had altered since 1984. Respondents were invited to assess this relationship in their authority by means of six categories presented to them to indicate which best described it in 1984-5, the year when the White Paper was first published, and 1988-9, the planning round current at the time of the survey. The results are shown in Figure 6.12*.

In the figures for 1984-5 there is evident a very clear majority of respondents (70.7 per cent) who indicated that their authority fell into the first two categories, i.e. 'highly co-operative and productive working relationship' and 'good working relationship'. Of these as many as 15.5 per cent indicated the first category. In the other categories in the 1984-5 round, a substantial number indicated a fair working relationship (32.8 per cent). A small number indicated a poor relationship (8.6 per cent), whilst only one respondent perceived there to have been a very poor relationship. Two respondents indicated the relationship between their authority and the MSC to have in been, in the 1984-5 planning year, distant and irrelevant.

At a time prior to the White Paper it would appear, therefore, that relationships were generally good, according to the survey respondents' perceptions. This finding is significant in considering the way in which relationships developed after the White Paper was announced.

In the figures for the 1988-9 planning round, there is evidence of a marked improvement in the quality of working relationships to a point where as many as 85.5 per cent of respondents perceived them to be described by the first two categories, 30.4

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* Of the six categories, two require explanation. The first category is written as 'highly cooperative and productive working relationship'. This was chosen in preference to 'very good' as an attempt to set the tone of the responses and draw genuine distinctions between the categories, avoiding bland hedging on the part of respondents. The next four categories are listed as 'good', 'fair', 'poor' and 'very poor', as it was not thought necessary to describe what was meant in more than one case. The category 'distant and irrelevant relationship' was included on the recognition that in 1984-5 some LEAs would have had no dealings at all with the MSC, the NAFE Agreement introducing one for the first time only after this date.

Figure 6.12: Quality of working relationship in 1984-5 & 1988-9 (absolute figures)
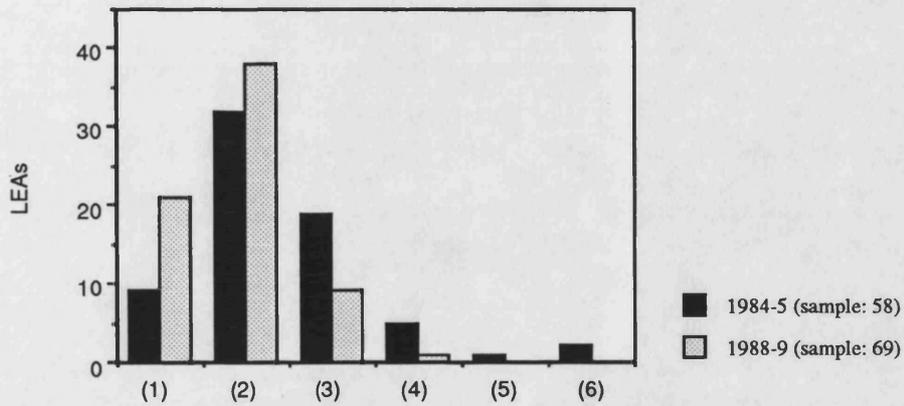
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

Figure 6.13: Quality of working relationship - % change by category 1984-5 - 1988-9
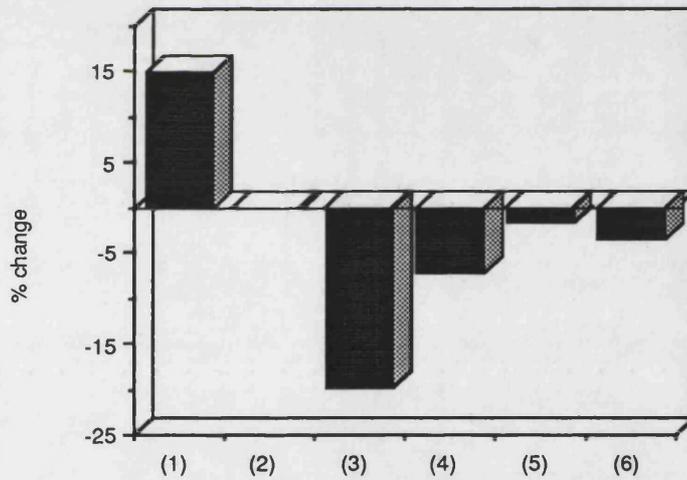
Categories:

(1) highly co-operative and productive working relationship
(2) good working relationship
(3) fair working relationship
(4) poor relationship
(5) very poor relationship
(6) distant and irrelevant relationship

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

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per cent of these putting them in the category 'highly co-operative and productive'. Of the remaining 14.5 per cent, nearly all described the working relationship as 'fair', with one respondent only describing it as poor.

Figure 6.13 shows the percentage change in each category between the two years. It is quite clear from these data that the movement was towards better relationships, with a 14.9 per cent rise in the first category contrasting with decline in categories 3-6.

When the data are broken down into LEA groups, some notable discrepancies emerge. By LEA type, the 1984-5 figures show some marked differences (see Figure 6.14a). Whilst respondents in London boroughs all gave answers in the first three categories only, respondents in metropolitan districts indicated category 2 much more frequently than any other category, though were represented in all categories bar 'very poor'. Shire counties appear to have had the least good relationships of the three judging by these 1984-5 figures - the largest group of shire county respondents (45.0 per cent) indicated 'fair working relationship', only 35.0 per cent indicating 'highly co-operative' or 'good'.

However, the figures for 1988-9 show a quite different picture. Figure 6.14b indicates very little variation between the figures for the three authority types. This can be taken as evidence of the NAFE Agreement having had some levelling effect in making LEA-MSC relationships more homogeneous, at least in terms of LEA type.

Figures 6.15a and 6.15b show the figures broken down by LEAs' political control in both years. As with LEA type, there is evidence of wide disparity in the 1984-5 data contrasting with near-homogeneity in the 1988-9 results. This similarly supports the contention as the data on LEA type that the NAFE Agreement has spread co-operation more evenly. There does not appear to be any discernable relationship in the 1984-5 figures: Labour-controlled authorities show a fairly even distribution peaking in the 'good' category, LEAs with no overall control a rough distribution peaking in the 'fair' category, whilst Conservative-controlled data is up and down. It is more likely that factors outside political control had a more influential role on executive-level links with the MSC.

Figure 6.14: % LEAs in each category by major LEA type

(a) 1984-5

(b) 1988-9

Legend:
- ■ L.Boro 84-5
- ▨ Met.Boro. 84-
- ▧ Shire co. 84-5

(Categories as in Figure 6.12)
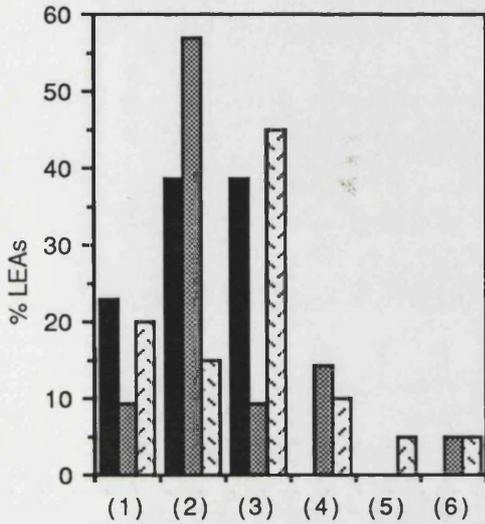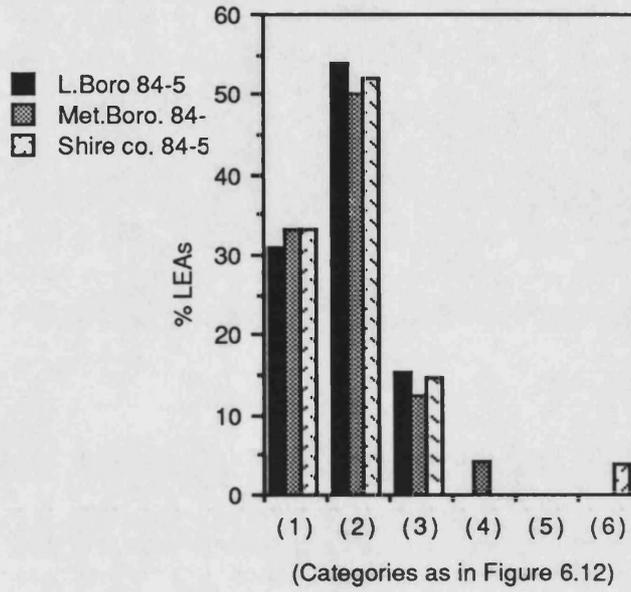
Figure 6.15: % LEAs in each category by political control

(a) 1984-5

(b) 1988-9

Legend:
- ■ Con 84-5
- ▨ Lab 84-5
- ▧ No cntrl. 84-!

(Categories as in Figure 6.12)
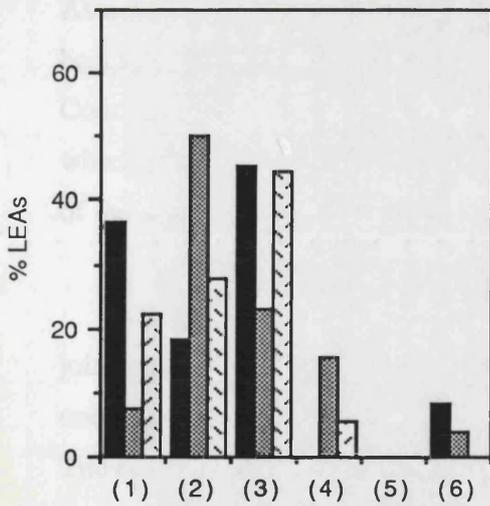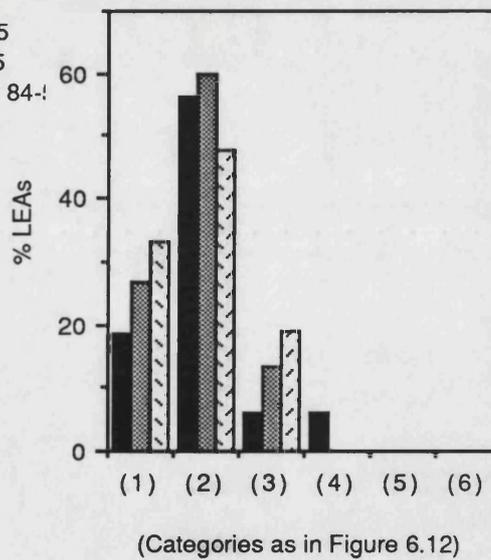
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

The overall conclusions to be drawn from the survey data on MSC-LEA relationships are as follows:

- In the planning year 1984-5, immediately prior to the introduction of the White Paper *Training for Jobs*, there is evidence that relationships between LEAs and MSC Area Offices were generally good.

- Changes in the period up to the 1988-9 planning round saw a general improvement in relationships.

- Figures broken down by LEA type and political control suggest that wide disparities in the earlier year contrast with a fairly uniform pattern in 1988-9. There is evidence of the NAFE Agreement leading to greater homogeneity in the relationships between LEAs and MSC Area Offices.

6.4 (iii) Sanctions

As noted in Chapter 4, the NAFE Agreement made provision for sanctions which could be applied if LEAs did not meet the provisions of its Annual Programme as agreed in its Contract with the Area Office, in three possible ways: refusal to sign the Contract (upon which payments depended); suspension of payments during the year; and renegotiation of the Annual Programme involving a smaller payment of funds.

MSC interviewees were asked if any of the above had occurred in their Areas since joint planning began. Several reported late signing of the contract, but in all cases bar one this was attributed to administrative and timetabling problems rather than disputes. The one exception involved a disagreement about a form of words which the LEA had been unhappy to accept, but which the Area Office had insisted upon. The LEA had eventually caved in to MSC pressure, 'but not with good grace'. One officer said the situation with one of her LEAs had come very close to a dispute preventing the contract being signed, and closer still in another part of her Region, but in neither case had this actually occurred[d].

Suspension of payments during the year was not reported by any of the officers interviewed, although a Regional officer interviewed reported instances of this elsewhere about which he had heard[a]. Renegotiation of the Annual Programme and does not appear to have happened at all throughout the history of joint planning, a fact confirmed by the senior NAFE officer interviewed at MSC Head Office[22]. More than one interviewee [b,e] stressed that it was usual to sort problems out before these extreme stages were reached. The officer at Moorfoot said that Head Office kept up its information on developments, but had so far had never had to intervene between an Area Office and an LEA.

It was pointed out that the MSC's powers of enforcement were limited and had to be recognised as such [b,j]. One officer, stating that her approach was to help solve problems rather than 'wave the big stick', noted that the stick was not very big anyway: in support of this an officer in one of her LEAs stated that it had 'several wrappings of wool around it', and was in fact 'more of a sausage', unlikely to be treated by LEAs as a major threat. The MSC interviewee claimed that while money could be withheld, at the end of the day LEAs could be confident that they would get it anyway, the MSC having no real 'teeth'. Also, it was pointed out by the same officer and others that the MSC's input to authorities' NAFE budget, though significant in absolute terms, was proportionally not big enough to intimidate LEAs into compliance over a major dispute. One officer claimed the MSC's input to be less than one tenth of her LEAs' NAFE budget[h], and another that his LEA had already come close to questioning the value of meeting MSC demands in order to receive a small and decreasing revenue[j].

Quite apart from the above factors, most Area Offices seemed to value the relationships carefully built up with LEAs too much to want to sacrifice them by being heavy-handed. One claimed talk of withholding money would have had 'a very adverse effect on the relationship we are trying to build'[d]. This underlined the view expressed by an FEU officer that the MSC, having spent years seeking to be accepted in the education community, was unlikely to jeopardise such hard-won relationships over planning details, and had refrained from flexing its financial muscle against LEAs for this reason[23].

6.4 (iv) Problem areas

Areas identified in early informal interviews as having caused problems between the MSC and LEAs were put to respondents to both the LEA questionnaire and the MSC interview survey. Table 6.7 indicates the problems specified in the LEA survey in the rank order of their significance as identified by the respondents*.

General comments on these findings include that there seems to have been a fairly high level of problems being experienced in the given areas, with 12 of the 19 areas showing scores of more than 50 per cent. Some of the items relate to issues covered in Chapter 7, but it is useful to address here those which affected the MSC-LEA relationship as a means of providing an overview of the problems which affected this relationship. The analysis of the data is carried out below by using (and in some cases merging) the categories in Table 6.7, interspersing information from the MSC survey and other interviews where appropriate. This is followed by the inclusion of some further areas derived from the MSC survey, and finally by a section dealing with 'other problems'.

Unpredictability of MSC demands

A number of LEA officers interviewed identified problems over this issue. These related mainly to the requests made of LEAs by the MSC in the national Guidance handed out every year. The *Guidance Handbook* was agreed at national level with the relevant local authority associations, but nonetheless caused controversy. The aspect

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* A list of identified problems was divided into two groups, which were: (i) MSC policy and structure; (ii) administrative relationship. These were presented to respondents who were invited to indicate whether their authority had in each area experienced major, minor or no problems. To render the results more meaningful, a weighting factor has been used to assign a single score to each category. The method used involved assigning the weightings 2,1,and 0 to the option 'major problems', 'minor problems' and 'no problems' respectively. The data under each were multiplied by these weightings, and the products added up and expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible score (i.e. the score obtained if all respondents had indicated 'major problems').

%

(1) unpredictability of MSC demands, i.e. 'goalpost-shifting' at short notice...... 81.6

(2) unnecessarily large burden of administrative work 71.7

(3) specific funding allocated for insufficient periods of time 66.9

(4) unnecessarily large requirement for information 66.7

(5) insufficient assistance with set-up costs of plan-related activities 62.9

(6) uncertainty over criteria for allocation of Central Reserve Fund 62.3

(7) lack of experience/understanding of educational matters by MSC staff......... 59.4

(8) incompatibility of MSC planning timetable with LEA committee cycles 55.1

(9) speed with which MSC expects LEAs and colleges to take decisions 53.7

(10)duplication of demands already made by other bodies, e.g. DES, HMI 53.7

(11)inaccurate assumptions made by MSC about past college performance 52.9

(12)insufficient clarity of MSC objectives 51.6

(13)insufficient integration of CRF projects with rest of NAFE planning 46.3

(14)incompatibility of MSC and LEA budgetary cycles 44.7

(15)rapid MSC staff turnover 44.6

(16)rigidity of MSC adherence to details of annual contract 36.8

(17)duplication of demands between different branches of MSC 24.2

(18)intervention in local matters by MSC regional office 18.5

(19)intervention in local matters by MSC head office 17.4

picked up in preliminary interviews as most irksome to LEAs was the tendency for the guidance to change markedly from year to year. One LEA officer claimed the MSC was 'constantly changing the ground rules - you think you have a system, then it changes'[24]. Another described the changing requirements as 'an annoyance', being frequently at short notice and late - an example of the latter being new announcements on monitoring requirements after the academic year had begun[25]. The MSC was guilty of 'moving the goalposts'. This phrase was mentioned in a number of interviews, as was the tendency for MSC policy to reflect a 'flavour of the month'. This, one LEA officer claimed, was true both in NAFE and of the Commission's own programmes which it conducted in LEA colleges, notably those involving its adult training strategy[26]. This lack of stability made it 'hard to keep up', and the officer stated her belief that constant criteria allowing 'time for consolidation' would be very beneficial. A respondent to an LEA survey question asked to identify particular problems wrote:

> 'Flavour of the monthism' - The MSC has a marked tendency to invent bright ideas, which are frequently ill-thought out, they run them for very short periods and then they are dropped or subordinated to a lower priority. This causes LEAs extra work with no extra resources to no lasting effect other than increasing cynicism to MSC initiatives.

The LEA survey data outlined in Table 6.8 shows that this issue stood far and away above the others as that perceived to be causing LEAs most problems, with a score of 81.6 per cent. This result confirms the impressionistic view gathered from the intensive data to have been widely and strongly held across the LEA spectrum. A score of 51.6 per cent for the problem of 'insufficient clarity of MSC objectives' further supports the view that the Commission's requirements caused difficulties, and that LEAs were in many cases unclear exactly what was being asked of them.

In the MSC survey, five interviewees identified minor problems over shifting policy directives from Head Office, two of them major problems. Of those who identified no problems, two officers specifically put this was down to local solutions. One claimed this depended on the local relationship and 'the degree to which you (as an MSC officer) are prepared to be flexible'h; the other stated that it was 'well accepted' by his LEAs as inevitable, that this was the nature of the MSC, and that they had to adapt its mobile naturef. One officer suggested a more serious problem in that the MSC was not perceived

locally to be consistent in its monitoring requirements, there being a 'lack of a clear long term line'[c]. This officer also noted that this problem could in part be traced to the changing requirements of government. A respondent to the LEA survey stressed this point:

> The MSC officers are very reasonable people to deal with. They are however under pressure from Head Office or (the) Department of Employment. LEAs need to recognise that pressure.

This last point was taken up by an officer from the ACC[27]. He claimed the constant changes to be attributable to the Treasury and central political policy. The MSC was under pressure to produce results, especially as it had made a compromise in the NAFE Agreement which had run against government wishes (see Chapter 4). Results in this context meant demonstrable change; the MSC wanted each year to 'notch another measurable, countable bit', to provide annual evidence that 'the screw is turning'. The officer believed confusion arose from the Commission being under pressure to fulfill its perceptions of the Employment Secretary's own perceptions of what should be done. Its determination to issue new guidance every year stemmed from a combination of pressure for change and results, and a lack of understanding - the latter being partly accounted for by its inexperience at programme-delivery, and its being accustomed to seeking short, sharp solutions.

A senior MSC NAFE officer recognised problems in this area, stating that the local authority associations 'try to remind us to be sensible in our demands'[28]. However, whilst accepting the need to avoid 'too much change', he defended the continual development of requirements, on the grounds that 'we do want to keep lifting people up', aiming at a step-by-step improvement of the service. The LEAs' Plan ought to be flexible, because 'we don't live in a fixed environment'. Problems arose often because individual LEAs could not perceive the overall strategy being pursued.

The administrative burden

The heavy workload imposed by the new planning arrangements was a common complaint in LEA interviews. The evidence in the LEA survey supported this view,

finding the second most significant problem to be 'unnecessarily large burden of administrative work' (which scored 71.7 per cent), and the fourth highest to be 'unnecessarily large requirement for information' (66.7). Fifth highest was 'insufficient assistance with set-up costs of plan-related activities' (62.9) whilst 'duplication of demands already made by other bodies, e.g. DES,HMI' scored 53.7 per cent, the ninth-equal highest score. All these together point towards the fact that LEAs had genuine and serious problems in dealing with the administrative burden created by joint NAFE planning, the lack of new resources devoted to this activity exacerbating these problems.

A certain degree of MSC insensitivity to this fact is indicated by a score of 53.7 per cent for problems concerning the 'speed with which MSC expects LEAs and colleges to take decisions'. The implication is that the Commission did not necessarily tailor its demands to the capability of most LEAs to respond to them. It also appears to confirm differences in the institutional culture of the two bodies, as described in Chapter 3, there being a tension between the MSC's results-seeking dynamism and educational bodies' more cautious forward movement. Respondents to the MSC survey were asked to comment on their experience of LEA being slow to respond. Six out of the nine interviewees indicated minor problems in this area, one complaining especially of the lateness of LEA information-provision in advance of monitoring meetings[d]. Whether or not this can be attributed to LEA inefficiency or an unreasonable burden, it is clear that MSC officers had higher expectations than were being met. More than one MSC officer put problems in this area down to the low position of NAFE in LEAs' overall priorities, an important factor which inevitably resulted in low resources and difficulties in meeting outside requests for information on time[c,29].

A major LEA complaint being picked up from the intensive preliminary work was that MSC Area Offices were asking LEAs for large quantities of information about NAFE courses and administration for the vague purpose of 'monitoring', without giving clear reasons why it was necessary. There were complaints that MSC, in asking for information without having a sound *rationale,* had in some cases asked already stretched NAFE staff to arrange for the collection of information already being supplied to other bodies. It was further suggested that local MSC officers did not themselves know the purpose of it, merely following instructions from above, and that even that those at the

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top were unsure of a clear purpose. LEA officers appeared to feel that they were bearing the brunt of MSC experimentation over exactly was needed to furnish the information good planning required, again without any extra funding to do so. There was the suggestion that because of the financial relationship between the two bodies, LEAs' greater educational expertise had been subordinated to a large degree to the views of the MSC, whose staff were less well-placed to know what was and was not useful for monitoring provision.

In addition to indicating the existence and significance of problems in this area, respondents were invited to specify which information, if any, had proven particularly problematic to collect. Twenty-three respondents gave specific answers to this invitation. A disparate range of information types were cited, but no single piece stood out: the collection of information on student destinations, which was cited by eight of the twenty-three respondents who specified information types, was the most prominent. Though a small proportion of the overall response, it would appear to identify an important problem area in being specified by a third of those who opted to identify particular information (see also section 7.3).

Allocation of specific funding for insufficient periods of time

A common approach used by the MSC was to provide funding on a short-term, perhaps annual basis, in the hope that it would aid the establishment of structures that could survive independently after the funding had ceased. This pump-priming approach reflected the market-oriented/private enterprise bent in the MSC's institutional culture identified in Chapter 3. There were widespread views expressed in the LEA survey that in many cases this had not been very successful, and a score of 66.9 per cent for problems under this category indicates LEA officers were not happy with this approach in NAFE. It might have ben expected that smaller, less well-resourced authorities, would tend to rely on the MSC to support new initiatives at a time when squeezes on block grant funding to LEAs meant little money being available from within. Interestingly, however, the experience of problems over this appears to have been quite evenly spread between LEAs of different types, whilst by LEA size it was the larger authorities which indicate the most problems: a 71.9 per cent score, compared with 64.7 for medium-sized LEAs

and 51.7 for smaller authorities.

Lack of experience/understanding of educational matters by MSC staff

A complaint raised a number of times in interviews was that the MSC (having been asked to become involved in NAFE quite suddenly and without warning) entered the field without the required educational expertise. Several LEA officers interviewed drew attention to this, one claiming that MSC staff 'have had to do much learning'[30], another that 'MSC don't really understand NAFE, or education generally', an example being Area Office staff confusing staff:student ratios with average class size. The latter noted that whilst local officials recognised this, there was less awareness of the problem at the higher levels, creating difficulties over its Guidance statements. He stated that whilst 'goalpost-shifting' was a bad enough problem in itself 'when you understand the rules of the game, ... MSC don't even know what a goal is'[31].

An officer interviewed from the ACC agreed that the Commission was insensitive to the educational world and had no expertise[32], and the senior MSC officer interviewed admitted 'problems of understanding in the early days', given that FE was 'a complicated business'. The Commission had had 'to make sure our people were saying sensible things' to LEA officers who were already agitated by the White Paper[33].

Whilst the Commission had taken measures to get around these problems, notably through the appointment of the regional FE advisors, it is notable that at the time of the LEA survey, three years into joint planning, the issue was still perceived as a source of problems to the tune of a 59.4 per cent score, which indicates that as far as the LEA respondents were concerned the MSC still had some way to go to remedy the situation.

Incompatibility of MSC planning timetable with LEA committee and budgetary cycles

A problem clearly arose in the relationship between the two bodies in that LEAs followed a committee cycle based around the academic year and other local authority priorities, whereas the MSC operated on the basis of the financial year. Implications for allocating funding were resolved without too much difficulty by including late academic year

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payments in the budget of the new financial year. Coordinating planning procedures on a common format proved more difficult. That the problem remained significant in 1988 is illustrated by its 55.1 per cent score in the LEA survey.

In the MSC survey, five interviewees indicated no problems in this area; of these, one claimed the Area Office slotted in with the LEAs' schedule[c], whilst the other commented that the LEA staff were competent and worked the problem out themselves[f]. Of the three officers who identified minor problems, one officer stated that the MSC timetable had not fitted in with college governors' and LEA sub-committee meetings[e]. Another noted the difficulty that much of what was discussed with LEAs had to be treated in confidence until it had been through council committees[h].

With regard to the coordination of budgetary cycles, a score of 44.7 per cent in the LEA survey indicates that budgetary co-ordination was less problematic than that of the committee and planning timetables. In the MSC survey, six interviewees identified minor problems in this area. One stated that whilst it had been a problem for her LEAs, it was 'not one they've screamed about'[h]. Another three all pointed out the problems of coordinating the financial and academic years. The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed stated that 'you can't win with budgetary cycles', they created an inevitable coordination problem[34]. He revealed that a plan was underway to shift the MSC NAFE financial year to accommodate the problem.

Inaccurate assumptions made by MSC about past college performance.

The issue of inaccurate MSC assumptions about past NAFE performance in colleges refers back to the controversial objective stated in the White Paper *Training for Jobs* that colleges should become more responsive to employers' needs. Complaints were picked up in picked up in LEA interviews that the MSC had approached working in NAFE with LEAs on the assumption that the White Paper's assertions were accurate, or nearly so, the implication being that colleges had a poor record requiring drastic interventionary change.

The question of MSC being perceived to have brought unfair assumptions into their

approach to NAFE was put to LEA respondents, and a score of 52.9 per cent indicated a significant proportion of LEAs encountered problems in this area. One LEA officer interviewed tied this problem in with the MSC's 'different operating culture - it acts as if with an assumption of mistrust'.

Notable discrepancies in the LEA survey data on this matter arose by both LEA type and size. Whilst London boroughs showed a score of only 36.4 per cent, metropolitan boroughs indicated 52.1 and shire counties 60.7 per cent, approaching a perceived problem-level nearly double that of the London boroughs. By LEA size smaller authorities showed a much lower score (46.3 per cent) than either medium-sized LEAs (52.9) or larger authorities (69.4). These two sets of figures suggest a greater problem in those large LEAs which were usually served by a single MSC Area Office.

Staff turnover

Staff turnover in Area Offices and LEAs was identified as a source of problems in both the development of planning arrangements and the maintenance of good relations. In the case of the MSC, the fairly frequent shifting from post to post characteristic of the Civil Service was cited a number of times as a problem area in the preliminary interviews, which suggested this to be a major bone of contention. An officer interviewed in the MSC survey, who was the fourth in her post since planning began, identified major problems in this areas. She claimed this to cause particular difficulties over monitoring, where she felt new officers coming in and having to learn the ropes (in an area where continuity was very important) imposed a considerable hurdle.

Interestingly however, none of the other officers interviewed considered there had been any problems in this area; one claimed this to be down to the LEAs getting on with the process themselves, which to a degree made him often 'feel superfluous in this job', suggesting that Area Office staff turnover would have little impact on NAFE planning in his Area. In support of this, the score from the LEA survey data of only 44.6 per cent indicates this issue to have been much less significant than many other problem areas in respondents' eyes, and provides an example of how extensive work can usefully refute the wider incidence of findings suggested by intensive analysis.

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Staff turnover at the LEA was cited as a serious problem in a preliminary interview with one MSC officer, who said the NAFE staff at one of his five LEAs had altered completely in a year, seriously hampering the local relationship[35]. An officer in the MSC survey claimed to have experienced major problems in this area[a]. Two others noted very minor problems, one referring mainly to college staff changes. The other six indicated no problems, despite one case of an LEA having had three Assistant Education Officers dealing with FE in the course of the previous year. One officer claimed that staff changes at the LEA had greatly *improved* working relationships[d].

Rigidity of MSC adherence to details of annual contract

Accusations on the part of LEA officers in the preliminary interviews of a narrow and demanding pedantry characterising the MSC's approach to ensuring the terms of the annual contract were fulfilled are not well supported by the data from the LEA survey in this category. A score of 36.8 per cent indicates that this was not a highly significant problem area. The overall impression from the MSC survey interviews is that considerable flexibility was exhibited by Area Offices in seeking local solutions, a matter covered in Chapter 7.

Intervention in local matters by MSC Regional and Head Office

There were suggestions garnered in preliminary interviews that in some cases the higher echelons of the MSC could disrupt a healthy local relationship between LEAs and Area Offices. One LEA officer claimed that MSC Regional Office 'interferes a lot', and was 'searching for a role'[36], another that whilst local officers were amenable to thrashing out problems informally, the more distant Regional Office could disrupt this. One respondent to the LEA survey complained that

> 'Regional, Area staff and the FE Advisor have different, and in some cases conflicting, requirements'.

Further evidence of the potential disruption of the local MSC-LEA relationship through the intervention of a higher level of the MSC was given by respondents to the MSC survey. Whilst only two interviewees stressed significant difficulties here^{cJ}, one provides a case example which illustrates some important aspects of the nature of the relationships that developed between the MSC and LEAs.

The officer^c in question had good relationships with both LEAs covered by his Area Office, a fact attributable to painstaking effort over a prolonged period. The building of mutual trust had involved a deliberate development of personal contacts, and the far-sighted efforts of an Area Manager who had recognised the value of good relations, and who from the outset had sought to soothe LEA fears about MSC 'imperialism' and negotiate a pragmatic and cooperative partnership.

Despite local stability in the *status quo* however, this relationship was apparently subject to 'boat-rocking' from outside, in particular from the periodic intervention of the Regional Office. The latter was accused of a lack of sensitivity to local arrangements, and a tendency to 'bulldoze its way in' and upset the local equilibrium with no regard for the consequences, largely because these would be felt only locally and not by the Regional officers themselves. Quoted examples included the Regional Office taking it upon itself to contact the LEAs directly without consulting the Area Office (perhaps in the form of a letter outlining a new requirement, or statements made at Regional MSC-LEA meetings), which breached locally accepted agreements over the extent of MSC demands of the LEAs that year.

The consequences for the Area Office were a diminution of its credibility in the eyes of the LEAs, when the latter realised it was ignorant of such developments, and injury to the mutual trust upon which so much of the local arrangements depended. The officer stated that on such occasions it usually fell to his office to take much 'renewed time and effort to repair the damage', a wasteful and avoidable exercise. Not surprisingly perhaps, the LEAs in this Area had a very negative view of the Regional Office.

Looking at this issue from the opposite perspective, the interviewee in question recognised that at the Regional Office, local staff were to some extent perceived as being

'in bed' with the LEA. He considered that the nature of the Area Office's position in NAFE entailed it acting as a mediator between two sources of pressure, one being the higher echelons of the MSC and government, the other the LEA. Sometimes the resolution of these meant putting the pressure on LEAs to deliver, but sometimes, he argued, it required standing alongside the LEA in resisting the higher MSC view. Whilst the Regional Office tended to perceive this as 'batting for the LEA' it was, he argued, no more than was sometimes necessary to secure agreement. It was, he felt, easy for the Regional officers to assert from a distance that the LEAs had to 'toe the line', but in reality high-handedness was counter-productive. There was a lack of appreciation by the Regional Office that the MSC's NAFE work at the coal-face meant dealing with *people*, and that sensitivity mattered. He strongly believed that secondments of Regional and Head Office staff to Area Offices would wake them up to the realities of day-to-day dealings with an LEA.

However, most MSC interviewees claimed the LEAs' view of Regional Offices to be good, in some cases[d] very good. Evidence from the LEA survey, which under these headings yielded low scores of 18.5 and 17.4 per cent respectively for intervention by Regional and Head Office, indicated that this issue had not been a major source of problems overall

LEA reluctance to observe nationally-agreed criteria

Respondents to the MSC survey were asked to indicate whether they had experienced problems through LEAs being reluctant to follow planning requirements determined by national level negotiations between the MSC and the local authority associations.

Four officers claimed there had been no problems in this area, whilst four more pointed to a minor problem. In two cases [c,d] it was that the local LEAs had questioned the relevance of some requirements to their part of the country. For example in one south-coast authority the need for a detailed planning policy on ethnic minorities was questioned when these existed in only one city in the county, where the issue was dealt with by the local college in its own policies. In both cases the problems had been talked through and overcome.

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In another Area[h] problems had arisen the previous year as none of three metropolitan LEAs had complied faithfully with the national criteria in their Plan and Programme. However, the officer concerned, knowing what the LEAs were doing in practice, was satisfied that their efforts were acceptable and persuaded her seniors to accept Plans and Programmes which were ostensibly unsuitable on this basis.

Only one officer[j]cited major problems over this issue, having in the previous year had a dispute with his LEA over a form of words to be used in its Plan, which the Area Office had insisted should appear to meet national guidelines. The LEA had eventually capitulated under threat of sanctions being applied.

Slower pace of LEA bureaucratic procedures:

The MSC survey explored respondents views on any problems caused by the slower pace of LEA procedures. Three interviewees identified no problems, although one noted that they were slower, stating that his office recognised and anticipated this. Five noted minor problems, the LEA staff he dealt with tending 'to ignore their own bureaucracy at times'[e]. One officer claimed LEAs to be 'notoriously slow to change'[f], and cited an instance where his predecessor had had to pressure the elected members of an authority in order to speed things up.

Again the accepted limitations of LEA resources devoted to NAFE were widely cited as an important factor [a,c]. One stated that the more LEA officers involved, the more prompt was the action[a]. In her LEA there was only one full time LEA officer dealing with NAFE.

Interestingly, one respondent to the MSC survey suggested that in his experience, MSC bureaucratic procedures were often a lot slower than those of his LEA, for example in Head Office keeping the Area Office up to date with changes in the planning requirements. The LEA would receive circulars from Head Office advising it to approach the Area Office for further information, which it sometimes yet knew nothing about. The LEA accepted such delays in MSC internal communication, which at times provided 'a

good excuse' when things went wrong.

Other problems

Other problems mentioned by respondents to the MSC survey included the observation of
one officer in a northern single county authority, regarding his LEA's gathering of
statistical information in the early stages[e]. This had taken some while to get going, largely
through the LEA's concern to make sure they had got the process right and were
producing the information that was required. Such problems he claimed were dealt with
by both parties working together on them in close cooperation. This officer was at pains
to stress that problems in his Area had been very few, because of a competent and very
motivated LEA, but that this was untypical in his region. At regional meetings he claimed
to have become notorious for not having problems to report, in strong contrast to all the
other HEOs present.

A number of LEA survey respondents drew attention to problems relating to a view
of MSC as lacking in appreciation of the way things were at the LEA. These ranged from
a perceived MSC unawareness of the financial constraints on LEAs connected with
government cuts in block grant funding, and a lack of appreciation of LEAs' lesser staff
resources, to MSC's lack of sympathy or understanding about LEA political
structures/systems, to MSC's lack of understanding about NAFE. One LEA survey
respondent put problems relating to financial pressures thus:

> A lack of awareness that the financial controls operated by Central Government over Local
> Government (particularly penalties for overspending and the threat of rate-capping), the
> variations in these year to year, and the time-lag/uncertainty of RSG attracted by NAFE, all
> prevent a rational approach to NAFE planning and additional provision.

An officer in a north-western metropolitan Area did identify major local problems
resulting from one of the LEAs having been rate-capped in the previous year[h]. The
enforced budget cuts had apparently seen the council lose 4,000 jobs overall, some of
them in the education department. As a consequence the planning process could not be
properly carried out; the Area Office had adopted an understanding and supportive

position, and a very rough plan had been accepted. A similar circumstance had arisen in another authority in the Area, one of whose colleges had accepted PCFC status and so passed out of LEA control, causing a traumatic period while this happened. Again, the Area Office had taken an understanding and supportive line. The officer in question stressed the importance of not being high-handed in these situations, and of seeking diplomatic solutions to such problems.

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The effects of all the above factors upon the restructuring of the NAFE policy network are considered further in Chapter 8. Before that, it is necessary to consider the empirical evidence generated on the impacts of *Training for Jobs* upon the practice of NAFE planning.

Notes to Chapter Six:

1. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Notes using letters a-j refer to the interviews conducted in the MSC survey. These are listed at the end of the thesis.

4. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Interview with local MSC NAFE HEO, 1.11.88.

7. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

10. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

11. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

12. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

13. Interviews with LEA officers, 23.3.88, 6.5.88.

14. Interview with local MSC NAFE EO, 5.5.88.

15. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

16. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

17. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

18. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

19. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

20. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

21. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

22. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

23. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

24. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

25. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

26. Interview with LEA officer, 3.2.88.

27. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

28. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

29. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

30. Interview with LEA officer, 23.3.88.

31. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

32. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

33. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Interview with MSC NAFE HEO, 5.5.8.

36. Interview with LEA officer, 23.3.88.

Chapter Seven

Impacts of *Training for Jobs* on the practice of NAFE planning.

7.1 Introduction

In studying the impacts of *Training for Jobs*, the last chapter concentrated upon the bureaucratic structures and administrative relationships which developed in response to the White Paper and the subsequent NAFE Agreement. In analysing the impacts of the legislation overall, it is necessary to go beyond the institutional response of the parties involved, and to look to some of the more significant areas of NAFE planning practice upon which the new policy impinged.

This chapter identifies and analyses these key areas. It focuses on the significant activities required to support planning, such as monitoring and the collection of labour market information; it focuses also upon the issues of funding, liaison with other groups, and the use of centrally-funded projects to establish and disseminate good practice throughout the NAFE system. Finally, it considers the area of curriculum change, and goes on to consider the impacts of the NAFE initiative on this and the other significant areas of change which occurred in NAFE between 1984 and 1989. Before considering these issues, however, it is necessary to present information gathered about the experiences of LEAs and their MSC partners in implementing the NAFE Agreement in the early years of their joint involvement.

7.2 LEAs' NAFE planning experience

The practical experiences of NAFE planning varied widely for LEAs across England and Wales. This section considers these experiences from a number of angles, the first being differences between authorities in their approaches to the construction of the Development Plan and Annual Programme*.

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* Hereafter referred to, where jointly, as the 'Plan'.

7.2 (i)   Approaches to Plan construction

A view which emerged from early interviews was that LEAs' approach to writing their Plans varied broadly between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' styles. Involving a different concept to the top-down policy-making model outlined in Chapter 3, these can be conceived as two poles of a continuum describing the degree to which the process was centralised/dispersed. An ACC officer interviewed preferred the term 'circumference-in' to 'bottom-up', as the former better expressed the dispersed physical nature of many authorities' institutional patterns[1]. He argued that circumference-in Plans were in general the best. His ideal situation saw these taking the form of collaborative exercises: an LEA would rely on colleges to identify their needs and make proposals for action to meet them. The LEA would then accept or reject these, and assimilate a college-based Plan for the whole authority.

The LEA survey investigated this issue by seeking to establish the relative extent of top-down and circumference-in planning. Three questions specifically addressed the issue: one asking about who had been involved in the work of drawing-up the Plan; who had been involved in decision-making over its eventual contents; and the level of participation of college staff at various grades.

The results to the question are shown in Figure 7.1. This shows clear evidence of a shift over time in the use of top-down and circumference-in approaches to planning. Top-down planning is in this instance indicated by the categories 'single LEA officer' and 'LEA team', whereas circumference-in approaches are indicated by those categories showing a collaborative arrangement between LEAs and colleges (categories c,d,e in Figure 7.1).

According to the data gathered, in the first planning round, in 55.7 per cent of cases the Plan was produced centrally at the LEA by a single officer or team, whereas in only 40.0 per cent of cases (excluding 'other') were college staff involved, either directly or by submitting reports to the LEA.

In contrast, the results for the most recent planning round indicate that only 30.4

Category:

(a) single LEA officer
(b) LEA team
(c) LEA/college team
(d) college staff writing those parts of the
    plan relevant to their institution
(e) LEA officer/team editing
    submissions written by college staff
(f) other

■ first plan (sample 70 LEAs)
▨ most recent plan (sample 69 LEAs)

LEAs

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
first plan	27	12	15	1	12	3
most recent plan	13	8	21	1	22	4
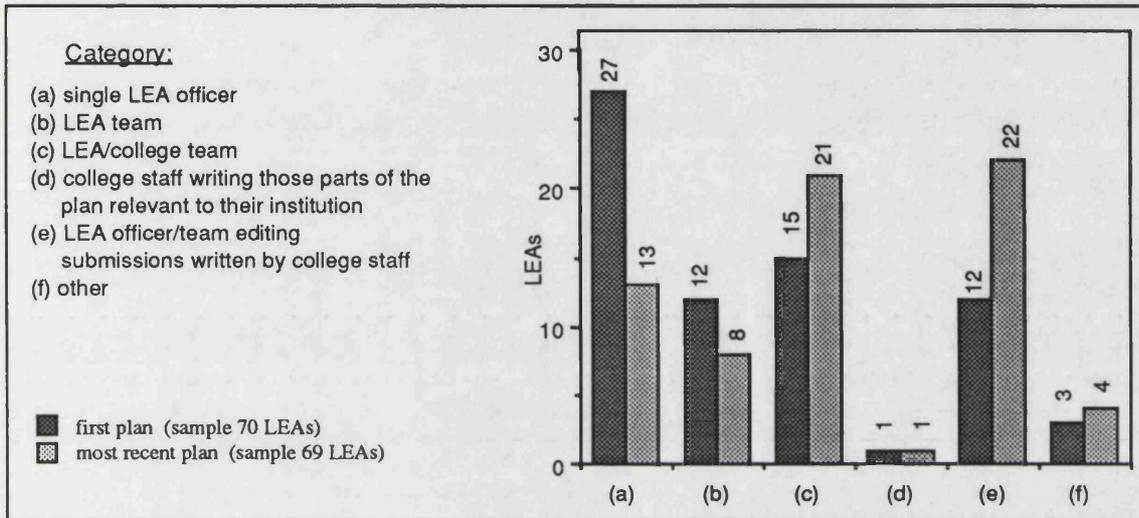
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

Figure 7.2: % in LEA and LEA/college categories by full sample & LEA type

(a) First Plan:

Legend:
- ■ Full sample
- ▨ London boroughs
- ▨ Met. boroughs
- ▨ Shire counties
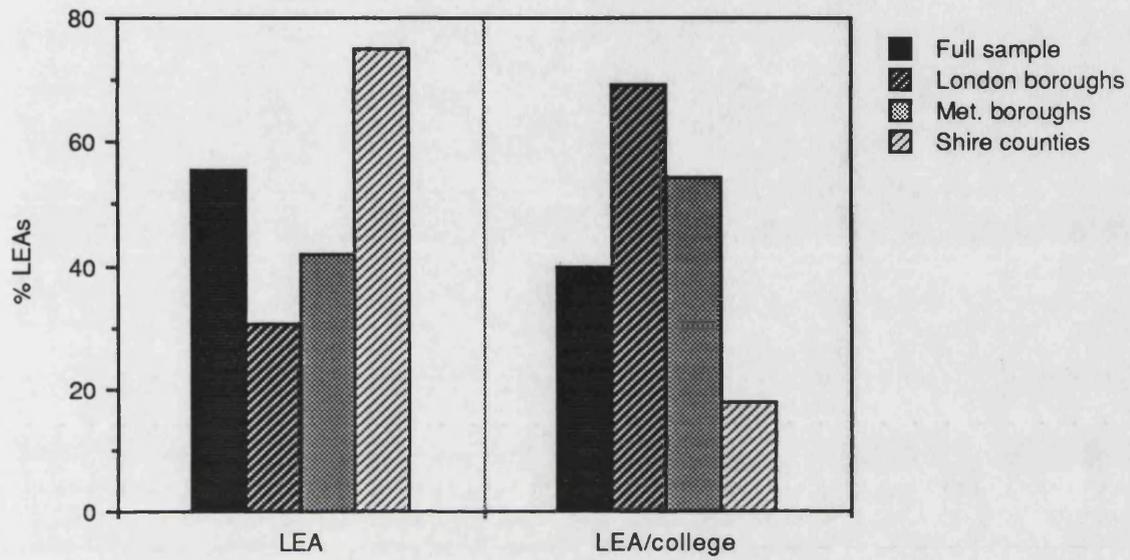
(b) Most recent Plan:
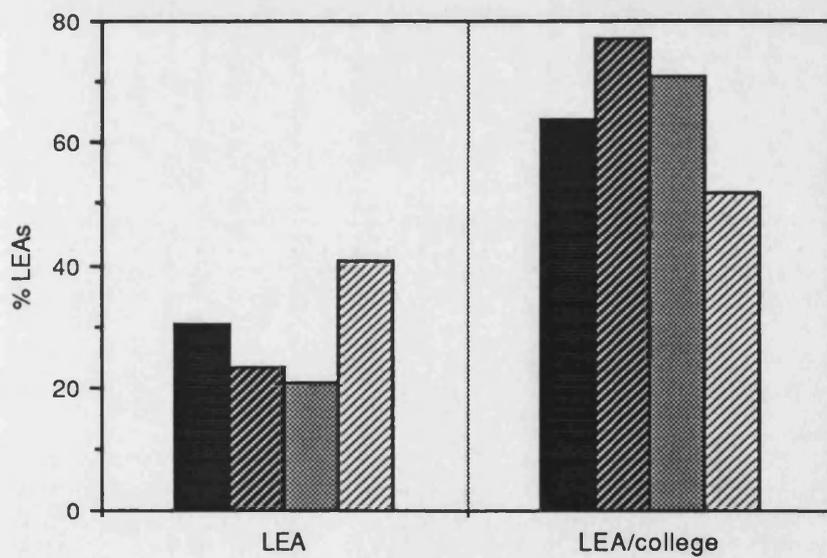
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

per cent of Plans were produced solely at the LEA (a drop of 25.3 per cent on the first round), whereas 63.8 of Plans involved the contributions of college staff (an increase of 23.8 per cent).

Some notable differences emerged by LEA type, as illustrated in Figure 7.2. In the case of the first Plan, London boroughs showed a definite bias towards collaborative LEA-college arrangements, this being so in 69.2 per cent of cases as compared with 30.8 who indicated a wholly LEA-based approach. The reverse was true for shire counties, where 75.0 per cent of authorities showed an LEA-based approach compared with only 17.9 per cent indicating collaboration. Metropolitan districts fell between the two.

In the case of the most recent Plan, however, the picture had changed, with all LEA types moving to a similar position where LEA-college collaborative arrangements predominated. The data shows that the shift from wholly LEA-based Plan production was most marked in the shire counties.

A similar pattern emerged when the results were broken down by LEA size, as shown in figure 7.3. This shows that progressively larger authorities made the greatest use of LEA-based Plan production in the first planning round, whereas in the most recent Plan the differences between authorities had been reduced.

The suggestion of the evidence is therefore of a shift from a situation in which top-down approaches were common in the first planning round (1986-89 Plan), to one by the second round (1987-90) in which circumference-in approaches were the most common. The overall trend showed at the outset a greater incidence of centralised, top-down approaches in the larger LEAs and the shire counties (which in the majority of cases were the same authorities) than in the smaller, urban authorities, with the former exhibiting the most change towards collaborative approaches by 1988.

The second of the LEA survey questions to address the issue of top-down versus circumference-in approaches examined officer-level decision-making concerning the final contents of the Plan submitted to elected members (the ultimate LEA authority) for

Figure 7.3: % in LEA & LEA/college categories by full sample & LEA size

(a) First Plan:

(b) Most recent Plan:

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

Respondents indicated that the following made the final decisions as to what was included in the draft NAFE Plan submitted to elected members for approval:
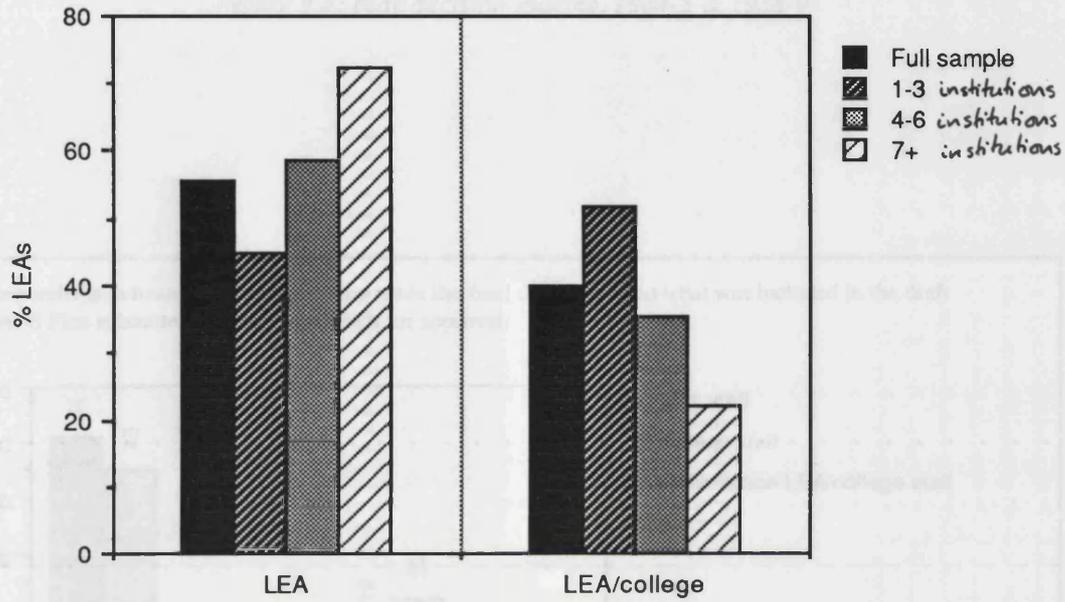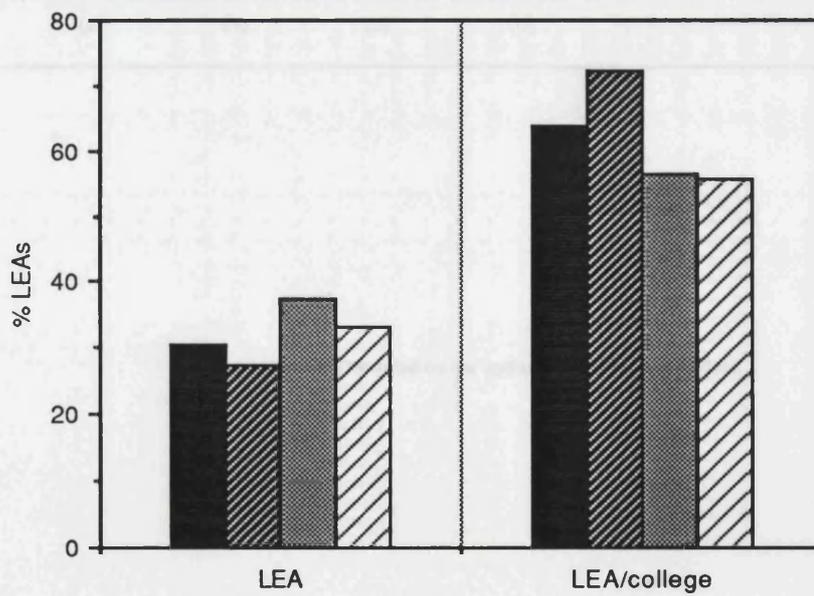
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

approval. Figure 7.4 shows the results of this enquiry.

The pattern evident is of LEA staff taking sole responsibility for sending drafts to elected members for approval in a majority of cases, in both the first and most recent years of planning (72.9 and 65.2 per cent respectively). There was only limited change across the period. In no case at all was it indicated that college staff made this decision without the involvement of LEA staff, in either year.

When these figures are broken down by LEA size and type, significant patterns again emerge. Figure 7.5 shows the proportion of respondents indicating each category for both planning rounds by LEA size. A relationship is evident in these figures. Whilst the smallest LEAs (1-3 institutions) had in both years an approximately even share of LEA-based and joint LEA/college approaches to decision making, the largest (7+) were LEA-based in 100 per cent of cases in both planning years. The middle-sized LEAs (4-6) fell between, and showed more change towards joint arrangements than the other two, accounting for most of the limited variation between the two points in time.

The figures broken down by LEA type show a similarly clear relationship, as shown in Figure 7.6. Here it was the shire counties which showed the greatest use of LEA-based decision-making, though not as overwhelmingly as the '7+' authorities group.

The inferences to be drawn from these data are as follows:

- LEA-based decision-making was more common than joint procedures. Contrasting these results with those of the previous question, it appears that centralisation in terms of decision-making was more established than that concerning the Plans' compilation.

- Change towards more decentralised, circumference-in approaches, though marginally present, was also less marked than for Plan compilation.

- The findings broken down by LEA size and type would support two hypotheses:

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Figure 7.5: Decision-making in each category by LEA size

(a) First Plan:
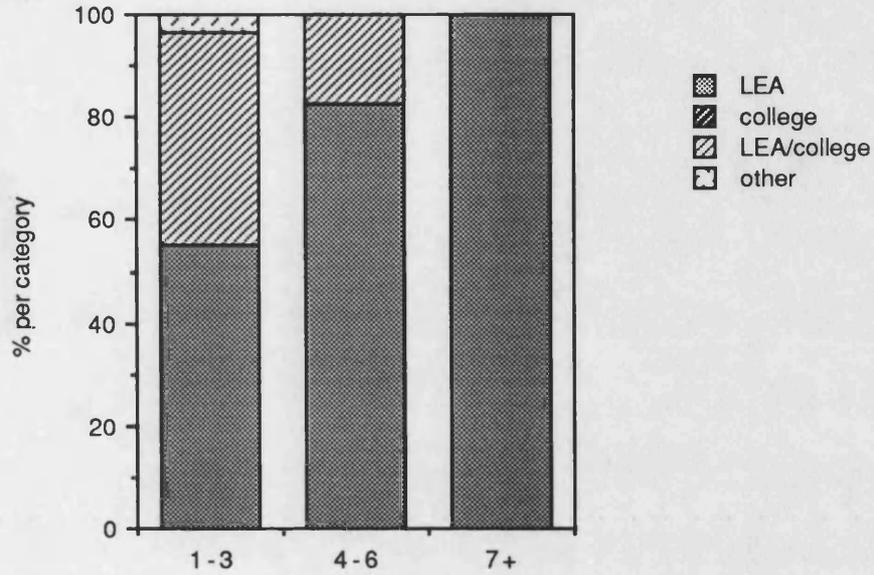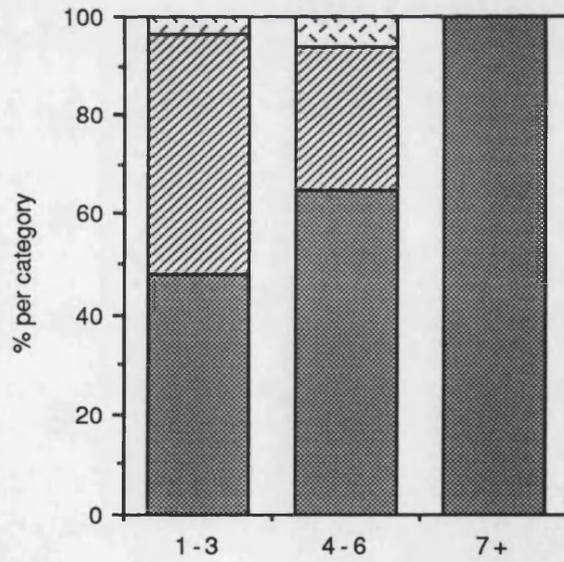
(b) Most recent Plan:

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

Figure 7.6: Plan decision-making - % in each category by 3 LEA types

(a) First Plan:
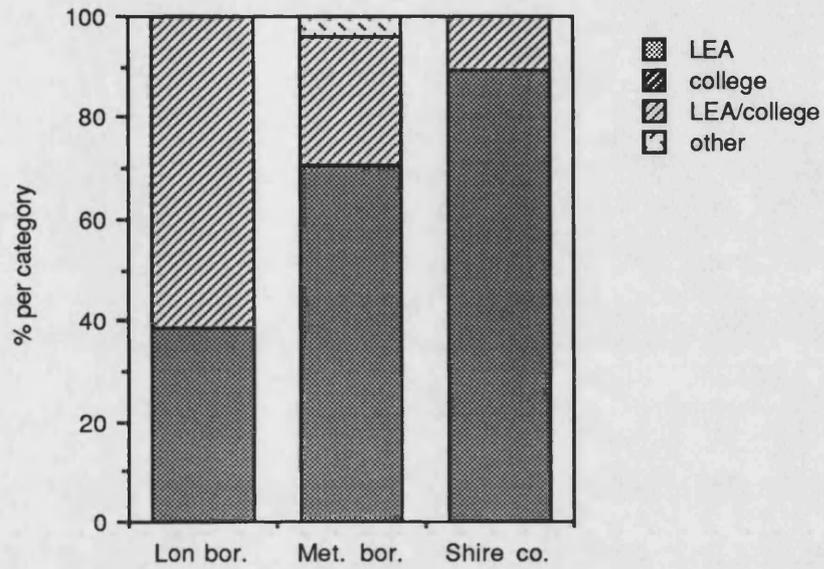
(b) Most recent Plan:
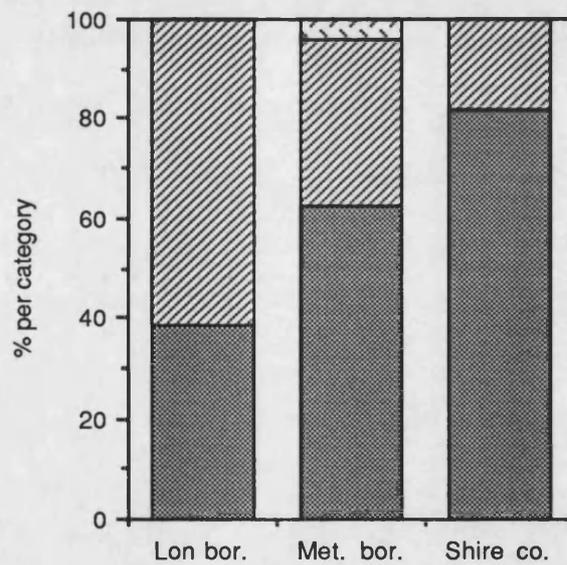
Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

i) that smaller authorities frequently had insufficient resources to conduct planning properly without the assistance of colleges, whereas the larger LEAs were more commonly equipped to cope with such demands;

ii) the greater the number of institutions in an authority, the greater was the need for coordination and central control over disparate and sometimes competing colleges. This was especially so in the more geographically-extensive shires, where institutions were often isolated from one another, and LEA staff had an important role in bringing the threads of separate programmes together.

The third question investigating this area focussed on the involvement of college staff in the planning of NAFE, and was discussed in Chapter 6. Table 6.4 in that section indicated that senior college management had had a participatory involvement in a large minority (45.7 per cent) of cases in 1984-5, which had risen to 71.4 per cent at the time of the survey. The equivalent figures for college departmental heads showed an increase from 17.1 to 41.4 per cent over the same period.

The evidence from this question once again supports the prime finding of these investigations. Namely, that the use of 'circumference-in' approaches to planning increased markedly over the period of joint LEA-MSC NAFE planning. Whereas at the start of this period the use of top-down methods was the most predominant approach, new methods came to affect particularly the construction of NAFE Plans, particularly in larger authorities. There was less change in the degree of decentralisation of decision-making, suggesting that the increased participation of college staff in planning did not extend to increased power over the content of NAFE Plans, their involvement being limited to a contributory input.

Some individual comments from LEA interviewees illustrate support for a circumference-in approach. One officer stated that his LEA believed colleges were better placed to assess demand and to respond to it, the role of the authority being to coordinate rather than direct their activities[2]. Another indicated an LEA desire to 'embrace as much grass roots input as possible'[3], particularly in the construction of the Annual Programme, and a third that his LEA's Plan was compiled from colleges' own

'action plans'[4].

7.2 (ii) Plan quality

Commenting on the quality of the first three Plans produced across England and Wales, an FEU officer charged with evaluating progress suggested the first year plans were 'very variable' and 'mostly terrible'[5]. They had in most cases been 'a sinecure'(sic) directed at meeting the minimum obligations to secure the receipt of payments from the MSC. They showed 'much addled thinking', especially over the notion of responsiveness. There had been very little strategic content, little in the way of objectives with timescales - 'the basis of monitoring and evaluation' - and much in the way of educational clichés.

An officer interviewed in the MSC survey complained that the local LEA had 'tried to bamboozle us', its first Plan having been sent to the Area Office in the form of nine separate Development Plans and nine Annual Programmes, one for each college in the countyj. The FEU officer indicated that this approach had not been uncommon, citing as an example a large urban midlands authority whose first Plan had comprised eleven volumes.

An LEA officer in an eastern shire county indicated that her authority's first Plan had involved 'much guesswork'[6]. It had been written single-handedly by the principal eduction officer responsible for NAFE, after some hurried discussion in the department to come up with some objectives to include in the document. This reflects an approach claimed by an ACC officer interviewed to have been common in the first round, that of a single senior LEA officer sitting up 'with a towel over the head and a pot of coffee' to write the Plan in one night to meet the MSC deadline and get hold of its NAFE money.

The previous section noted evidence of a significant transition from this type of approach to one where a wider range of LEA and college staff became involved, and the clear increase in circumference-in planning can be expected to have had a positive effect on Plan quality. Improvements also stemmed from improved experience and

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understanding of strategic NAFE planning, a process new to many authorities, and progressively accrued as each planning year came round.

The LEA officer in the eastern shire referred to above noted significant improvements in her authority's Plan in the second and third years. The second Development Plan had 'built on the first', and the third (current at the time) had a much more developed LMI section. Its objectives were linked to specific proposals for action. The following year's Development Plan was intended be slimmer, whilst the Annual Programme had become 'easier to run now underway'. Another LEA officer signalled his authority's intention in future to make the Development Plan 'a short, incisive, direct document' which stated clear, 'tractable' objectives. The first of these two LEAs was one picked out by the FEU officer for particular praise, being one of several examples of formerly rather inactive authorities which had seized the initiative following the impetus afforded by the NAFE Agreement. Conversely, some formerly effective authorities had not significantly improved their performance in response to the new arrangements. It seems fair to conclude along with an MSC officer responsible for five London LEAs that plan quality remained 'variable' between different authorities after three planning rounds.

7.2 (iii) Involvement of outside parties in Plan production

Use of NAFE committees

The LEA survey investigated the use made of boards or committees established specifically for the production of or comment upon authorities' NAFE Plans. The results indicated that a majority (55.7 per cent) of LEAs had such a committee. Some variation was apparent by LEA type, with shire counties indicating the use of a committee in a majority (60.7 per cent) of cases whilst London boroughs and metropolitan districts indicated lower figures (46.2 and 45.8 per cent respectively).

The questionnaire also investigated the constitution of these committees. Table 7.1 indicates the proportion of authorities which were indicated to involve participants in

Table 7.1: Consitution of NAFE boards/committees

Of the respondents who indicated that their authority had a board or committee specifically responsible for the production of or for comment on the NAFE Plan, the numbers of respondents indicating that this board included the following representatives were:

		#	%
(1)	elected authority members	21	53.8
(2)	authority staff	37	94.9
(3)	college staff	34	87.2
(4)	MSC officers	19	48.7
(5)	Careers Service officers	21	53.8
(6)	HMI inspectors	4	10.3
(7)	individual employers / employers' representatives	17	43.6
(8)	Chamber of Commerce members	12	30.8
(9)	trade union representatives	17	43.6
(10)	other	7	17.9

sample: 39 LEAs

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

each of the ten categories shown. From the table it is apparent that the most commonly represented groups were, unsurprisingly, LEA and college staff, at 94.9 and 87.2 per cent respectively, followed by elected authority members and Careers Service staff, both 53.8 per cent.

After these came MSC officers (48.7 per cent), representatives of employers and trade unions (both 43.6 per cent), and Chambers of Commerce (30.8 per cent). HMI were represented in only 10.3 per cent of cases.

The overall finding is therefore that members of such bodies were most commonly individuals closely involved in NAFE on the LEA side.

MSC involvement in Plan production

Having noted that the involvement of MSC officers in NAFE boards and committees was rather less common than that of LEA officers, the MSC survey sought to investigate the matter further. The aim was to identify the extent of MSC officer involvement in the actual production of NAFE Plans, as opposed to the mere acceptance or rejection of these. The FEU officer interviewed indicated that many LEAs had, at least originally, taken a view that the MSC should leave planning up to them, and then 'dumped' a finished Plan on the Area Office.

To explore this, interviewees were asked to describe the extent of their involvement in the drafting of the LEAs' Development Plan and Annual Programme, and the extent to which this had changed over the period of mutual involvement. Since there was no formal requirement for liaison in this area, any involvement would have been a matter of local voluntary cooperation.

Of the 9 officers interviewed, 8 were involved in discussions or liaison of some kind with their LEAs during the various stages of Plan and Programme drafting, although not necessarily with all the LEAs in their Area. In most if not all cases this appeared to have differed considerably from the situation in early planning rounds, when a Plan and Programme would commonly arrive by post along with a request for

the allocated money.

In the case where there appeared to be the closest Area Office-LEA liaison[c], the officer concerned spoke of a fairly distant situation having changed in only 3-4 years to one which saw extensive Area Office participation. This officer had developed a distinctly collaborative role, making comments and suggestions at all stages, the final planning and Programme documents being very much the product of a joint effort. This officer was in the current year actually drafting the labour market report section of one of his LEAs' Development Plan, a circumstance fairly unimaginable in 1984.

Another officer[d] described a situation with one of her two LEAs in which both parties discussed the year's aims and priorities from their point of view before the national Guidance was issued, and then went through the latter jointly when it arrived, setting out a mutual programme for meeting agreed targets. Both parties maintained informal liaison throughout, with a by now much reduced emphasis on formal negotiations. Again this contrasted with the early years of the process, at which time 'sketchy' plans had been sent in for approval or rejection.

An officer dealing with a single LEA indicated that despite not being a party to LEA management meetings his involvement extended throughout the planning process, and he worked jointly with LEA staff in the drafting of the Plan and Programme[e]. This circumvented the danger of an expensively-prepared document being referred back for changes, and assisted the achievement of a mutually satisfactory piece of work. Whilst this officer had reservations about the content of the authority's somewhat glossy Plan, its value as a highly effective marketing document coupled with an understanding with the MSC about what was actually going on in the colleges made for an acceptable arrangement.

Three other officers [b,g,h], all in multi-LEA metropolitan areas, indicated that they engaged in some discussions and negotiations in the Plan and Programme drafting stage, although some LEAs covered by this group continued to send in draft plans without prior discussion. All three officers expressed a desire to improve the overall level of liaison in this area, and at least two of them seemed to be making progress

towards this [g,h].

Partly, the differences in the level of involvement would have been a product of LEA type, attitudes and style, a fact illustrated by different levels of liaison between MSC officers and different LEAs in their Area. In one case[h] close cooperative links with one LEA contrasted with very low levels of consultations with another, the relationship with a third authority coming somewhere in between. Further illustrating this point, in one example of close liaison[d], the same officer had, in contrast, very limited links with the other of her two LEAs. It would appear to have been significant that this latter was a small, single college authority, whereas the other LEA was a large multiple college authority with greater resources and a more developed administrative machine. Such factors would clearly be important in determining the feasibility of extensive liaison.

What appears to be significant also is the length of tenure of the HEO in post. In three of the examples of close liaison listed above [c,d,e], the officers had been in post 2, 4 and 5 years respectively. This contrasted with the second three [b,g,h], who had been in post 18 months, 1 year and 6 months. Whilst these officers would have inherited pre-existing arrangements with LEAs to a certain extent, stress should be laid on the importance of the development of personal links. It would appear that the more these were allowed to develop, the greater was the potential for collaboration, provided there existed a willingness in the LEA to allow this.

7.2 (iv) Local interpretation of national policy

The discussion of the nature of policy-formulation, decision-making and implementation presented in Chapter 3 stressed the role of street-level bureaucrats in the reformulation and concretisation of policy directives into a more specific and more detailed policy on the ground. The routinisation of broad objectives into day-to-day tasks was argued to necessitate a degree of discretion on the part of implementors, a degree of freedom to make their own interpretation on the basis of local circumstances. In the context of this argument it was important to examine the issue of local

interpretation of national NAFE policy by Area Offices and their LEAs.

Interviewees in the MSC survey were asked to indicate the extent to which their Area Office interpreted national Guidance in order to make the NAFE process relevant to local needs. One interviewee stated that over the course of the period in which NAFE planning had taken place, the Area Office and its LEAs had developed local arrangements for meeting the requirements agreed at national level by the MSC and the local authority associations[c]. Much less important now, he claimed, than struggling to meet outside-imposed criteria was the identification of what was possible and a joint process of working together towards goals thus defined. Such goals were intended to reflect local needs, and to ignore factors irrelevant to the area. Making an informed judgement was the key Area Office task in this situation, in the sense of identifying accurately what the LEA could and could not achieve. The latter would not be demanded of it, but the former definitely would, even if the LEA claimed itself unable to deliver.

Another officer stressed the importance of learning what could be realistically asked of LEAs[d]. Having taken the starting point as what it was able to provide, the Area Office had concentrated each year on seeing how far each authority could go towards the long-term objectives, rather than on aiming for 'the perfect Plan'. In the first instance she and her colleagues had taken the national Guidance as a basis upon which to work - she drew attention to the fact that the original *Guidance Handbook* had included the caveat 'as far as possible' in stating what LEAs should provide - and until the present year had continued to use it as a target. In the present year there had instead been an attempt to develop a local strategy, to identify what the Area Office really wanted out of the process, and influence the LEA on the basis of this.

An officer who dealt with a fairly truculent LEA indicated that all the objectives included in the Plan had to be specifically agreed in advance. None were imposed where agreement could not be reached, suggesting a high degree of LEA influence over the employment of local discretion[i].

One officer, claiming that procedures in her Area reflected realistic goals, noted

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differences between LEAs in her multi-authority Areas. Some LEAs went above national targets - not surprisingly, she stated, these were not held back. Other cases were more problematic. Often it was clear that an LEA's planning and monitoring procedures were inadequate, but that the Area Office was not at that stage going to get anything better out of it. In these circumstances, long-term interests necessitated making allowances and accepting what was available, in order to achieve the best result that was realistically practicable. The pre-requisite of such tolerance was that the LEA's best attempts were being made to improve. It also, she stated, involved an 'act of faith' on her part that their Programme was being delivered as arranged. An LEA officer interviewed in the same Area claimed that 'the MSC are flexible', being more concerned that the contract was being honoured than with the detailed specifications of the Plan structure. A 'reasonable compromise' had thus been possible[7].

All the interviewees who offered a view on this claimed there was local interpretation of the national requirements in their Areas, although local MSC staff did seek as far as possible to follow national guidelines. These findings give clear support for the arguments made earlier for the importance of lower-tier discretion in the implementation of policy.

7.3 Monitoring

The issue of monitoring was one which caused some of the initial difficulties in the LEA-MSC relationship. These related to the workload being placed on LEA officers required to carry out the monitoring work - one described the process as being 'arduous and a burden'[8] - a factor identified as the most significant problem area in section 6.4 (iv). It also reflected problems which stemmed from MSC officers' lack of educational expertise, which could lead to misunderstandings over what forms of monitoring were practicable and of value.

This section explores the issue of monitoring from each side, by first presenting the information gathered on the subject in the MSC interview survey, followed by a presentation of data from the LEA questionnaire.

Monitoring from the MSC perspective

A senior MSC officer interviewed gave an overview of the monitoring process in which he described how initial expectations of a system of formal reviews had become superseded in practice by much more informal arrangements[9]. Whilst there had originally been much in the way of 'formal, cool, eyeball-to-eyeball' meetings at which 'inches-thick documents' were discussed at length, monitoring had now become a much more continuous process in which officers from both parties talked through problems at an early stage and worked on solutions together. This had progressed to the point where the latest *Guidance Handbook* required only one formal meeting, the purposes of retaining one being twofold: to ensure the participation of senior management, and 'in case we're being given the runaround'*. The officer commented, however, that early caution had given way to openness and flexibility, and that LEAs had generally been very cooperative in providing information. Monitoring was now conducted 'by exception', a method which necessitated trust in what the LEA identified as meriting MSC attention. The alternative was 'a rather arid plod through reams of material'.

The above overview can be illustrated more fully by recourse to the MSC survey. Respondents stressed on a number of occasions that it was not the MSC's task to monitor NAFE courses, but to monitor the LEAs' own monitoring of these [d,f,10]. Two officers noted that it was beyond the authority of the Area Office to go into colleges and check on what was happening [b,e], and another noted that it was also beyond its resources[d]. It was pointed out that in agreeing to the LEAs' Plan and Programme the MSC was agreeing to its monitoring procedures also[b]. There was still no MSC brief to become involved in the curriculum, or go into classes or lecture rooms in the manner of HMI; it could only advise and influence such matters indirectly[e]. One officer noted that at monitoring meetings in his Area it was the LEAs who set the agenda for discussion[f].

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* The latter comment suggests mutual trust (a matter considered more fully below) remained at least partially qualified.

The form which monitoring took varied considerably from one locality to another. All Area Offices and their LEAs were required to hold at least two formal monitoring meetings every year under the terms of the Agreement. But outside of these there was much room for differences in approach. These centred on three areas:

- the degree to which quantitative and qualitative assessment were used in proportion to one another;

- the overall formality or informality of the process;

- whether, instead of an attempt to monitor the whole of provision, there had been a decision to concentrate on chosen areas as indicators of the whole.

One officer claimed that the business of monitoring hitherto had been very much a matter of ensuring the Annual Programme was being met, of checking numbers on course starts, enrolment figures, course completions, staff-student ratios and the like[e]. Only now was his Area Office looking beyond this towards seeking evidence on the efficiency and effectiveness of Programme delivery. One officer stated that in her Area the MSC concentrated on qualitative assessment of the year's trends, leaving the quantitative analysis to the LEA staff[d]. To demonstrate themselves competent and informed in this area was sufficient. One officer noted that her office had in the current year deliberately moved away from the 'number-crunching' exercise which had been employed in earlier rounds[h]. In another case an interviewee stated that it was her Area Office's approach to consider both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the monitoring process.

One officer gave an indication of how the formal side of monitoring was subdivided. There were two broad monitoring areas, the Annual Programme and Development Fund projects. The former involved two processes: quantitative analysis of figures; and discussion in meetings of steering groups set up to oversee the delivery of the programme. These groups comprised local MSC officers, LEA staff and college principals, and their meetings fulfilled the formal obligation outlined in the Contract. This part of monitoring dealt with qualitative issues such as open learning, equal

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opportunities, TVEI coordination etc., concentrating on a general overview of provision as opposed to specific instances. Development Fund projects were monitored by their own individual steering committees, although there was some attempt to draw these together to some extent to reduce the monitoring workload.

All officers had to engage in a minimum amount of formal monitoring with their LEAs, but the extent to which emphasis was placed on this or more informal methods varied from one Area Office to another. Originally, with early Area Office-LEA relationships in many cases being quite distant (see Chapter 3), the whole of their contact tended to be on a fairly formal footing. Now that relationships had generally softened there had been a gradual development of more informal arrangements. These included the study of developments on a more *ad hoc* basis[d], perhaps monitoring different areas on a continuing basis throughout the year and maintaining a regular dialogue over developments with LEA staff.

A northern metropolitan officer explicitly indicated current moves towards a less formal approach[b]. Another officer in a multiple-LEA Area indicated that whilst monitoring had hitherto tended to be conducted 'around the table' with LEA and college staff, this was being supplanted by a less structured approach of going directly to colleges and monitoring chosen areas of interest[h]; whilst formal meetings still took place, their importance had diminished. One of her LEAs having at first been resistant to this idea was apparently now becoming more in favour of it.

Other Areas had seen less relaxation of the formalities. One officer noted that monitoring with his two LEAs was restricted to quarterly meetings. At these the MSC sought to ensure its requirements were being met, but in between which monitoring activity was conducted by the LEAs[f]. Another officer noted that with five LEAs to cover, the formal monitoring meetings with each of them added to the quarterly project monitoring meetings left her little time to build up informal monitoring procedures alongside these[g]. Nonetheless she was hoping to move towards this, having targeted one LEA for closer involvement already, and planning to target a second when her workload permitted.

A number of Area officers indicated that they were not making the attempt to conduct comprehensive monitoring by examining the whole of provision. One officer stated that when faced with a sometimes huge computer print out of the information an LEA has supplied about its whole Annual Programme, it was unclear what could be usefully done with such a large data set[d]. As response to this problem, the Area Office in question had adopted the approach described above of monitoring by exception. Having talked through the year's developments with LEA staff on a TOC category-by-category basis, monitoring officers identified areas of significant change and concentrated their discussions on these. Other officers identified similar procedures in their own Areas. One spoke of looking for trends in the overall figures, and of focussing on particular areas of interest which emerged[a]. Another stated that it was the objective of monitoring to identify change, and that she used the statistical data to produce graphs and charts which could illustrate such change most effectively, in order to best disseminate the information gathered from monitoring[b]. This officer also employed the practice of asking her LEAs to produce a paper giving their assessment of developments, of how far they had gone towards meeting their stated objectives, from which she would pick out the salient points for joint discussion. One officer described the MSC's monitoring work as being a matter of dealing with the periphery of NAFE, concentrating on 'the new, the altered and the deleted'[e]. This was where the evidence (or a lack of it) of the hoped for responsive developments would be apparent.

Two offices indicated their adoption of what one of them described as a 'case study approach' to monitoring. For one this was a topic-based approach involving the selection and close study of two TOC areas as samples of the whole[h]. This involved looking at the total picture in a part of the curriculum, rather than looking at only some aspects of the whole. Her monitoring involved analysing such factors as first year starts, first to second year progressions, exam results and student destinations, as indicators of performance in the areas of marketing, MIS, staff development, course development and so on. The other of these two officers had, in one of her two LEAs, chosen a selection of courses and a sample of colleges for in-depth monitoring, and sought to discuss any trends at college level[d].

It was recognised that monitoring in the early days of joint MSC-LEA planning

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had often left much to be desired. One officer who had been in post throughout the planning period claimed that there had been very little useful guidance on this from Head Office, and that Area Offices had had to develop their own responses[d]. A second officer echoed this sentiment, stating that Head Office had issued 'little really useful advice on detail'[c]; there had been contradictions between national Guidance, Regional advice and the realities of local interplay. The first of these two officers said of her Area Office that the staff had 'rather groped our way on this - in common with most people'. The reason for this, she claimed, was mainly attributable to the fact that, originally, Head Office had no more idea of what should be done than did local staff; it had learnt what it now knew as a consequence of studying the activity out in the field - i.e. 'good practice' had 'come up from the ground'.

There had been a certain amount of bad feeling between LEAs and the MSC resulting from these early uncertainties. LEA staff had accused the MSC of holding up 'hoops for them to jump through'[11], without giving good reasons why. Some of the MSC officers interviewed agreed that initially there had been some truth in this accusation: monitoring had originally been a matter of meeting specified criteria[c], which supposedly were to be demanded of LEAs in return for transfer of the NAFE money. When LEAs had asked about the purpose of some information upon whose collection they were not keen, the answer was not clear, a fact which did not assist in developing LEA trust and confidence in the Area Office.

Partly this was a function of the MSC's lack of expertise and understanding in what was for most of its staff a new field. Several officers pointed to improvements in this area [a,b,g], and one noted the importance of this in promoting the MSC's credibility in the eyes of the LEAs, which helped provide them with a greater position of trust and influence[g].

There appeared to be some agreement that monitoring procedures were generally now much better. One officer stated that whilst the MSC had previously indeed been asking for information without knowing why, it now did know why, as a consequence of its greater experience in the field[a]. Another identified improvement as a consequence of two factors: an increased sense of LEA 'ownership'; and attempts by the Area Office

to make the process more meaningful[c]. The first of these had been a question of getting the LEAs to see the monitoring requirements as a matter of concern for themselves also, not simply as a means of getting the money. The second had been the development and interpretation by the Area Office of the requirements to make them practical, achievable, relevant and above all useful. This meant their reflecting local needs and ignoring aspects which did not apply in that Area. Another officer stated her philosophy on the matter that if information was to be demanded from LEAs, it should be returned 'with value-added' in order to convince them of the usefulness of the exercise[b]. Given that monitoring was the area of the NAFE work that her LEAs had been 'least enthusiastic about', she tried hard to make it useful to them, as a means of 'turning negatives into positives' and 'getting rid of the deadwood'.

Another officer cited difficulties she had experienced with monitoring in her early experiences of the job, having been appointed six-months previously[g]. Having had to 'start from scratch' she now felt that the experience of one planning round had given her a much better grasp of the task's requirements, and had consequently been able to win the LEAs' respect and trust. This she felt to be very important, a source of leverage and influence without which the task would be much harder. She felt that monitoring in her Area had in the past not been well-developed, but that its effectiveness was now improving.

The improvement in monitoring relationships was several times connected to the development of partnership between Area Offices and LEAs. One officer noted the increasing tendency of both parties to develop local definitions of national planning guidelines in collaboration[c]. Others stressed that in their Areas monitoring was 'a joint review process' in which both sides offered their perceptions[b], that the process proceeded successfully on the basis of mutual trust[e], and that a sense of partnership had developed with both parties feeling they had their 'feet under the same table', as opposed to a former sense of virtual enmity[g]. This officer claimed that a good relationship was crucial, for without it monitoring would be no more than a procedural exercise. One officer described a move away from the notion of the MSC 'standing over the LEA, demanding what it wanted' towards a genuine partnership, working together and tackling problems jointly[h].

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Flexibility on the part of the Area Office seemed an important factor in developing such partnership. One officer illustrated this with the example that, provided an LEA accepted a requirement for collecting a piece of information but indicated genuine problems in achieving it, the Area Office was quite prepared to allow it to postpone the job until the following year[c]. Another officer stated that the MSC in his Area would not 'get excited about minor deviations' from the Programme, merely wanting to ensure that the attempt to deliver was being made[e]. In one case an officer claimed that she always sought to look at problems from an LEA point of view, a stance which she believed allowed the greatest influence for the MSC[h].

One officer made the point that monitoring could be a learning exercise *for LEAs*, requiring them to explore areas many of them would previously not have considered[d]. In joint monitoring meetings at colleges she had been 'struck by the naïvety' of some of the LEA staff's questions, and believed it had been valuable for them to go through the process. Also useful for the LEAs had been the ability to blame unpopular demands for information or course changes on the MSC, thus deflecting opposition to its moves. The officer was quite happy for the Area Office to be used in this way if it brought about positive change.

Interviewees were specifically asked to comment on the possibility that LEAs could have been 'pulling the wool over their eyes' in the case of monitoring, in order to get their money without having to move in the ways demanded of them.

Some officers stated that this had been a concern in the early days[12]. One stated that in those days the Area Office 'didn't know the bottom line on anything'[d], i.e. given their lack of experience and expertise MSC officers were uncertain as to whether or not they were doing the right thing. An example she gave was that in one of the first years 40 courses listed in the Annual Programme did not appear. The LEA gave reasons and cited a 'swings and roundabouts' effect, stating that there were 40 other courses elsewhere to make up for this. It was not clear to the Area Office whether to believe this or not, and in fact over such issues it could still not be 100 per cent certain. Another officer referred to the potential danger of being 'blinded with science' in education[f].

One officer, whilst admitting initial concerns in this area, claimed the problem had not arisen with his LEA due to a relationship conducted in good faith on both sides[e]. He 'felt good' about his relationship with the LEA, confident in its honesty, and past experience had led him to trust its staff. He noted that there certainly was scope for the LEA to juggle with figures between TOC areas, but that the LEA was just as concerned about efficiency and effectiveness as the MSC. Its own standards were high, and it could be trusted to keep its colleges closely monitored and ensure they were moving in the right direction.

Another officer citing his LEA's honesty indicated that its staff 'wouldn't bother to take the trouble' to deceive the Area Office, the mutual relationship being 'blunt, if not cordial'[j]. Overall, the senior MSC officer interviewed believed that, despite initial concern in this area, the issue was 'not a worry now'[13].

More than one officer pointed to the improvements in information-gathering which had reduced the possibility of this problem occurring. One believed it to be less and less possible as MIS became increasingly sophisticated: LEAs could now often be expected to have the information asked for, so it was ever harder for them to claim it was not available to them[g]. Another officer stated that up until the last twelve months deception had been a possibility since information was not being collected 'in a usable form'[b]. Now that the Area Office had progressively more quantitative information at its disposal, its greater knowledge and more pertinent questions meant it was getting 'too close for comfort' for LEAs successfully to bend the truth. Whilst LEAs were still likely to 'tell us what they want to tell us', the officer was confident that she could get an accurate picture. Another officer stated that there were now mechanisms to prevent the problem, the increase in expertise and available information reducing the danger[a]. But she also stressed the importance of the improvement in mutual trust. She claimed that now LEAs could see the use and value of the whole process, they were more prepared to be open and honest with the MSC. One officer noted in this context that three years previously, when the Area Office asked for information and the LEAs proved reticent, MSC staff believed LEA officials were being obstructive[d]. It had turned out that the LEAs did not in fact have the information, but were reluctant to

admit this. Subsequent improvements in information-gathering meant that they were now much better placed.

Two officers developed the view that the longer an individual HEO was involved, the more experience he or she would gain[g,h]. The more well-informed, the more such an officer would become credible in the eyes of the LEA, and the less likely they would be to consider being untruthful in discussions[g]. The situation under these circumstances would become based much more upon mutual respect and trust[g]. This same officer, who had not been in post a full year at the time of the interview, nonetheless indicated that this problem was a real danger, and that she was sure that such deception had happened in her Area. She indicated that she was prepared to accept a certain amount of this, depending upon what it was she was after - if the information was really important she would work very hard to obtain it accurately.

One final point worth noting on monitoring which emerged from the interviews related to LEA-type. Large, multi-institution authorities required a much more extensive monitoring apparatus to oversee their progress than would a small single-college LEA. One interviewee, whose two LEAs each represented one example of the above, indicated that the vast bulk of her monitoring work was carried out with the larger authority[d]. In the case of the other LEA there was less to know, knowledge was consequently very full, and she claimed that as a result of this the obligatory formal monitoring meetings 'had to be spun out sometimes'.

Data from the LEA survey on monitoring and the use of evaluation techniques

The LEA survey investigated monitoring activity at both authority and college levels. It sought data both for current activity and for that conducted in the 1984-5 planning round, in order to provide a picture of change over time. Table 7.2 indicates the results of an enquiry into the information gathered by LEAs in both years and whether monitoring and evaluation had become more common activities.

Part (1) of the question illustrated in Table 7.2 lists pieces of information LEAs were asked by the MSC to collect under the terms of the Contract. The column relating

Table 7.2: LEA monitoring of NAFE in 1984-5 & 1988-9

Respondents indicated whether their authority undertook for the purposes of its NAFE courses any of the following arrangements 1984-5, and whether it was doing so in 1988-9:

	1984-5		1988-9		% change	rank	sample
(1) Required its colleges to collect and and supply data on:	#	%	#	%			
(a) first destinations of leavers	7	10.1	60	87.0	76.9	1	69
(b) total enrolments	48	69.6	66	95.7	25.1	7	69
(c) enrolments for each course	44	63.8	66	95.7	31.9	5	69
(d) completion/drop-out rates by course	6	8.7	52	75.4	66.7	2	69
(e) information about when and why students leave courses early...	3	4.3	49	71.0	66.7	2	69
(f) attendance figures by course	18	26.1	35	50.7	24.6	8	69
(g) examination results	24	34.8	47	68.1	33.3	4	69
(h) applications received annually by course	4	5.8	25	36.2	30.4	5	69
(i) relevance of leaver's acquired skills to their first destinations ...	0	0	22	31.9	31.9		69
(2) Conducted its own monitoring of NAFE provision in colleges	15	21.7	55	79.7	58.0		69
(3) Conducted its own evaluation of NAFE provision in colleges	9	13.0	37	53.6	40.6		69

to the planning round 1984-5 indicates that LEAs' record at collecting this information before joint planning was introduced was somewhat patchy. Whilst enrolment figures by course and overall were collected by over 60 per cent of LEAs, fewer than 10 per cent collected information on completion/drop-out rates by course, information about non-completers and annual applications received by course, whilst none at all had gathered information on the relevance of leavers' acquired skilled to their first destinations.

The figures for the 1988-9 planning round show some dramatic changes. The right-hand column of Table 7.2 ranks the percentage change in each of the categories, and indicates the area of greatest change to have been the collection of information on the first destinations of leavers This rose from being collected by only 10.1 per cent of LEAs in the 1984-5 planning round to 76.9 per cent by that for 1988-9. It was noted in section 6.4.4 that this had been an area stressed heavily by the MSC as a good performance indicator for NAFE. The view was not wholly shared by LEAs, and an ACC officer suggested that destinations after ten years were much more significant[14]. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence of the attention to this area leading to significant change in practice.

The other categories which scored high rankings in the 1988-9 column tended also to be those which showed low figures for 1984-5. The information collected most commonly at the earlier point, i.e. enrolment figures and examination results, remained so in the later year, but showed lesser percentage increases having started from a strong base. Only two categories were collected by less than 50 per cent of LEAs in the 1988-9 round, annual applications received (36.2 per cent) and information on relevance (31.9 per cent). What emerges most clearly from the data is that the collection of all the information types listed rose significantly over the period. Whether this can be attributed wholly to the influence of the NAFE Agreement is open to question; this matter is explored further in section 7.8.

The other figures in the table support the idea that monitoring increased considerably in the period under consideration. Whilst only 21.7 per cent of LEAs are reported to have conducted any monitoring during the 1984-5 planning round, the

figure had risen to 79.7 per cent in 1988-9. The surprising feature of this result is how low the latter figure is, given than 100 per cent of LEAs were supposed to be monitoring NAFE under the terms of the Agreement, a factor which may be accounted for by incomplete responses or may indicate some LEA foot-dragging on carrying out monitoring themselves. Either way, there has been a clear and significant increase between the two points.

The use of evaluation procedures in NAFE is a key area which the NAFE Agreement sought to address, given its primary concern to introduce mechanisms aimed at maximising NAFE quality. In the responses to the above question evaluation was reported to be carried out by fewer LEAs than monitoring. The 1988-9 figure, at 53.6 per cent, was nonetheless a very significant increase over 13.0 per cent in 1984-5. To explore this issue more fully, a more detailed question was posed, the results of which appear in Table 7.3.

The question explored six types of evaluation: follow-up surveys/questionnaires; self-evaluation by lecturers; course monitoring by client committees; monitoring by senior college staff; and monitoring by LEA inspectors. It is quire evident from Table 7.3 that in the 1984-5 planning round no form of evaluation was employed by a large number of LEAs, the highest figure being 30.8 per cent for 'regular course monitoring by senior college staff'. The only other type of evaluation used in more than one fifth of all authorities was 'course monitoring by committees representative of college clients' at (24.6 per cent).

However, by the 1988-9 planning round there is evidence of marked increase in a number of categories. Course monitoring by senior college staff remained the most significant technique (78.5 per cent of LEAs), but the use of more objective sources of information had become much more significant, notably the follow-up questionnaire/survey of students and employers (76.9 and 70.8 per cent of LEAs respectively). Survey of other groups had risen to sizeable minorities of LEAs, but the only other forms of evaluation to become very common were reported to be course monitoring by client committees (52.3 per cent) and regular self-evaluation by course lecturers (46.2 per cent).

Table 7.3: LEA evaluation of NAFE in 1984-5 & 1988-9

Does the authority at present, or did it in 1984-5, promote any of the following policies for course quality assessment in its colleges ?	1984-5		1988-9	
	#	%	#	%
(1) Follow-up questionnaire or interview survey of any of the following to investigate client satisfaction, course relevance, teaching quality etc.:				
(i) students	12	18.5	50	76.9
(ii) employers	10	15.4	46	70.8
(iii) Industrial Training Organisations	10	15.4	20	30.8
(iv) Chambers of Commerce	3	4.6	16	24.6
(v) students' parents	1	1.5	4	6.2
(vi) community groups	2	3.1	15	23.1
(vii) ethnic minority groups	2	3.1	14	21.5
(viii) others (specify)	1	1.5	6	9.2
(2) Regular self-evaluation by course lecturers	12	18.5	30	46.2
(3) Course monitoring by committees representative of college clients	16	24.6	34	52.3
(4) Regular course monitoring by senior college staff	20	30.8	51	78.5
(5) Regular course monitoring by LEA inspectors	7	10.8	22	33.8

(Sample - 65 LEAs)

The overall picture which emerges from these data are as follows. The evaluation of NAFE provision had in 1988 become a significantly more common activity since 1984-5. The judgements of senior college staff had been and remained a key element in the evaluation of college provision; where subjective judgements were called into play, it appeared that these actors brought such judgements to bear most influentially. Nonetheless, there is evidence of a considerable increase in the use of follow-up questionnaire or interview surveys to gather attitudes about college provision, spreading wider the sources of hard data upon which the more subjective judgements could be brought to bear. The survey of the key client groups - students and employers - has clearly been the most important form of this. The extensive use of bodies representative of client groups suggests evidence of action to meet concerns about responsiveness to client needs.

One or two additional points arise from breaking the figures down by LEA size. In each of categories (2),(3) and (4) significant differences emerged, which are illustrated by Table 7.4:

Table 7.4: Differences in use of evaluation techniques by LEA size

	%(2)		(3)		(4)	
	84-5	88-9	84-5	88-9	84-5	88-9
1-3 institutions	38.5	53.8	42.3	69.2	50.0	73.1
4-6 institutions	6.7	46.7	18.7	50.0	25.0	75.0
7+ institutions	5.6	38.9	11.1	33.3	11.1	83.3

In each case the smaller authorities showed a greater use of each evaluation technique for 1984-5. The figures indicate that by the 1988-9 planning round a more even spread of these techniques had arisen, although the smaller authorities still showed a considerably greater use of evaluation through monitoring by client committees (69.2 per cent). The most striking changes over time were in the category 'regular course

monitoring by senior college staff, which saw increases in all LEA sizes, but most markedly in the case of larger authorities, whose figure rose from 11.1 per cent (the lowest for 1984-5) to 83.3 per cent (the highest for 1988-9).

7.4 Funding and projects

This section considers two aspects of funding in the NAFE planning process: the central resource created to fund development projects and, first, the costs incurred by LEAs in administering the new arrangements.

LEA costs

The funding of all local government activity had in the years covered by this study come under tight budgetary pressure from the centre, as recounted in Chapter 3. Within this, NAFE activity was squeezed tighter by the imposition of additional duties without any concomitant rise in grant allocation. There was in fact over time some reduction in the money made available for NAFE, the inflation factor for MSC funding being set at a lower level than that for block-grant funding to LEAs[15].

The LEA survey sought to explore the claim made in a preliminary interview that some authorities were 'insufficiently resourced to meet the needs of NAFE'[16], particularly in the light of shifting MSC demands. Table 6.8 indicated that the problem area defined in the survey as 'insufficient assistance with set-up cost of Plan-related activities' ranked as the fifth most serious in respondents' perceptions with a percentage score of 62.9, indicating widespread LEA dissatisfaction over this matter.

The survey sought to identify whether LEAs had budgeted NAFE planning as a separate activity, in an attempt to estimate the absolute cost of the process. Only one LEA indicated this to have occurred, without specifying a figure. The only figure identified was by a NAFE HEO in London who claimed that one of his boroughs had identified an annual cost of £11,000 to administer NAFE.

A second question in the LEA survey aimed at this issue asked respondents to indicate whether their authority had seen an increase in the share of LEA resources devoted to post-16 activity. Only 18.6 LEAs were reported to have done so. This result is curious, given that greater resources might be expected to have been required simply to get the new work done, and would suggest that many LEA NAFE officers were struggling to meet their new obligations without any improvement in the support they were receiving from their departments.

In the light of the tightness of resources in NAFE, the need to seek additional funding became of increasing significance, along with greater moves towards marketing and charging more for college services. The investigation of the most prominent directions in which extra resources had been sought was therefore another important avenue of enquiry. A question was consequently posed to the LEA respondents which aimed to gain some insight into the financial links LEAs developed with bodies outside the main funding framework, resourced by the twin incomes of central block grant and the MSC.

The results are shown in Table 7.5, which ranks the sources in their order of frequency. The most commonly approached source - Education Support Grants (ESG) - were introduced in 1986 as a means to fund local programmes from a national fund. Administered by DES, it represented approximately 0.5 per cent of the annual national allocation to LEAs, which was held back to be offered to LEAs for specific projects.

That the ESG figure should be higher than that for MSC is intriguing, as the Development Fund through which LEAs made bids for MSC money was established (unlike ESGs) specifically and exclusively for funding projects in NAFE. Nonetheless, the number of LEAs seeking the MSC central resource evident from these data is very high. The section below on projects covers this more fully.

The next most commonly-approached sources, PICKUP and local collaborative project (LCP) programmes, were set up by the DES and MSC respectively as initiatives in adult education and training, both of which had been in place some time and were

Table 7.5: NAFE funding sought by LEAs from other bodies

Respondents indicated whether their authority/its colleges actively sought additional NAFE funding from any of the following sources:	#	%
(1) Industrial Training Boards	20	28.6
(2) Non-Statutory Training Organisations	10	14.3
(3) MSC	64	91.4
(4) private-sector training bodies	8	11.4
(5) European Social Fund	56	80.0
(6) Education Support Grants	68	97.1
(7) PICKUP	59	84.3
(8) College Employer Links Programme	24	34.3
(9) Responsive College Programme	23	32.9
(10) Local Collaborative Projects	55	78.6
(11) others (specify)	10	14.3

sample: 70 LEAs

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

being run down by the time of the survey. The attempted use of these sources appears to have remained high in this period.

Most interesting perhaps is the high figure recorded for approaches to the European Social Fund (ESF). The other sources in the top five listed above all existed within the framework of the structures operated by the DES and MSC. The ESF represented a quite separate avenue of funding, and it is interesting that as many as four in five LEAs have used it as a means to seek additional resources for NAFE .

When the figures are broken down by LEA type, it emerges that London boroughs made markedly less attempted use the ESF than other authorities. Only 38.5 per cent of them did so, compared with 82.1 per cent of shire counties and 100.0 per cent of metropolitan districts. They similarly were much less prone to approach LCPs for funding, only 46.2 per cent doing so compared with 83.3 per cent of metropolitan boroughs and 92.9 per cent of shire counties. (This latter was naturally related to the existence of LCPs in an area, something which varied widely across the country.) There is also evidence of London boroughs being less active in seeking funding from the PICKUP programme, a figure of 61.5 per cent contrasting with 85.7 per cent of shire counties and 91.7 per cent of metropolitan boroughs.

The extensive approaches made to outside bodies and funds suggests that the administration and delivery of NAFE placed considerable financial pressure on LEAs, who found it necessary to look beyond the more traditional forms of public educational funding.

Centrally-funded projects

<u>1. Aims and organisation</u>

Noted above in Chapter 4 was the creation of a central MSC fund made up of a small proportion (originally five per cent) of its overall NAFE budget. Having started life as the Central Reserve Fund (CRF), later becoming the Mutual Development Fund (MDF), by the time of the MSC survey it had become the Work-Related Further

Education Development Fund*. The CRF ran during the academic years 1986-7 and 1987-8. Its main emphasis was on research and development, intended to enable LEAs to make their NAFE provision better related to labour market information[17]. Having originally been administered from Head Office, in late 1986 responsibility was largely transferred to Regional level. The MDF ran during 1988-9, and its emphasis was more on the embedding of good practice. With a budget boosted by the input of additional MSC funds, it shared its characteristics with the later Work-Related FE Development Fund. Such projects fell into two broad camps:

(a) Research and development projects, which were administered centrally from the MSC Head Office at Moorfoot. Area officers were not usually involved in these, unless invited out of courtesy to be observers on R&D projects in their Area.

(b) Embedding projects, which were funded regionally and locally overseen. Each year the Development Fund identified certain themes, such as equal opportunities or the embedding of a certain type of practice. Project money was awarded to LEAs either directly or on behalf of their colleges on the basis of bids which they were all invited to submit. The success of a bid would depend in part upon its relevance to the year's priority themes.

The task for the Area Office NAFE HEO, once a project had been agreed and launched, was to ensure the establishment of a steering committee which each project was required to have to oversee its progress and consider its strategic development, and to act as a member. The workload involved for local officers over this varied very much according to the number and scale of projects underway in the Area.

In the previous year one Region cited had been allocated £600,000 for projects; in the current year this had risen to £1.1 million, indicating an increasing importance being attached to project work[a]. At the same time the budget for mainstream NAFE had gone down. The senior NAFE officer interviewed at Moorfoot admitted that there was an attempt to build up the Development Fund, which had been unintentionally at the

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* Here it will be referred to, where all three incarnations are being considered, simply as the 'Development Fund'.

expense of mainstream NAFE funding. The reasons stemmed from a concern that not enough was being done to implement ideas and good practice.

Benefits identified as a consequence of project work included their having acted as a catalyst for senior management, in allowing the awareness of lecturing staff to be pushed upwards in projects which often had a very grass-roots impetus[h]. One officer described the Development Fund as 'the most important tool we have'[h]. The Fund was greatly appreciated by LEA staff, and especially colleges, who very much valued there being a source of money exclusively designated to NAFE. Seeking money through authority committees was an altogether more difficult process, more constricting. The MSC could be more flexible, making money available in the short term if required.

A local officer in southern England indicated that Development Fund projects had been a great success in her region[d]. Her Area Office and the Regional Office had been very concerned to ensure their LEAs received a good portion of the national Development Fund, and their success in achieving this had been very beneficial in terms of boosting local MSC-LEA trust and confidence. The region as a whole had seen a 30 per cent overspend in the previous year, having taken up the slack from other regions which had experienced an underspend.

2. Allocation of Development Fund resources

The preliminary informal interviews and MSC survey work produced evidence of much discontent over the allocation of central project funding, and evidence of great variations in the amount of money being allocated in different Areas. An officer at Moorfoot noted that initially, at the time of cool relations, LEAs would not take the money, but after a while there was something of a rush once authorities realised the advantages[18].

A local officer in a northern county authority indicated that his LEA had been spectacularly successful at getting funding from this and other sources[i]. In the first year of the then Central Reserve Fund it had received £0.5 million out of a total national fund of £5 million, and ran 13 projects. He claimed this was because the LEA had got

its bids in 'while the others were still talking about it'. Other LEAs had complained that this authority had now had more than its fair share of Development Fund money, and should receive less in future. The interviewee did not share this view; his authority had gained its advantage through merit, having 'got its finger out' when others had not. Its staff thought ahead, and its project bids were still received weeks before those of other authorities.

An LEA officer interviewed took a different view, arguing that the most Development Fund money was received by those authorities who were 'fleet of foot' as a consequence of being accustomed to making bids for various forms of outside funding[19]. These were not necessarily the authorities who needed the money most. Many genuinely needy authorities lacked the organisational tradition attuned to making such bids, and had lost out.

The same officer claimed the problem was a serious one as the Fund represented 'a considerable amount'. However, an officer in a north-western metropolitan Area pointed out that Development Fund money varied between LEAs as a proportion of their total NAFE budget[h]. In two of her three authorities it represented around 3 per cent of the total, whereas in another, whose overall budget was much smaller, it made up 10 per cent. The significance to the authority therefore would vary in consequence.

The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed had 'little sympathy' with individual LEAs' complaints that the Fund was not distributed on a *pro rata* basis[20]. He felt these to stem largely from 'backwoods authorities' who were doing little and could be expected to 'moan'; the complaints were not coming from LEAs who had done much to improve. The purpose of the fund was to reward initiative, and to be spent only on certain specific things. He felt that the fact that all NAFE money had been allocated automatically before had probably helped create the problems the NAFE Initiative was seeking to tackle.

The extent of LEA discontent over the Development Fund was explored in the LEA survey. Table 6.8 indicated that the issue of specific funding being allocated for insufficient periods of time scored highly as a problem, being the third highest factor

with a score of 66.9. Uncertainty over criteria for allocation of the (then) CRF scored 62.3 (the sixth highest problem score), whilst 'insufficient integration of CRF projects with the rest of NAFE planning' was a significant but lesser problem, coming thirteenth of all the factors listed with a problem score of 46.3.

The MSC survey also explored MSC officers' perceptions of problems in this area. Four officers of the nine interviewed identified problems. One (in the same Area as the LEA officer cited above) claimed that these had been 'major' and 'frightful'G. The other three indicated minor problems, one noting some contractual problems arising from the difficulty of getting projects completed within the financial year in which funding was made available. Another noted his authority felt it was 'not getting its fair share'.

The third of these officers identified a more significant problemc. He stated that in his area a number of late starts had led to confusion over the allocation of funds, some proposals getting money, others not. He claimed that the process had been too informal - that much had been arranged by telephone, resulting in what some had felt was a less than equable distribution. He suggested that had more of the arrangements in his region been conducted in writing, the whole process might have been fairer.

Other interviewees, in claiming this area had not been a source of significant problems, indicated how potential difficulties had been tackled in their Areas. One officere, who stated that Development Funding was perhaps more of a problem at Regional than local level, stated that local inequities were avoided by the NAFE HEOs from the Area Offices of the Region getting together and having a 'carve-up' beforehand.

Another officer suggested that this caused no problems provided the LEAs believed they had received their fair shareh. In pursuit of this goal she tried to ensure that the three LEAs in her Area received fairly even proportions of the annual budget, in which attempt she claimed to have been quite successful to date.

In one case the local officer interviewed claimed that, far from causing problems,

the matter of allocating project money had been of considerable benefit in her Area[d]. The Area Office had from the outset shown itself anxious for LEAs to get hold of as much money as possible from this source. Having been successful, this had created a lot of goodwill between them, and been important in the early stages of building a proper partnership. LEAs were encouraged to be ambitious in submitting bids, and to have some in reserve at all times in case any additional money should become available.

Two comments offered on early problems in this area were that Head Office initially 'had no idea how much work it was taking on'[b] in delivering the (then) CRF, and that the arrangements for CRF had simply 'not been properly though out'[d].

7.5   Labour market information

A central plank of the *rationale* behind the 1984 NAFE initiative was the perceived need to increase the responsiveness of LEA colleges to the requirements of employers. It was recognised to be a problematic goal, given the lack of good information about what employers really did require. Some pointed to employers' poor record in accurately articulating even their own companies' needs.*

The generation of labour market information or intelligence (LMI) therefore became identified as a crucial area for rapid development, to facilitate both improved responsiveness and greater and better marketing of college course provision. Under the terms of the NAFE Agreement (reported in Chapter 4) the development of LMI was a role assigned to the MSC, which would supply LEAs with accurate and up to date information at the local level. This was not intended to discourage LEAs from producing their own, but did identify it as a clear MSC responsibility.

The Commission had experienced numerous problems in this area, however. Officers in the MSC's LMI Unit at Moorfoot drew attention to the considerable amount

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*   This perception that employers had not been good at articulating their own needs was recorded by a number of interviewees [d,e,f,]; one MSC survey respondent indicated the further difficulty of convincing employers that they could influence course content if they were prepared to detail how[e].

of time and money devoted to the development of a system called the Training Information Framework, which had eventually to be cancelled, significantly delaying progress[21]. This had been substituted by the smaller and more successful CALLMI (Computer-Assisted Local Labour Market Intelligence system) which operated at a more local scale. The supply of LMI for the purposes of NAFE had been a key consideration in the development of the new system.

The MSC survey investigated the experiences of local LMI delivery from the Area Office perspective. Every Area Office supplied each LEA with an annual labour market report, in line with its obligation under the Agreement. The form and distribution of this report varied, but in general it dealt with similar issues of labour market trends and skill shortages identified nationally, regionally and locally from a range of sources. One of the major sources was CALLMI. Being a complex system which was not very 'user-friendly', and because of the requirements of preserving confidentiality, LEAs and colleges were generally not given direct access to this, and information from it was disseminated in report form.

In addition to the annual report, two Area Offices sent out a quarterly supplement [b,d], one of these[d] and one other Area Office[c] sending out monthly reports. Four officers sent out occasional documents, usually topic or sector based, on issues relevant to their locality [c,e,f,g]. Aside from this, it was up to LEAs and colleges to come to the Area Office with requests for additional information, something which occurred to a greater or lesser extent across the sample.

With regard to how the supply of LMI issuing from Area Offices had changed over the years of joint planning, the officers interviewed gave differing answers. In most cases there appeared to be much data about, and generally the overall amount seemed to have risen, although in one case the amount produced by the LEA had apparently fallen due to reduced resources[f].

The comments of two interviewees are of particular interest in considering this issue. The first of these officers claimed that the amount of LMI supplied had increased steadily with the improvement of understanding over what LEAs actually wanted and

could make use of[d]. The other officer stated that in his Area changes had been not so much in the overall amount of material supplied, but in the nature and usefulness of that which was provided[c]. It was now less raw, more sorted into Technical Occupation Categories (TOCs), and represented an attempt to get the right information to the right people, rather than simply producing lots of it. The first of these two officers claimed that her Area Office had never been in the business of 'flooding people with reams of indigestible information' in the first place, and that improved understanding and an increased flow of intelligence went hand in hand.

There appeared to be a widespread acceptance among local MSC officers that the LMI produced in the early days of NAFE planning was not of a high standard, although 2 of the 9 officers interviewed were confident that good LMI had always been available in their Areas [e,h]. In one of these cases this was assisted by a very pro-active LEA and an HEO in post with long experience in the locality. Even in this case the officer concerned suggested LMI had improved over the years of NAFE planning. The other of these two officers had worked for thirteen years in this or related fields in a metropolitan locality which despite containing three LEAs was almost wholly composed of a single Travel To Work Area (TTWA), a neighbouring TTWA overlapping it only marginally. Having over this time developed good links with industry she felt confident to assert of herself and her colleagues that in terms of LMI, 'we know our patch'. In contrast, an officer in London complained that with a TTWA as large as the capital's, producing LMI for a single borough was highly problematic[22].

Several of the officers acknowledged early difficulties in providing LMI. Two of these made this point by emphasising how greatly LMI collection and provision had improved since NAFE planning began, through improved understanding of what LEAs wanted, more systematic methods of gathering information from employers, and an improved ability to analyse the data so gathered [c,d]. Another stated quite baldly that in the early days of NAFE, the 'veracity and quality of LMI was open to question'[b], and tantamount to 'crystal ball gazing'[a]. The point was made, however, that for the situation to improve it had been necessary to gain experience over a period of years before the MSC could confidently claim to offer what it aimed to[b]. This process had been inevitable, but had been gone through, as a result of which the MSC's LMI had

indeed improved and would continue to do so. One of officer emphasised the credibility factor at stake on this issue, and stated her belief that MSC credibility in her Area had been substantially improved over the recent period[a]. Whereas before the Area Office had been guessing at what employers wanted, she now felt it knew what they wanted.

Two other officers, however, offered a much more pessimistic view of MSC LMI provision in their Areas. One stated that it was 'not that good at all', being insufficiently structured or specific[f]. The other was even more critical, stating a strong personal view that in LMI, which she described as an area 'of the most crucial need', the amount provided to LEAs was inadequate, and the skills required to use it were lacking[g]. She felt ill-equipped to interpret and make sense of the data produced, and the LEAs in her area were no more qualified. Yet they were expected to plan their provision on the basis of it. The whole subject was a problem in her Area, a 'hole' in provision, a 'burning need' over which something urgently needed to be done. Overall, she felt the MSC could provide a better service. An LEA officer in the same Area claimed that the value of some of the LMI supplied was 'less than the weight of the paper' upon which it was written, stressing particularly a failure to integrate national and regional with local data[23].

The senior NAFE officer interviewed at MSC Head Office recognised concern in this area, stating that 'we were not as clever as we would like to have been in the early days'[24]. He stated however that 'we always had a gut feeling ... which was better than LEAs' gut feeling', though not necessarily better than colleges'. LEAs' own LMI had been the weakest of all (although some other authority departments were strong in the field) but none had the national dimension that the MSC could offer. However, whilst the MSC had improved, the LEAs had made 'greater strides' on LMI, having started from a poor base.

Respondents to the LEA survey were asked to offer their judgements on the quality of MSC provision, whether 'excellent', 'adequate' or 'inadequate'. Table 7.6 shows the results to the question, which indicate that only one respondent found MSC-provided LMI to be excellent whilst 43.1 per cent saw at as adequate. A majority, 55.4 per cent, saw it as inadequate. When asked to identify reasons for this inadequacy, the

Table 7.6: LEA view of MSC-provided LMI

Quality of LLMI provided by MSC:					

(1) excellent ☐ **1** ☐ 1.5%   (2) adequate ☐ **28** ☐ 43.1%   (3) inadequate ☐ **36** ☐ 55.4%

(sample: 65 LEAs)

	#	%
MSC-provided LLMI is: (a) too detailed	1	2.8
(b) needs to be more summarised	6	16.7
(c) not sufficiently localised	29	80.6
(d) too localised	0	0
(e) other inadequacy	15	41.7
(4) Improving	44	77.2
(5) Not improving	13	22.8

(sample: 57 LEAs)

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

most common complaint was that the LMI provided was 'not sufficiently localised', cited by four-fifths of those who identified an inadequacy. In addition to these data, it is worth noting that a further 20 per cent of respondents, all of whom had ticked the 'adequate' category, nonetheless recorded dissatisfactions under the heading 'other inadequacy', which suggests that a very large majority of LEA respondents were dissatisfied with the MSC's performance in this area. The reasons stated in addition to the insufficiency of local detail seemed hinged largely on a lack of analysis of the data supplied, as typified by the following observation:

> (MSC-provided LMI) is the major source but it is inadequate in so far as it is *information* not *intelligence*; it makes generalisations from specifics; it sometimes is used to support MSC prejudices without evidence. But apart from our own evidence it is all we have got[25] (my italics).

The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed believed the MSC knew what it wanted on LMI, and was 'getting there slowly'. There had been a problem in that at first the LEAs had been asking it the wrong questions, to specify which courses were required which was 'not our job'; because the LEAs were asking for something the MSC could not offer it had been 'on a hiding to nothing'. With the discontent thus aroused he could not claim overall to be yet satisfied with the MSC's LMI provision, but was nonetheless content that the Commission had been delivering a reasonable service; it had 'put a decent act together'[26].

Comfort could be drawn for this view from the indication in Table 7.6 that a clear majority of the LEA respondents, 77.2 per cent, felt MSC-provided LMI to be improving, with only 22.8 per cent feeling otherwise.

The LEA survey also sought to investigate how use of the MSC's LMI data compared with that of other sources. A question posed on the subject offered a series of options whose importance respondents were invited to indicate in terms of the importance with which they figured in the drawing up of NAFE planning priorities. The results are shown in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Use made by LEAs of different LMI sources

(a): Results by category

Respondents indicated the relative importance of the following sources of information on local NAFE requirements in terms of the degree of prominence with which they figured in the drawing up of planning priorities:

	Very important		Fairly important		Not very important		Not used		sample
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
(1) MSC - provided local labour market information	15	22.1	29	42.6	20	29.4	4	5.9	68
(2) LMI produced by authority-sponsored surveys	15	26.8	23	41.1	6	10.7	12	21.4	56
(3) LMI from other sources	9	23.7	15	39.5	4	10.5	10	26.3	38
(4) comments volunteered by employers to colleges	31	47.7	28	43.1	6	9.2	0	0.0	65
(5) information gathered from employers by college staff	36	53.7	27	40.3	3	4.5	1	1.5	67
(6) informal sources, e.g. press reports	7	11.3	34	54.8	18	29.0	3	4.8	62
(7) judgement of college staff	27	41.5	33	50.8	3	4.6	2	3.1	65
(8) others	6	60.0	2	20.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	10

(b): Rank by weighted scores

	%
information gathered from employers by college staff	82.1
comments volunteered by employers to colleges	79.5
judgement of college staff	76.9
MSC - provided local labour market information	60.3
LMI produced by authority-sponsored surveys	57.7
informal sources, e.g. press reports	57.5
LMI from other sources	53.5

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

Part (b) of the Table shows the categories ranked by weighted scores. It is apparent from these figures that colleges and college staff were the most significant players in this area, the three categories standing out most prominently being 'information gathered by employers from college staff', 'comments volunteered by employers to colleges'*, and the 'judgement of college staff' (scoring 82.1, 79.5 and 76.9 per cent respectively). It would seem fair to suggest that these bases for planning, especially the latter, represented the traditional approach used by LEAs/colleges, prior to the demands for more formally-organised planning systems. If this is accepted, the evidence here would indicate that the new structures created by the NAFE Agreement had not advanced to the point of replacing the main pre-existing arrangements.

It is significant that the source of information given most attention in the discussions leading to the NAFE Agreement, the local LMI provided by the MSC, should be only the fourth most prominent, coming well behind the leading three sources at 60.3 per cent. Four respondents even stated that MSC-provided LMI was not used, and only 22.1 per cent considered it very important. It did, however, figure slightly more prominently than that produced by authority-sponsored surveys (57.7 per cent), with informal sources close behind (57.5 per cent). Respondents did not indicate much use of sources other than those listed in the question. The low response suggests other forms of LMI were not of great significance in drawing up NAFE planning priorities.

On the basis of evidence from the MSC survey, there appeared to be some considerable variation in the degree to which LEAs and colleges requested information from then MSC. The nature of the LEA/college, whether inclined to be very proactive in this field or otherwise, would have been of considerable importance, as would the extent of the resources available to it. There were authorities which differed in these regards within the sample of interviews.

For example, one interviewee in the north-east stressed that his very go-ahead county LEA had been forced to be very proactive in identifying and meeting needs ever since

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* The distinction between these two categories being based on the origin of the initiative for the link

the recession in manufacturing (the foundation of the local economy) had begun to hit in the late 1970s, and that its gathering and analysis of LMI was consequently very advanced. In fact, the interviewee suggested it was it was ahead of the MSC in many respects, for example in providing a better 'brokerage' service for pooled labour market data than the CALLMI facility.

Two other interviewees identified LEAs within their Areas that were very 'go-ahead' on the LMI front and had carried the pursuit of such intelligence to an advanced stage. In one northern metropolitan Area it was clear that both LEAs would much rather have been left to develop this side of the work themselves, and felt quite self-sufficient as it was[b]. The second of these two officers noted that two of her three LEAs lagged behind the other, and had both had marketing audits carried out which had showed up deficiencies in their use of LMI in marketing college courses[h]. Both authorities were now beginning to put right these deficiencies.

One officer described how her LEA was engaged in LMI collection of its own, having a highly developed system of NAFE subject panels to inform its planning process[a]. But in this and one other case[d] the interviewees criticised their authorities' use of the data made available to them, feeling that much more could have been made of it given the will. For example it was suggested that one way in which they could improve on this was to test the detail of LMI findings against their own assumptions relating to provision, rather than simply treating their collection and identification as an end in itself[d]. There was criticism from several officers of some LEAs' tendency to regurgitate whole extracts from MSC reports in their own Development Plans.

Two further Area officers indicated that colleges in their LEAs were beginning to set up LMI units, procedures and databases of their own, but in both cases would continue to rely on MSC support for some time yet [c,f]. In one case, however, in a large metropolitan area with multiple small LEAs, the officer interviewed claimed that the authorities' staff had very little idea about LMI at all, and seemed to be struggling badly in this area[g]. A lack of expertise connected with a lack of resources appeared to be significant.

To examine the LMI LEAs generated themselves, a question was posed on the subject in the LEA survey. This asked respondents to identify any involvement in a list of areas in both the 1984-5 and 1988-9 planning rounds. The results are shown in Table 7.8. The Table defines five areas of activity, one having four subsections detailing information types. Some of the categories overlap: there is no water-tight separation, for example, between a 'systematic consultative process with employers', 'discussions with employers about future training needs', and the 'assembly or employment of details of anticipated future employer needs'. The categories were intended merely to explore different aspects of related themes to achieve a full picture. Comparison of results between them is less about trying to discover one area of activity's domination over another, more about teasing out priorities within linked areas.

Most striking in the light of the above point is therefore the dramatic rise evident across the board, all categories showing a rise of over 25 per cent between the two years, half of them showing rises of over 50 per cent. Whilst in 1984-5 no category showed more than 50 per cent of LEAs engaged in its activity, by 1988-9 only two showed under 50 per cent.

Such changes led to a position where in five out of the eight categories listed, more than 70 per cent of LEAs are shown to have engaged in such activity. The data indicate that the collection of LMI had become an area of considerably greater activity for LEAs. In the light of the increased emphasis which had been placed on responsiveness and marketing in the period, and the cuts in LEA and college resources which necessitated moves in that direction, such increase in activity was not surprising. It is noteworthy nonetheless that in the NAFE-related activity for which the MSC undertook most responsibility it was LEAs which took much of the initiative.

To consider the individual areas listed, that to which LEAs were clearly devoting the most attention to in both 1984-5 and 1988-9 was the recording/employment of information on expected changes in local population and student numbers. The figure can be seen to have risen from 44.8 per cent in 1984-5 to as high as 95.5 per cent of authorities by 1988-9. That demography should have been a key issue at a time when

Table 7.8: LEA collection of LMI in 1984-5 and 1988-9

Respondents indicated whether the education department did, in 1984-5 or in 1988-9:	1984-5		1988-9	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**
(1) Engage in a systematic consultative process with employers	12	17.9	37	55.2
(2) Record the number of consultations between college/LEA staff and employers	4	6.0	21	31.3
(3) Record the nature of consultations between college/LEA staff and employers................	5	7.5	24	35.8
(4) Assemble/employ: (i) written description of local labour market	17	25.4	57	85.1
... (ii) records of labour market data sources	10	14.9	47	70.1
(iii) info. on expected changes in local population and student nos ...	30	44.8	64	95.5
(iv) details of anticipated future employer needs	13	19.4	50	74.6
(5) Hold discussions with employers about future training needs	22	32.8	51	76.1

(sample: 67 LEAs)

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

an imminent decline in the number of 16-19 year-olds had received a lot of attention is not surprising. What is more interesting is that in 1984-5, before the greater public attention to this area, it was the same area which received most LEA attention. This says much about LEAs' planning and awareness prior to the 1984 White Paper and its implicit criticisms.

The production of a written description of the local labour market was the second most common activity, being conducted by 85.1 per cent of LEAs in 1988-9. A higher figure might have been expected as such a description was an integral part of the NAFE Development Plan in its typical form. That this was the area to have shown the most change since 1984-5 (59.7 per cent) appears to be a clear product of that fact.

The attention being paid to employers' future needs was clearly up over the period, high figures being recorded in 1988-9 for both the assembly/employment of details on employers' anticipated future needs (up 55.2 to 74.6 per cent) and for the holding of discussions with employers about future training needs (up 43.3 to 76.1 per cent). These seemed more significant areas than the systematic consultation of employers*: the data show that a lower number of LEAs (55.2 per cent) were pursuing this activity in 1988-9. This category also showed the third lowest percentage increase, 37.3 per cent.

The assembly and use of records of labour market sources was an area showing a high proportion of LEAs engaged in this pursuit in 1988-9, 70.1 per cent, in a category which had shown considerable increase (55.2 per cent) since 1984-5. The keeping of such records would in itself indicate that this was a matter now treated with much greater significance by LEAs. However, the areas in which least activity and least change overall was indicated were the recording of the number and the nature of consultations between college/LEA staff and employers. The lower figures in these

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*   There is a potential problem of semantics here, in that the intended rather subtle differences in meaning between 'systematic consultations' and the holding of 'discussions about future training needs' may not have been picked up by respondents answering a long questionnaire. The intended distinction was between the gathering of information from employers relating to decisions on future planning, and the involvement of employers in a dialogue about provision current at the time of the consultation.

categories evident in both years seems to suggest that the development of LMI itself and the general approach to its collection were more important to LEAs than keeping a detailed track of how the information was being assembled piece by piece.

7.6   Liaison with other groups

The discussion aroused by *Training for Jobs* accused NAFE, as an aspect of its supposedly insufficient responsiveness, of being out of touch with other interested parties, notably its employer clients. The two surveys sought evidence on the level and nature of LEAs' contact with other bodies after several years of joint planning.

Table 7.1 indicated which groups were most commonly represented on LEAs' NAFE boards or committees, finding that representatives of individual employers and trade unions were included in only a minority (both 43.6 per cent) of cases, whilst Chambers of Commerce (30.8 per cent) and 'other' groups (17.9 per cent) were even less commonly present. Given that such committees exited in only just over half of the LEAs surveyed, these figures do not suggest extensive liaison in this area.

Another question in the LEA survey asked if respondents' authorities had 'frequent discussions' with each of the five bodies listed in Table 7.9. This shows that, apart from the MSC (which might have been expected to be involved in frequent discussions in more than 67.1 per cent of cases), only Industrial Training Boards were involved with a significant number of LEAs (35.7 per cent), the other groups shown all falling below 16 per cent.

To consider how this issue was being pursued from the MSC side, respondents to the MSC survey were asked to state whether they had a policy of forging links themselves with other bodies over NAFE. Those who responded divided evenly as to whether they felt such a task to be their responsibility or one for the LEAs. Four indicated that they did pursue this objective: one was 'a firm believer in networking'[a], another that forging such links was 'very much a policy' with him[e], another indicating that she took 'a proactive approach'[h]. One of the four, whilst seeing this as his role,

Table 7.9: LEA discussions with other bodies over NAFE

Respondents indicated whether the authority/its colleges held frequent discussions with any of the following bodies:

		#	%
(1)	Industrial Training Boards	25	35.7
(2)	Non-Statutory Training Organisations	11	15.7
(3)	MSC	47	67.1
(4)	private-sector training bodies	7	10.0
(5)	European Social Fund	8	11.4

sample: 70 LEAs

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

claimed it to be more so on the LMI side than in NAFE[f]. Four officers considered this an LEA job [b,c,d,g]. One stated that his role in this was to oversee the LEAs' efforts and ensure that they were forging such links[c]. Another, whilst believing this to be an LEA task did note that her position was a little different because of her personal history of involvement in the area; she knew people in most of these bodies for a variety of reasons, and so happened already to have a well-established local network.

Another stressed that it was an LEA responsibility as it was 'their Plan'[d]. She stated that it was 'not our job to organise these things', for one thing because the Area Office did not have the resources which would be necessary. However, she did indicate that the Area Office had sometimes taken the initiative in order to get things done. This officer did note that, along with the LEAs, the Area Office had tried 'hard and long' to get consultative arrangements (an aim clearly stated in the national guidance) for NAFE involving a range of client and other organisations off the ground, without success. There had been a poor response to such overtures (little interest being expressed, for example, by the Local Employer Network which had been repeatedly approached) and the officer appeared very cynical about employer commitment to such arrangements.

7.7   Curriculum change

The criticisms levelled at NAFE in *Training for Jobs* suggesting that college courses were not relevant to the requirements of employers and that LEA provision ought to be more responsive and flexible implied a need for curriculum change. An ACC officer interviewed claimed that there had been 'little change in the basic shape of FE', some provision being the same as it had been twenty years before[27]. It was therefore important, in assessing the impacts of the NAFE initiative, to investigate the extent to which the curriculum had been altered as a consequence of the newly instituted joint planning arrangements.

The analysis of curriculum change was identified by an FEU officer interviewed as a notoriously difficult area, that any claims made could be substantiated only over a lengthy period[28]. The evidence presented here should be viewed with this consideration

very much in mind.

To serve this purpose, LEA survey asked a question aimed to examine respondents' perceptions of trends in the NAFE curriculum. Under a series of categories they were invited to indicate the changes experienced in their authority between 1984-5 and 1988-9. They were asked to do this by ticking boxes labelled 'increase/large increase', 'decrease/large decrease', or 'no change'*. It is important to stress that the question investigated respondents' perceptions only, and should not be taken as an objective measure of change. Nonetheless, the perceptions of those intimately involved in the planning of NAFE courses are of considerable value in seeking to evaluate the impacts of the Agreement upon curriculum change.

To further the pursuit of such evaluation, an attempt was made in this case also to investigate the issue of causality, by explicitly asking respondents to estimate the impact of the NAFE Agreement, offering them a choice between 'major', 'minor', and 'no impact'.

Before examining the results it is useful to consider each course type specified. The first category, new courses, was very significant to the NAFE Initiative. If it were to have had a substantial impact upon the delivery of NAFE in the sense of increasing responsiveness, it might be expected that there would be evidence of substantial growth in the provision of new courses. The same would be true for the redesigning of existing courses, in addition to which would be an anticipated rise in the number of courses being discontinued.

Full-cost courses were becoming important prior to the 1984 White Paper, and are an example of the kind of course the MSC were exhorting LEAs to promote as an aspect of improved marketing in NAFE. In many cases the terms 'short' and 'full-cost courses' described the same entity. Again these were becoming common prior to the

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*   Important to note is that the data generated here are impressionistic, and that respondents
     perceptions of the trends should not be taken necessarily as an accurate picture. Nonetheless,
     given the respondents' expertise and their proximity to these changes, they do provide us with a
     version of events sufficiently reliable from which to draw conclusions about apparent patterns,
     and the impact of the NAFE initiative upon these.

1984 NAFE initiative, and might be expected to show a similar pattern.

Certified modular courses represented component parts of overall qualifications which could be aggregated over a period of time suited to students/employers needs. It was an aspect of the flexibility much vaunted by the MSC and those who perceived the need for greater diversity in the nature of college courses offered.

Traditional apprenticeship courses were listed as a contrary example to the other types of course shown, being one which had seen considerable decline since the 1970s, the focus of much negative attention from both the MSC and the government, who viewed it as an anachronistic impediment to their current goals. Along with the promotion of short and full-cost courses, distance/open learning was the type of change towards greater responsiveness and flexibility which was being advocated in MSC and other circles during the 1980s. A large increase would be expected.

The results to the question are shown in Table 7.10. More revealing than the raw results shown in part(a) of the Table is the ranking of the categories by weighted scores shown in parts (b) and (c). Part (b) shows the categories in rank order by their weighted degree of change, and indicates as expected that distance/open learning, short courses and full-cost courses were the areas of greatest perceived change. New courses and redesigned courses also show weighted percentages of above 40 per cent, indicating significant changes the curriculum. Interestingly, however, there was considerably less evidence of discontinued courses, a category which scores only 19.4. Unsurprisingly, traditional apprenticeships showed a very marked decline, scoring - 47.6. It is evident that the perceived increases occurred most visibly in areas which had been the focus of much attention in the 1980s, the type of provision which the government and MSC had been seeking to promote through such initiatives as the 1984 White Paper and subsequent joint NAFE planning.

It is important to note that none of the categories showed a truly dramatic increase, the highest score being only 51.6 out of a possible 100. The message appears to be that such change as occurred, though in some cases significant, was relatively modest overall.

Table 7.10: Curriculum change in NAFE

(a) Trends by category

Trends, between 1984-5 and 1988-9, and the degree to which respondents felt the NAFE Agreement had been a significant factor in any change, shown by percentage of authorities in each category:

	large increase	increase	no change	decrease	large decrease	Sample	major impact	minor impact	no impact	Sample
							Impact of NAFE Agreement			
(1) new courses	10.6	68.2	18.2	3.0	0.0	66	6.5	62.9	30.6	62
(2) redesigned courses	9.0	67.2	22.4	1.5	0.0	67	6.3	47.6	46.0	63
(3) discontinued courses	1.6	40.3	53.2	4.8	0.0	62	3.4	44.8	51.7	58
(4) full-cost courses	15.9	65.1	14.3	4.8	0.0	63	7.9	38.1	54.0	63
(5) short courses	12.3	72.3	13.8	1.5	0.0	65	3.3	43.3	53.3	60
(6) certified modular courses	0.0	60.3	39.7	0.0	0.0	58	12.5	37.0	59.3	16
(7) traditional apprenticeship courses	0.0	3.2	14.5	66.1	16.1	62	1.8	19.3	78.9	57
(8) amount of distance/open learning	15.6	71.9	12.5	0.0	0.0	64	20.0	43.3	36.7	60

(b) Rank order of categories by % change (weighted score)

	% Score	Rank by impact
(8) amount of distance/open learning	51.6	1
(5) short courses	47.7	7
(4) full-cost courses	46.0	5
(1) new courses	43.2	2
(2) redesigned courses	41.8	4
(6) certified modular courses	30.2	3
(3) discontinued courses	19.4	6
(7) traditional apprenticeship courses	- 47.6	8

(c) Rank order of categories by impact (weighted score)

	% Score	Rank by % change
(8) amount of distance/open learning	43.3	1
(1) new courses	37.9	4
(6) certified modular courses	31.0	6
(2) redesigned courses	30.2	5
(4) full-cost courses	27.0	3
(3) discontinued courses	25.9	7
(5) short courses	25.0	2
(7) traditional apprenticeship courses	11.4	8

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data

The figures shown in part (c) of the Table reveal perceptions of the NAFE Agreement's effects upon the changes identified in part (b). The first thing to note is that in no category was the Agreement seen as being a decisive causal factor, the highest weighted score being only 43.3. The second is that the rank order for impacts is markedly different than for the degree of change in each category. Whilst the Agreement was seen to have had most impact on the area of greatest change - distance/open learning - it was seen to have had less impact other areas. That the Agreement should be perceived to have had little effect upon the demise of traditional apprenticeships is unsurprising. More striking is its perceived lack of influence over the growth in short and full-cost courses, both in the top three growth categories over the period, and discontinued courses. More significant was its perceived impacts upon new courses and certified modular courses (only considered the sixth most important of these categories of change). It is highly significant to this consideration that in 5 of the 8 categories put to respondents here a majority of them believed the NAFE Agreement to have had no impact at all upon the changes which they indicated to have taken place.

The implications for assessing the impacts of the NAFE Agreement and its associated initiatives are not fully clear. Firstly it must be remembered that the above are perceptions, and therefore open to the distortions of ignorance, misjudgment and prejudice. Secondly it cannot be assumed that because the respondents do not generally perceive a great impact in these areas that the same can be expected to apply in others. Nonetheless, it remains significant that in one of the few cases where respondents were asked explicitly to make their views clear on the subject of the Agreement's causal impact, the result has been, on the best interpretation, a lukewarm suggestion of limited effects; at worst, a dismissal of the new structures being seen as an effective force for change.

7.8   Evaluation

The purpose of this section is to collate and present the perceptions of various interviewees and survey responses on the broad changes which had taken place as a consequence of the NAFE initiative. It then explores their views on the significance of

the MSC as one amongst a number of possible causal factors, on the commitment of LEAs to the joint planning process, and on alternatives for the future direction of NAFE. The information presented is intended to act as a basis for evaluation of the overall impacts of the NAFE initiative upon the practice of NAFE planning.

7.8 (i) Changes associated with the NAFE initiative

An ACC officer interviewed addressed the question of the impacts of national policy initiatives, as typified by *Training for Jobs* and the subsequent NAFE Agreement[29]. Observing that 'these things change the shape of the paperwork', he questioned whether they had much effect beyond this upon actual provision, over and above what would have happened anyway. Many different views were expressed in answer to this question in the course of the empirical investigation, a number of which are considered here.

The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed at Moorfoot believed the NAFE initiative had brought genuine benefits, most notably in establishing amongst LEA planners an acceptance of the need for constructing an overview of provision in order to plan effectively[30]. He accepted the need for further improvements, stating that there were still 'too many wheels not attached to the wagon' of good practice, but that progress was being made. In addition to this, a range of other beneficial developments were cited. The ACC officer stressed the galvanising effect of the initiative in creating an impetus for change, pushing LEA FE sections into action by giving the system a 'shake-up'; it prevented NAFE from getting submerged in shorter-term issues by creating a 'longer-term crisis' which had to be addressed. This had in some cases instigated activity, in others accelerated existing practice. Three LEA officers interviewed also identified this factor as significant[31]. The ACC officer also claimed the NAFE Agreement to have been 'infinitely better than the alternative', i.e. the original *Training for Jobs* proposals. It had 'shifted the emphasis of planning from control to something a bit more forward-looking', improving the quality of judgements being made in NAFE.

An LEA officer, asked to assess the benefits of the joint planning exercise said the answer depended 'on who is asking the question'[32]. If it were the MSC, the answer would be that the NAFE initiative had had its intended effect, that LEAs would 'never have got their act together had the MSC not wielded its stick' to bring about change. This was because the MSC 'have institutional masters to please', for whom they had to produce results. In reality, joint NAFE planning was 'a paper exercise' - a 'game' designed 'to get the money back from the MSC'.

The above officer nonetheless listed a number of real benefits he perceived to have accrued from the Agreement. Advantages he and other LEA officers identified included the raising of NAFE as a priority within their education departments, and notably improvements in the collection and presentation of information on NAFE courses, which had improved LEA understanding of what happened in colleges, helped identify any bad provision and assisted LEAs in responding to the Joint Efficiency Study[*,33]. One officer noted that whilst her authority's NAFE priorities had not significantly changed as a consequence of joint planning, they were now much better articulated, being based on a sharp *rationale* rather than 'lecturer's whim'[34].

The NAFE initiative had also created a new awareness for LEAs, providing them with 'new terms of reference' and new ideas on how to approach planning. One officer cited as an example the introduction to NAFE of the 'self-evident virtue of the MSC's message of resource management'. The creation of a clear-cut planning cycle was an advance, and had established better co-ordination and structures for improved responsiveness. Part of the advantage of greater coordination lay in the fact that colleges had 'learnt from each other'[35]. A respondent to the LEA survey identified a positive development in that 'the involvement of the MSC has been useful in ensuring the performance of an explicit legal duty'.

Disbenefits identified primarily stressed the administrative burden created by joint planning, a problem identified as highly significant in Chapter 6. One LEA officer complained that it had cost 'a lot of time and money' and was a very bureaucratic

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* (see next section)

exercise, another that the heavy requirement for detail was an unnecessary cost[36]. The former suggested that the Agreement had had much effect upon the management and administration of NAFE, little on actual provision, echoing the view expressed earlier.

The ACC officer interviewed picked up on the idea of the MSC's need to satisfy its political masters as a weakness of the planning exercise, a weakness which meant the whole process had become 'perverted in operation' - a foreseeable consequence. Another agency fulfilling the same task as the MSC 'would have moved more slowly, but might have had more universal genuine success'. The pursuit of change had been hasty and 'based on a false analysis of the problem' (that NAFE courses were overpriced and uncompetitive); in consequence it was 'likely to be an arid exercise'. The Agreement was principally flawed because its efforts were concentrated towards improving results rather than processes. In consequence it had not escaped the old problem of planning reactively, failing to emphasise the need to get the process of NAFE delivery right before being able to sensibly judge results in terms of individual courses. The problem had been that processes were 'sadly, not measurable in MSC terms'. Instead of actually improving such areas as consultation with employers, LEAs' efforts were being concentrated but on 'satisfying the MSC officers that these things (were) being done'.

One of the main positive outcomes of the NAFE initiative this officer identified were that the 'creative tensions' set up between MSC and LEA officers had been fruitful and constructive, their 'love-hate relationship' being better than a consensus arrangement because more stimulating to both parties.

7.8 (ii) MSC impacts upon NAFE

It is clear that a series of changes affecting the planning, administration and delivery of NAFE occurred during the period 1984-9. Some of these, such as the writing of a NAFE Development Plan and monitoring an Annual Programme are directly attributable to the influence of the MSC, but other more general changes, in areas such efficiency, cost-effectiveness, the flexibility, responsiveness and relevance of provision, the

introduction of new types of courses and the decline of old forms, have no clear causal links. This section considers the views of interviewees and survey respondents on the significance of the MSC as one amongst a number of possible factors responsible for such changes.

The senior NAFE officer interviewed at MSC Head Office acknowledged an interest in claiming credit for positive changes, but stated his belief that 'we have moved things along'[37]. The Commission's main impact had been to instigate change along a common front, suggesting that 'some (LEAs) would have done all this of their own volition and done it very well, whilst others would have done nothing'. It would be 'oversimplified' to suggest that all LEAs were moving in the right direction anyway, and the MSC had played an important role in 'speeding up the back markers'.

Of the LEA officers interviewed, one stated that the MSC had 'had an effect, but then so have lots of other things'[38]. She believed its intervention to have been an agent of change, but not a directive one, a view shared by another officer who saw its contribution to have been indirect: its involvement in NAFE had caused change to occur, but those changes were determined by others[39]. This idea was summarised by an academic commentator thus:

> Changes in the last ten years have generally been a case of colleges responding on their own
> initiative to changed circumstances. But the MSC has been involved in changing those
> circumstances.[40]

Other LEA officers claimed the MSC to have been a factor, but only a contributory one amongst others, against whose influence the Commission's was hard to weigh[41]. One officer stated it had been 'part of a larger process, but the biggest factor in that process'[42].

The MSC survey explored its interviewees' opinions on the role of the Commission in effecting change in NAFE, and found that their views did not widely diverge. There was a widespread belief that similar changes would have taken place anyway, but not necessarily in the same form and almost certainly not at the same pace

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(a,b,e,f). One officer was very circumspect in making this judgement, stating that such change would have happened anyway only 'possibly', and then very much more slowly[a]. Her LEA, she claimed, had previously been 'content to let colleges get on with it'. This meant that there would have been inter-LEA variation in developments had the MSC not been involved, some colleges being more 'go-ahead' than others over marketing and other matters. Without the NAFE Agreement, this officer claimed, some colleges in her Area would still have been doing the same thing as in 1984.

An officer in a northern metropolitan Area suggested that without the involvement of the MSC the developments in NAFE would have happened anyway, 'or they (the colleges) would have gone out of business'[b]. However, the MSC had stepped up the pace of change by delivering a 'shock to the system'.

Another officer who indicated that change would have occurred regardless of MSC involvement stated that LEAs 'were working on it, but were not focused'[f], another that they 'were moving that way, but fragmentally'[e]. NAFE had 'pulled the thing together' for them, and concentrated their efforts towards this end. The process of development had been speeded up by the NAFE Agreement, which had allowed the release of more resources through a raising of the priority given to FE within LEAs. Another officer noted that prior to the Agreement authorities had few resources to devote to FE planning, and that the MSC had forced an increase in the allocation of these resources through its demands[d].

None of the officers suggested that the MSC had been the principal reason for change, although one did claim it had been 'a substantial factor'[g]. One officer stressed that the MSC's influence had only been one of a series of factors, that it was not possible to claim any changes to have occurred *as a result of* its influence alone[d]. Some changes were clearly directly consequent upon MSC initiatives, but these had only been possible because the other factors were already present.

Of the other factors nominated by the 9 interviewees, demographic change was the most commonly cited, by 5 officers (a,b,d,g,h). One indicated that falling rolls would have had a big impact - given the decline in the number of 16 year olds, and with it the

number of students on YTS placements, colleges would have had to either shed staff or look for new markets[a]. Another officer noted that this factor hit first at college level, whose staff had a greater awareness of its importance as it fundamentally affected their 'bread and butter'[d]. This had greatly boosted college activities in marketing and follow-up, which had rapidly accelerated the pace of change.

Various other factors influencing changes in NAFE were mentioned. General ones included increased competition between colleges (linked to demographic decline)[b], greater links between LEAs/colleges and employers[g], pressures brought about through changes associated with YTS on those courses where it had been involved[g], and the important directive role of senior college management[g]. One interviewee spoke of there having been 'economic, social and political' factors at work[h]. The effect of the Joint Efficiency Study (JES) which recommended improvements in colleges was seen by this officer as a pressure, but one whose strength was questionable; it was not a major motivation for LEAs, she claimed, they were 'very grudging' about its proposals. One other officer cited the JES as a contributory factor in his LEA, along with financial pressure caused by restraints on local government spending[j].

Local factors were cited in a number of cases. One officer mentioned the issue of providing for ethnic minorities as an impetus for change in the largest city in her LEA[a]. Two others mentioned the influx of money through Urban Development Corporations and the European Social Fund in Areas which had seen much industrial decline [e,h], and 'horrific unemployment'[h]. One of these had noted that his authority had been particularly adept at attracting money from such sources, its proactive stance clearly being an important factor contributing to change[e].

One officer claimed that the alliance of the two institutions, LEAs and the MSC, had been a force which had instigated 'tremendous change'[d]. Another officer, in commenting on the significance of the MSC's role in altering NAFE, indicated that the question of whether it had become involved or not was perhaps a redundant one, because 'if it hadn't been us it would have been the DTI'[f].

The LEA survey sought to produce some more extensive data on perceptions in

this area. It asked two questions on the subject. The first specifically asked respondents about the impact of the MSC, whether the evident changes in NAFE could be attributed to its activities, and if so whether its influence had been to initiate new developments, or merely to accelerate change which would have occurred anyway. The results are shown in Table 7.11.

The results show that a clear majority of respondents believed that the MSC had played an influential role in altering the administration and delivery of NAFE since 1984. A small group only (17.4 per cent) felt such changes would not have occurred without the intervention of the MSC, but 71.0 per cent believed that whilst such changes would have occurred anyway, they would have taken longer. Only 11.6 per cent felt that the changes would have taken place had the MSC been involved or not. The results indicate that respondents generally supported the view which saw the MSC as having had a galvanising effect upon the NAFE field; few felt its impact had made decisive changes which were not already in train, but even fewer felt it had not been influential.

The second question analysing this subject aimed to set respondents' views about the impact of the MSC upon NAFE in the context of other causal influences. It approached this by asking them to rank a series of given factors in descending order of impact. These categories are indicated in Figure 7.7.

The category 'overall changes in economic, industrial and employment conditions in the 1980s' emerged as the most significant factor in altering the delivery of NAFE since 1984, with a percentage point score of 23.0. The second highest score was for 'other national influences' at 20.9 per cent, with MSC involvement close behind on 20.3 per cent. Direct budgetary constraint through RSG scored 18.7 per cent, whilst the remaining categories were further behind: 'changes within the authority' on 12.3 per cent, and 'others' on 4.8 per cent.

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from these data is that no one factor or group of factors stood out above any other in terms of their perceived impact. The top four categories fell within 4.3 percentage points of one another, and all the

Table 7.11: LEA perceptions of MSC influence in NAFE

Please indicate which of the following statements you would most agree with. (sample: 69 LEAs)	#	%
Changes which have occurred in NAFE since 1984 would :		
(1) not have occurred without MSC involvement	12	17.4
(2) have occurred without MSC involvement but would have taken longer	49	71.0
(3) have occurred regardless of MSC involvement	8	11.6

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

Figure 7.7: MSC influence in NAFE compared against other factors

Respondents ranked the following factors in terms of their overall significance in altering the delivery of NAFE provision since 1984. (The results have been weighted and averaged, the figures indicated in the graph below representing the percentage each factor scored.)

(1) MSC involvement
(2) other national influences, e.g. Audit Commission,
   Joint Efficiency Study etc.
(3) direct budgetary constraint through Rate Support Grant
(4) changes within the authority, e.g. in its political
   complexion, in its officer personnel etc.
(5) overall changes in economic, industrial and
   employment conditions in the 1980s
(6) others

(sample: 69 LEAs)

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

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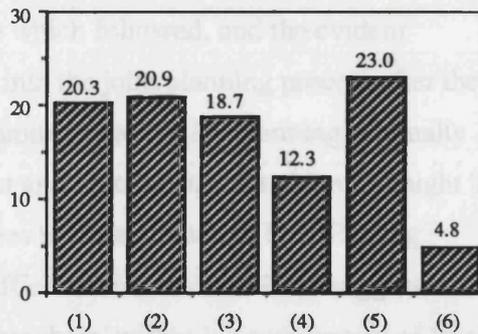
influences contained within these can consequently be deduced to have had a very significant impact.

Although MSC involvement did not score highest, to be so prominently cited alongside the other, grouped factors makes it stand out as having been a crucial determinant of change. Likewise, budgetary constraint was perceived as a strongly influential single factor. The role of other national influences cannot be deduced on an · individual basis, but collectively it is clear that these too   were very important.

However, the strongest influences were nonetheless attributed by these responses to changes in the overall structures within which NAFE operated. The extent to which these in turn were affected by NAFE and the MSC is difficult to estimate, but clearly a very wide field of contributory causes must be considered when seeking to establish reasons for change in NAFE.

7.8 (iii) LEAs' commitment to planning

It was reported in Chapter 4 that when *Training for Jobs* was first introduced, the reaction of LEAs was generally very negative. The initial adverse response of LEAs to the White Paper, the extended period of dispute which followed, and the evident reluctance with which many authorities entered into the joint planning process after the NAFE Agreement all suggested that LEAs' commitment to NAFE planning originally was not high. The subsequent NAFE Agreement and practice of joint planning might be expected to have seen a warming in LEA attitudes to the approach to NAFE being advocated by the MSC, though an MSC local officer interviewed in 1988 suggested that there was 'no enthusiasm for the process anywhere' within his community of five LEAs[43]. The accuracy of this view across the country had not been established, however, and it was consequently important to examine the extent of LEAs' commitment to the NAFE planning process.

This was approached in both the LEA and MSC surveys. A question in the former focussed on strategic objectives identified in government and MSC documents and

Table 7.12: LEA support for stated MSC objectives in NAFE

Respondents indicated the level of support they considered the authority to lend to each of the following objectives in NAFE:

	strongly supports #	strongly supports %	supports #	supports %	no view #	no view %	opposes #	opposes %	strongly opposes #	strongly opposes %	sample
(1) Improving further colleges' responsiveness to employers' needs	39	55.7	31	44.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	70
(2) Raising the profile of NAFE planning amongst LEA priorities	21	31.3	37	55.2	8	11.9	1	1.5	0	0.0	67
(3) LEAs to develop a clearly defined set of NAFE objectives	30	43.5	32	46.4	7	10.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	69
(4) Emphasis on manpower planning above other NAFE objectives ...	1	1.5	13	19.4	35	52.2	18	26.9	0	0.0	67
(5) Tailoring shape and content of courses to employers'/other clients' specific requirements	14	20.3	51	73.9	3	4.3	1	1.4	0	0.0	69
(6) Emphasis amongst client needs upon those of employers	5	8.3	32	53.3	16	26.7	6	10.0	1	1.7	60
(7) Development of an LEA marketing strategy for NAFE	20	29.4	44	64.7	2	2.9	2	2.9	0	0.0	68
(8) Heavy authority involvement in the collection of labour market information	12	17.9	26	38.8	17	25.4	12	17.9	0	0.0	67
(9) Improving college cost-effectiveness	27	39.1	41	59.4	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	69
(10) Increasing student-staff ratios	12	17.9	41	61.2	14	20.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	67
(11) Increasing the scope and volume of curriculum and student data collected by LEAs	11	16.2	47	69.1	9	13.2	1	1.5	0	0.0	68
(12) Greater monitoring and evaluation of NAFE by LEAs	15	22.1	49	72.1	4	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	68
(13) Development of new learning strategies e.g. open learning, short courses..	32	46.4	34	49.3	3	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	69
(14) Greater course flexibility e.g. in lengths, starting dates, hours per week etc.	29	42.0	33	47.8	7	10.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	69

statements, and investigated the extent to which LEAs were in agreement with these positions. This can be taken as one measure of the commitment of the authorities to the premises upon which joint MSC-LEA NAFE planning was based, and an indication of which aspects received LEAs' most enthusiastic support.

Respondents were asked to indicate, for a series of objectives, the strength of their authority's support on a range from 'strongly supports' to 'strongly opposes'. The results are shown in Table 7.12. To increase their value the raw data were weighted to produce an overall score for the aggregated level of support/opposition in each case*. The results are shown in Table 7.13 below:

Table 7.13: LEA support for listed NAFE objectives (weighted figures)

(1) Improving further colleges' responsiveness to employers' needs 77.9

(13) Development of new learning strategies, e.g. open learning, short courses.. 71.0

(9) Improving college cost-effectiveness 68.8

(3) LEAs to develop a clearly defined set of NAFE objectives 66.7

(14) Greater course flexibility, e.g.in lengths, start dates, hours/week etc. 65.9

(7) Development of an LEA marketing strategy for NAFE 60.3

(2) Raising the profile of NAFE planning amongst LEA priorities 58.2

(12) Greater monitoring and evaluation of NAFE by LEAs 58.1

(5) Tailoring shape and content of courses to clients specific requirements 56.5

(11) Increasing scope/volume of curriculum & student data collected by LEA 50.0

(10) Increasing student-staff ratios 48.5

(8) Heavy authority involvement in the collection of LMI 28.4

(6) Emphasis amongst client needs of those of employers 28.3

(4) Emphasis on manpower planning above other NAFE objectives .... -2.2

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* The categories were multiplied by weightings thus: strongly supports=2, supports=1, no view=0, opposes=-1, strongly opposes=-2. They were then calculated as a percentage of the maximum possible score (i.e.had all responded 'strongly supports'). Thus a 100% score would reflect the fullest support, -100% the fullest opposition.

The most striking general point to emerge from these data is that the level of support for the objectives was generally high, with only one category attracting a negative score and ten out of fourteen receiving levels of support of 50 per cent or over. The general finding is therefore that there was a high level of commitment on the part of LEAs to the basic objectives upon which the NAFE initiative was founded.

To consider the individual objectives, the most popular was 'improving further colleges' responsiveness to employers' needs', which attracted a score of 77.9 per cent. The approval of responsiveness is unsurprising, but significant is the implicit acceptance that there was room for improvement, given the objections raised against the assertions of *Training for Jobs* on this subject noted in Chapter 4. The same observation would apply to the strong support for improving college cost-effectiveness (68.8 per cent) and course flexibility (65.9 per cent score).

The high score for the development of new learning strategies (71.0 per cent) reflects the developments noted in section 7.7, and strong support for the idea of the NAFE Development Plan is evident in the score for 'LEAs to develop a clearly defined set of NAFE objectives' (66.7 per cent).

Several of the listed objectives fall in the range of around 48-60 per cent, which indicate significant but not overwhelming levels of support for marketing in NAFE, according NAFE a higher priority within LEAs, increased LEA monitoring and evaluation, tailoring courses to specific client demands, LEA collection of curriculum and student data and increasing student staff ratios.

Of the less popular objectives, the most outstanding here was 'emphasis on manpower planning above other NAFE objectives', which attracted more opposition than support. This finding indicates to have been widespread the view picked up in informal interviews. LEAs did not in general support the MSC-backed view that the primary purpose of NAFE was to supply skilled labour to industry, the consideration of individuals and more specifically educational issues being secondary considerations. That it was these latter aspects of NAFE provision that prompted this opposition is underlined by the finding that the category 'emphasis amongst client needs of those of

employers' received a score of only 28.3 per cent. The third category to fall well below most others was 'heavy authority involvement in the collection of LMI', at 28.4 per cent. The finding suggests this to have been an area for which LEAs felt they should not carry a heavy responsibility.

In order to further explore the issue of LEA commitment to joint NAFE planning, the MSC survey asked its respondents to assess the commitment of LEAs to the process, focussing in particular upon the extent to which they genuinely supported the new procedures or alternatively perceived them more as a means of securing income.` They were also asked, five years on from the White Paper, to indicated how the situation had changed since joint planning began.

One officer noted that in the early days there had been little or no enthusiasm for NAFE from either of her LEAs, each of whom had sent in initial Development Plans of eight and four double-spaced pages respectively, and made 'the usual political objections'[d]. One of these, a single college LEA, had remained unenthusiastic throughout, its Development Plan still being written by a college head of department. The other, however, had become very committed 'once over the initial hump', a process aided by the retirement of some key personalities. The authority in question had, she claimed, taken the whole process on board and made it work for itself. The quality of its Development Plan had risen dramatically over the planning rounds, and it now had its colleges writing their own Plans in the same style. Whilst the authority going for what *it* wanted had meant the Plan did not conform to the MSC standard requirement, as a demonstration of the LEA's enthusiasm to make planning work it was a welcome development. The LEA now regarded the joint structures with the MSC as an integral part of its planning process, rather than an additional part.

Several officers indicated that their LEAs were very enthusiastic in their commitment to planning. One of these noted that this would not have been the case a few years previously, that her LEA had 'come round' over time[a]. This was because it had taken a certain amount of time for its staff to be able to see the results of NAFE planning and the benefits therein.

An officer in a northern metropolitan Area indicated a commitment to make the NAFE process work had arisen in her LEAs out of a sense of 'who are they coming in telling us what to do ?', prompting them to see that things were done *they* wanted them to be[b]. Also, there was a desire 'not to appear as duffers'; the LEAs wanted to be 'on top of the game'.

Another officer noted a similar pattern of development, both his LEAs being now enthusiastic about NAFE when at first they had been resistant[c]. Initially they had regarded the production of the Development Plan and Annual Programme as 'a burden' and 'a chore', but now had a much greater sense of 'ownership' and involvement. One authority had shown enthusiasm for monitoring from a very early stage, the other had taken longer. The LEAs had been 'brought screaming from what they wanted to do to what they had to do'. It was the case that then especially, in the light of the imminent ERA legislation, the LEAs had come to realise the importance of monitoring and planning. However, the MSC was 'unlikely to get any official thanks' from them for this - the LEAs' executive NAFE officers were more appreciative of the benefits than were their political masters.

Two further officers claimed their LEAs to be very enthusiastic about the joint planning process. One claimed both his LEAs to be very committed to NAFE planning, and that both would follow the MSC's 'flavours of the month' even if they were not keen on them[f]. At the outset one of these had been 'very amenable' to the process, whilst the other had taken 'a little persuasion at the political level' before it became enthusiastic. The interviewee stated that reasons for this could be attributed to the former having been a centralist authority already given to the issuing of directives to its colleges, whereas the other had previously taken 'a fairly laid-back approach'.

The other of these two officers noted that for his 'very committed' authority, which had previously identified that the divisions of its colleges' work into designated areas of expertise were beginning to slip, the NAFE Agreement had come along at the right time to tackle this[e]. It had allowed the LEA to re-impose its control over college activity, the MSC providing a useful 'whipping boy' on whom to deflect the blame. For this authority cooperation in NAFE planning was definitely not simply a matter of

seeking the MSC's money. Other interviewees echoed some of these points: one noted that in her Area the MSC was similarly used by one authority to shoulder the blame for LEA intervention unpopular with colleges[d]; another that one of her LEAs had reorganised its colleges concurrently with NAFE planning, moving to a tertiary system and enabling it to break down college-based resistance to change and centralise to the LEA some power in FE[b]. This had involved some 'blood-letting', but had sped up the potential for change.

Another officer stated that in her Area enthusiasm for NAFE planning varied between its five authorities[g]. On the whole she felt they would 'vote it a good thing', and that they were 'very prepared' to see it as useful. It had made the LEAs think much more about long term planning, and had 'prepared them for the rigours of ERA'.

One officer claimed that her metropolitan LEAs were not enthusiastic about the joint NAFE process, but that they had nonetheless come round to seeing the need for it[h]. They were using it for themselves, the activity having moved on from being a matter of MSC insistence. The process was being used as a tool in overall local planning, and local politicians were taking more interest in NAFE as an influence on the local economy.

Three officers did note continuing minor difficulties in this area, however. One, whose LEAs he described as enthusiastic planners, claimed there was still some lingering resistance to the process, and that the authorities would still go through 'tricks' to get their money[c]. He did note, though, that learning these tricks had in itself been worthwhile in causing the LEAs to learn the value of monitoring, providing them with an opportunity to see this which might otherwise not have been forthcoming. Another officer stated that her two authorities, despite having taken planning on board, were still very reluctant to put timescales to their objectives and set target dates for their intended achievements[b]. In this sense they had 'not got it yet'.

The third of these officers indicated his LEA to be 'not particularly enthusiastic', and that it carried out NAFE planning purely for financial reasons. Because of this Area Office staff had to 'jump through hoops' to make progress with the LEA, which

frequently was not carried on from one year to the nexti.

Interviewees were asked to conjecture as to whether their LEAs would be likely to continue the planning processes currently established under joint arrangements in the event of a termination of MSC involvement. Most drew attention to the important fact that ERA would oblige LEAs to plan in any case, but a hypothetical view disregarding this influence was nonetheless sought.

Four officers offered a response to this question. One indicated that her authority would continue NAFE planning under such circumstances, that it could perceive benefits beyond the incentive of MSC money, that planning and marketing got results[a]. Another stated that 'if we pulled out tomorrow, they'd still do it', because by now they were doing it for themselves and their own purposes[b].

On the other hand, one officer felt that in one of her three LEAs, if the financial relationship with the MSC was taken away, the planning arrangements 'would probably drop away'[h]. Against this, another officer claimed that even if the money relationship was removed, market factors would provide the impetus and necessity for the present procedures to continue, regardless of what an LEA might prefer. The senior NAFE officer interviewed at MSC Head Office believed two factors would keep NAFE planning going: upwards pressure from colleges, and the fact that LEA officers had now come to see the value of the process, unlike before.

Interviewees were also asked to indicate how much their LEAs had needed to change in order to meet the requirements of the NAFE Agreement, and to indicate the extent to which the MSC had introduced change or alternatively had been 'pushing at an open door'. Only half of the interviewees responded to the first part of this enquiry. One of those who did indicated that her LEAs had experienced 'much movement' since joint planning began[d]; another that both his LEAs had needed to change, each previously having had only one full-time officer for NAFE[f]; another that her LEAs 'weren't doing much', and had to move a long way[h]. One officer stated that the LEAs in her Area had had 'a long way to come, and still have a long way to go'[b]. The problems hindering change centred on particular individuals. Institutions had changed,

but she believed some people still needed to significantly change their attitudes. Whereas she believed more typical for administrators at the top and bottom of organisations to be best informed about what was going on, she identified a situation in NAFE where it was the middle managers who were the most aware. These were the LEA executive and Area Office staff, who were more up to date with the requirements of NAFE than were councillors or college staff.

Another officer commenting on personality issues claimed that in her Area it was senior college staff who were out of touch with current needs, lecturing staff being much more in tune with these[h]. Therefore, the latter were able to impress a change in needs (towards, for example, flexible delivery systems aimed at adult returners) upon senior management by means of Development Fund projects, which had acted as catalysts for change in what was described by the officer in question as the 'bidet effect', i.e. a bottom-up impetus at work.

7.8 (iv) Future options

The involvement of the MSC in NAFE was clearly unpopular in the aftermath of *Training for Jobs*, and whilst considerable evidence has been presented here to suggest that MSC-LEA relationships had improved dramatically since that time, it remained uncertain whether, given the choice, LEAs would opt to retain the participation of the Commission in their delivery of NAFE, i.e. whether they would prefer to continue or to terminate joint planning and the financial relationship. The answer to this question is perhaps the ultimate test of the quality of MSC-LEA relations. The discussion below investigates this issue, as well as attitudes regarding alternative forms of NAFE administration.

The senior MSC NAFE officer interviewed believed that, given the choice, some (but not all) LEAs would retain the involvement of the MSC, recognising the value of its role[44]. Whilst accepting the possibility that 'we're kidding ourselves', he considered this unlikely.

Respondents to the MSC survey were also asked to consider this question. One officer in a northern metropolitan Area was quite certain that her LEAs would not opt for continued involvement[b]. As far as the LEAs were concerned the relationship existed purely out of financial necessity, and 'they would lose no sleep if we pulled out'. Although this view was pragmatic and not a grudging one towards the Area Office, it held true throughout both authorities. An officer from one of her authorities confirmed this, stating that 'LEAs could manage perfectly well without (the MSC)'[45]. The MSC officer claimed it was unlikely that any of her colleagues up and down the country would say otherwise[b].

However, most of the other officers in this sample did say otherwise. One in a midlands county authority indicated that her LEA was keen for involvement to continue[a], and another in the south of England that both her LEAs had stated that they wanted the MSC to stay involved[d].

One officer in particular was very adamant that his authority desired continued partnership[e]. The MSC locally was seen very much as 'a force for the good', and both the LEA and its colleges wanted to see that continuing. In fact, he claimed they wanted to see the MSC more involved, certainly in working towards the ERA requirements. The early resistance the Area Office had experienced had been no more than 'skin deep', and in talking about the potential futures of NAFE under TECs to the LEA staff, with whom he had a very familiar relationship, he had found that they were very reluctant to have any connection severed. Furthermore, he claimed some colleges were keen to have MSC officers based within their institution, as an influence on and consultant to the lecturing staff at the lower levels. Nonetheless, the officer in question did stress that this attitude was characteristic of his authority, which had a particularly successful network of cooperative partnerships formed over a number of years, and that the situation he described there should not be seen as typical. Certainly, he knew his experience to differ from that of his colleagues in other Areas within the same MSC Region.

Other officers were not quite so certain about the position of their authorities on this question. One in a multi-authority metropolitan Area claimed it was 'difficult to

say's. She believed that on the whole they found the link beneficial, in particular through the spin-offs from the involvement of the RFEA, whose professional expertise and regional perspective was of great value to the LEAs, providing something they would otherwise not have had available to them.

Another officer who did not state clearly whether her three LEAs would be either for or against continued involvement also pointed out the considerable advantages to the LEAsʰ. She believed the relationship had been mutually profitable, and that the LEAs' staff appreciated having somebody else in the field at the grass roots level with whom to work. The DES could offer only HMI, whose role was different and less flexible. She felt they very much appreciated the money received through the Development Fund, which provided them with resources which might otherwise not have been forthcoming: if they had to seek such funding through their council's committees, all sorts of other pressures and priorities might have intervened. Furthermore, the MSC could make money available quickly, and on a short term basis if necessary; it was more flexible in this regard. The project work was very popular, particularly amongst colleges, who greatly prized there being a source of funding devoted entirely to NAFE. She claimed they would prefer to see the MSC continuing in its present role out of a sense of 'better the devil you know'.

One officer claimed for his Area that without the financial relationship the LEAs 'wouldn't want to keep involved much' and that there would be 'much less contact' with the Area Officeᶠ. Nonetheless, he believed they would still want to receive LMI from the MSC. Another officer indicated that his LEA would welcome continued MSC involvement in some areas only of its NAFE provision, whilst resisting it in othersʲ.

A Regional officer interviewed claimed that within his Region two, possibly three LEAs 'would like to see the back of us'ᵃ. The other six LEAs did, he claimed, see the link as a partnership and would want to continue it. However, future collaboration depended heavily on the present staff being kept involved - in NAFE, personal relationships were very important.

The officer who indicated most decisively that her LEAs would not wish MSC

involvement to continue nonetheless expressed the personal opinion that such a continuation was important and should be maintained[b]. It needed to be kept going in order to best serve the needs of the client, who wanted a clear idea of what was available and what could be done. The MSC could help make NAFE more flexible and attractive to this group.

The LEA officer interviewed from the same Area, who indicated that his LEA would not keep the MSC involved, stated a belief that the initiative would have been much better had it involved the DES instead of the MSC. The DES had a better understanding of NAFE, its officers 'spoke the same language'[46] Another LEA officer disagreed on this, claiming the Department 'would not have had nearly the same impact', in terms either of speed or extent[47]. The ACC officer interviewed felt the alternative of a different body reporting to the DES might have been a better option, because it would have been biased towards provision; the MSC's concerns were more strongly rooted in responses to unemployment and labour market needs[48]. He suggested that NAFE would profit more from a tiered system of administration, with responsibilities shared between the college, LEA and national levels, providing an ability to negotiate with NAFE clients at every level.

Picking up on the idea of an alternative body to oversee NAFE, a respondent to the LEA survey stated the following view:

> Ultimately, the only long-term rationale for MSC involvement would be as a national body criticising variations in LEA responsiveness, volume of provision and efficiency. Leaving aside accountability for such in the future (LEA or college governing body ?) this is a role the MSC have been totally unwilling to play, and, it could be argued, one that HMI Inspectorate should have performed anyway.

To explore the views of LEAs on this subject across England and Wales, the LEA survey asked its respondents to indicate whether they felt the future needs of NAFE would best be met with or without MSC involvement. Three options were given:

Table 7.16: LEA preference about the future of the MSC in NAFE

Notwithstanding the provisions of the current Education Reform Bill, respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt the needs of post-16 non-advanced provision would best be met:

	#	%
(1) with continued MSC involvement in its presen.t form	13	19.7
(2) with continued MSC involvement in a modified form	29	43.9
(3) without continued MSC involvement	24	36.4
- if so, they preferred to see NAFE planning be:		
(a) left to individual LEAs	19	79.2
(b) overseen by an alternative national body	5	20.8

(sample: 66 LEAs)

Source: Compiled by the author from LEA survey data.

continuation of the present arrangements; continued involvement on the part of the MSC but in a modified form; and the termination of MSC involvement. Those who indicated the latter were invited to indicate whether they would prefer to see the MSC replaced by an alternative national body, or have NAFE left entirely to LEAs*. The results are shown in Table 7.14.

None of the three main options attracted a majority of respondents, although a clear majority were in favour of continued MSC involvement in some form: the first two categories showed an aggregate total of 63.6 per cent. Of these, however, very much the larger group were in favour in a modification of the present arrangements (43.9 per cent), with only 19.7 per cent of respondents preferring to see a maintenance of the *status quo* .

A significant minority of respondents (36.4 per cent) were keen to see MSC involvement terminated. Of these, a fifth expressed a preference that NAFE be overseen by an alternative national body, whilst four-fifths preferred to see NAFE left to individual LEAs. Only three respondents specified alternative national bodies they would wish to see involved**.

> One respondent commented:

> 'Without continued MSC involvement' would have been the answer had not (ERA) made a nonsense of LEAs duties to plan post-16 sensibly.

The principal finding from these LEA survey data is therefore that respondents were generally in favour of the retention of MSC involvement in some form or another - a far cry from their common position of refusal even to communicate with Area Offices when *Training for Jobs* was first announced.

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*   Recognised once again here was the imminent passing of the Education Reform Act (ERA); respondents were asked to give a view which ignored the latter's impacts.

** These were: 'single national body involved in <u>all</u> education and training so long as LEA remains local agent'; 'DES/HMI'; 'LEAs responsible for post-16 NAFE within their area, but coordinating, consulting, discussing on a regional basis, such as through the WJEC throughout Wales'.

Notes to Chapter Seven:

1. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

2. Interview with LEA officer, 23.3.88.

3. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

4. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

5. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

6. Interview with LEA officer, 6.5.88.

7. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

12. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

15. Interview with MSC NAFE finance officer at Moorfoot, 29.3.88.

16. Interview with LEA officer, 9.2.88.

17. Interview with MSC Development Fund officer at Moorfoot, 29.3.88.

18. *Ibid,*

19. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

20. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

21. Interview with MSC LMI Unit officers, 17.2.87.

22. Interview with local MSC HEO NAFE, 5.5.88.

23. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

24. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

25. Respondent to the LEA survey.

26. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

27. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

28. Interview with FEU officer, 20.5.88.

29. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

30. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

31. Interviews with LEA officers, 2.3.88, 16.3.88, 6.5.88.

32. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

33. Interviews with LEA officers, 16.3.88, 6.5.88.

34. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

35. Interviews with LEA officers, 2.3.88, 16.3.88, 23.3.88, 6.5.88.

36. Interview with LEA officers, 16.3.88, 6.5.88.

37. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

38. Interview with LEA officer, 6.5.88.

39. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

40. Interview with Leonard Cantor, Loughborough University, 8.1.88.

41. Interview with LEA officer, 23.3.88.

42. Interview with LEA officer, 2.3.88.

43. Interview with local MSC NAFE HEO, 5.5.88.

44. Interview with senior MSC NAFE administrator at head office, 27.4.89.

45. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

46. Interview with LEA officer, 16.3.88.

47. Interview with LEA officer, 23.3.88.

48. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions.

8.1   Introduction

This thesis has taken the development and implementation of a single policy move, the 1984 White Paper, as an illustrative example of how the policy process encompassing the delivery of national policy through local government agents can operate in a specific instance. In doing so it has considered aspects of the nature of policy networks, the characteristics of public bureaucracies and interactions between central and local government. It has analysed how these can be understood by conceiving the policy-formulation, decision-making and implementation process to be a continuum in which actors at all levels contribute to policy outcomes. It has then taken as an example of this process the experience of *Training for Jobs*, analysing its conception, introduction, revision and implementation through the theoretical concepts outlined, and empirically examining its effects upon the NAFE bureaucracy and the practice of NAFE planning.

The contribution of the research is thus threefold. At the most focussed level, it has added a considerable weight of knowledge about the workings of the NAFE bureaucracy and the administrative practices through which NAFE is delivered. At a wider level it has illuminated key aspects of the education and training policy process in England and Wales, indicating pointers to the likely impacts of different strategies introduced within its sphere. Above this, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution by providing support for the notion of the policy-making continuum.

To synthesise the foregoing work, the overall conclusions derived from the historical, theoretical and empirical analysis of the thesis are discussed in this chapter. It considers a number of areas: the first is an overview of the inception, announcement and revision of the government's 1984 NAFE strategy as expressed in *Training for Jobs*. The next section, 8.3, goes on to consider the restructuring of the NAFE bureaucracy, drawing on the empirical findings of Chapter 6, whilst section 8.4 examines impacts of the White Paper upon the practice of NAFE planning. The thesis' conclusions on the overall impacts of the NAFE Initiative are discussed in section 8.5, which is followed by a consideration of some of the theoretical implications of the findings, referring back to points raised in Chapter 3. The final section addresses directions for further research suggested by the thesis' discussions.

8.2   The reshaping of the 1984 NAFE strategy

The White Paper *Training for Jobs* made public a government strategy for NAFE which came unexpectedly and demonstrated a radical shift in the way policy-making in this area was to be made. The meaning of the White Paper has been explored in the thesis by recourse to three themes: the underlying forces which created the circumstances conducive to such a strategy; the particular motivations which drove the central government's actions in 1984; and the specific outcomes it sought to achieve as a consequence of the new legislation.

The underlying forces have been identified as:

- long-standing tensions within the state bureaucracy caused by an historical division of responsibilities for VET between the education policy community on one hand and the employment/training policy network on the other;

- economic decline and the return of mass unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, in the late 1970s and early 1980s;

- a centralising tendency within the public sector from the mid-1970s onwards which saw amongst other things the reassertion of central government authority over local councils, and attempts to centrally direct education more forcefully than had been the case throughout much of the post-war period;

- the emergence of a vocationalist philosophy in further education, emphasising the supply of skilled labour to industry above an earlier emphasis on personal development;

- the rise of a new, dynamic and flexible agency (the MSC) in the employment/training policy network which by 1984 had already begun to challenge education sector bodies for the unclaimed policy territory on their mutual frontier.

Government thinking at this time is argued to have been shaped by a number of ideological, political and policy objectives which influenced its choice of strategy. The ideological considerations may be identified as:

(a) a desire to see public sector VET provision with a market-oriented, employer-led bias which would serve industry as a more responsive mechanism for skilling the labour force;

(b) a predisposition against local government, and a desire to reduce its political power over policy. This it held to a considerable extent in NAFE, *de facto* if not *de jure*, as a consequence of such factors as budgetary discretion, local possession of expertise, and the size and complexity of NAFE as an administrative activity.

Other motives were the political importance of tackling the youth unemployment problem exacerbated by demographic trends in the late 1970s/early 1980s, and a genuine belief that public sector FE colleges were not fulfilling their proper function as adequately as they might.

The government strategy developed to meet these objectives represented an attempt to shift the balance in the policy-making continuum firmly towards the centre*, whilst at the same time devolving power to local, private hands, an aspect of its stated intention of 'rolling back the state'. *Training for Jobs* is seen primarily as an attempt to increase central influence over NAFE provision by restructuring the administrative bureaucracy through means other than direct statutory intervention. Eschewing heavyweight legislation that would alter LEAs' responsibilities or change their direct relationship with central government, it was a policy based entirely upon financial manipulation and the juggling of public resources. It announced quite simply that the budget of the MSC allocated for the purchase of college-based training was to be raised in such a way that it would become responsible for about a quarter of all provision in the area. The block grant to LEAs would be cut by the same amount. In one sweeping change the

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* see Figure 3.5.

government had reoriented the policy landscape, by simply recalculating the levels of responsibility for NAFE held by bodies already engaged in its provision.

Central to the initiative was a key strategic calculation. This involved setting an amount of resources which, in being transferred from one body to the other, would be sufficient to produce the desired shift in the balance of power, without being so great as to inspire a political controversy serious enough to jeopardise the success of the policy. Crucial was the lever afforded the MSC through the provision in the White Paper which gave it the option to spend its NAFE money outside LEA colleges should they not satisfy its demands.

This thesis demonstrates that in the event the strategy was largely unsuccessful. Local education authorities refused to cooperate, and the MSC was eventually forced to compromise after a long period of dispute and negotiation. The primary reasons for this development are here argued to be:

- a miscalculation on the part of government of the amount of resources it would need to remove from local authority budgets to compel their cooperation;

- the non-executant nature of the MSC - its lack of organisational resources to deliver its own programmes, and its consequent reliance on purchasing power as a means of achieving its objectives. These could only be effective if an alternative supplier was available: in a sector as complex, costly and voluminous as NAFE, this option was unrealistic;

- the solidity with which LEAs resisted the *Training for Jobs* policy over a sustained period;

- the transfer of the MSC chair to a new incumbent less staunch in his support of the government line.

Thus the scale of NAFE and the weight of opposition foiled the strategic aim. As a consequence, the MSC lost its financial lever over NAFE through an agreement to

adopt a shareholder's role in the whole of provision rather than that of a selective purchaser of individual parts. Furthermore, the care with which it had had to woo LEAs to accept even this role created a delicacy in the relationship which made the exercise of the powers it did gain in NAFE a high risk option. The government intention that local authority control over NAFE would be substantially depleted was not realised.

The policy innovation was not a total failure, however, in terms of its objectives. It encouraged LEAs for the first time to think strategically about NAFE - traditionally a 'Cinderella' area. Also, it thrust 16-19 and adult provision forward as a major area for further future reforms. It had real if limited success in establishing an MSC role on the supply side of NAFE where previously it had none. There was a consequent rise in the influence over NAFE of central politicians and of an agency with an employer-oriented, market-based bias. In the light of this the negotiation of the NAFE Agreement in preference to the White Paper must by seen as a policy *modification*, rather than a defeat. The disappointing aspect of this for government strategists was that the Commission was able to gain influence only as a lesser partner in the process of NAFE administration, rather than as a key and direct determinant of specific NAFE outputs in terms of courses provided. This remained a matter for LEA discretion.

8.3   The restructured NAFE policy network

Chapter 6 outlined the nature of internal and external linkages which the MSC and LEAs developed in response to the NAFE initiative. As well as the new posts and structures which became established, the chapter explored the nature of relationships between the various actors involved, their quality, and the problems which emerged as influences upon them. This analysis allows the construction of a revised portrait of the policy network** within which NAFE came to operate. This new network, a development of the frameworks outlined in Chapter 3 for both NAFE and employment

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** The term 'network' is used in preference to 'community', in recognition of the broader and less integrated framework of linkages within which NAFE came to operate as a consequence of the NAFE Initiative.

and training, is portrayed in Figure 8.1*. The complexity of the diagram illustrates the extensive web of inter-linkages within which NAFE came to operate after 1985, and embraces all the components included in the earlier Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

The case for including all the participants in each of the formerly discrete policy networks is based on their undoubted significance to the development of NAFE policy after 1984. Whilst there were no direct NAFE links between, say, the CBI and LEAs, the significance of its influence over MSC policy positions is a crucial influence in the field, alongside numerous others.

Despite the considerable extent of the overall policy network, it must be recognised that the bulk of regular interaction over NAFE between the leading participants took place within a much more localised network of linkages. These are illustrated in Figure 8.2, which focuses on the links between the MSC and LEAs outlined in the various sections of Chapter 6. Figure 8.2 serves as a short-hand summary of the overall system of MSC-LEA relationships which have been identified.

The principal link was that between the MSC Area Office NAFE HEO and the LEA equivalent in its NAFE executive section. It was between officers at this level that most day-to-day joint planning activity was conducted. The latter were also likely to involve the Area Manager, the official NAFE partner to the LEA and signatory to the local Contract. Links which were active only occasionally, such as those between MSC Head Office and individual LEAs, have not been marked on the figure, although it should be noted that certain contacts of this kind did occur in addition to the main ones shown.

Contact between MSC Area Offices and individual colleges varied considerably across the country, some LEAs encouraging this, others being indifferent or in some cases firmly opposing such contact. It has thus been portrayed in Figure 8.2 with a

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* The figure shows financial and 'other' linkages, the latter being connections involving such activities as administration, line management, negotiation or the exchange of expertise. The distinction between the two broad divisions shown is most apparent in the case of MSC-college links, where the MSC's client relationship with individual institutions must not be confused with administrative or monitoring links in NAFE, the circumstances of which vary from one LEA to another, in some cases being quite contentious.

Figure 8.1: The NAFE policy network in 1989
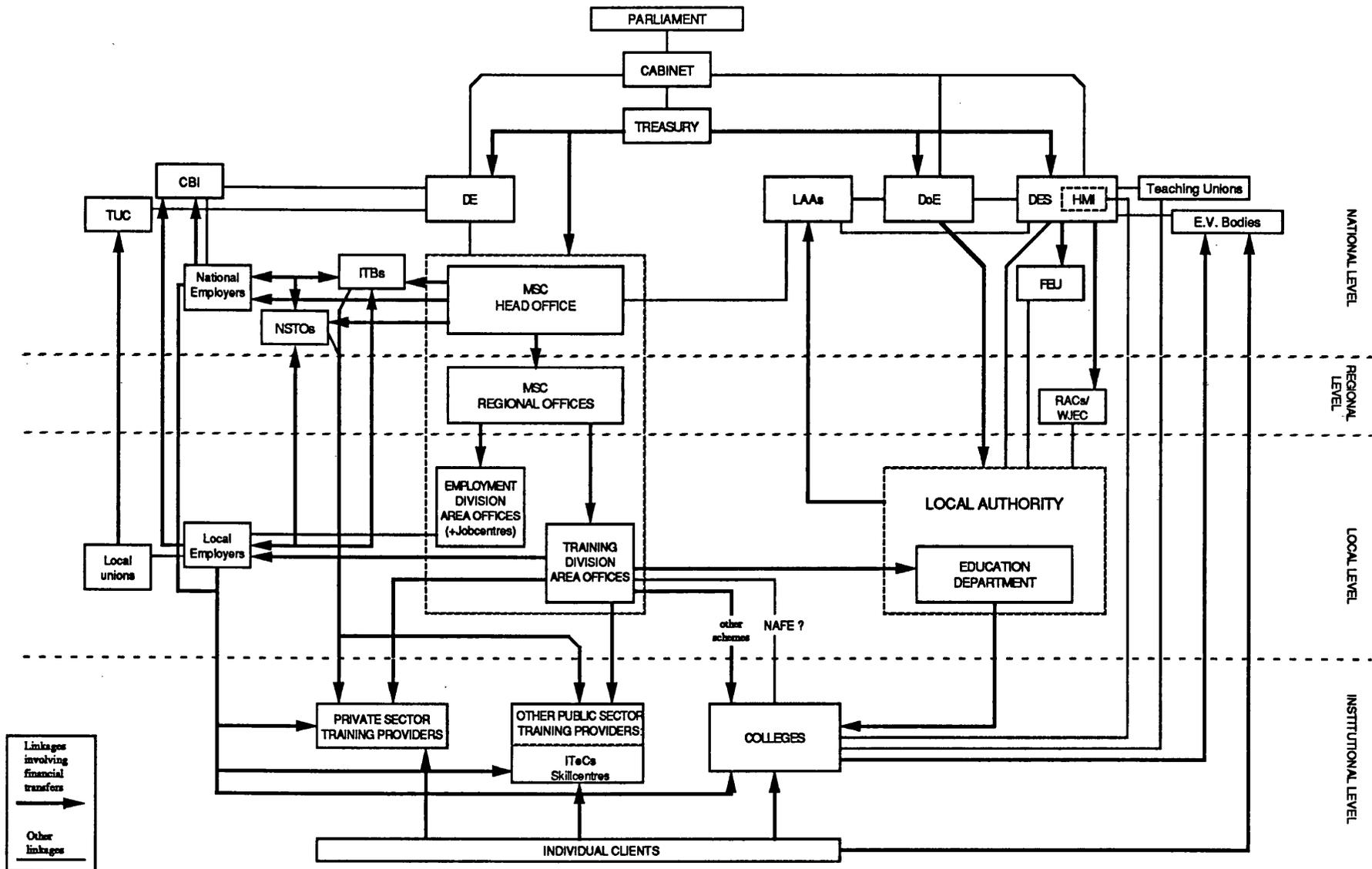
Source: Compiled by the author.

Figure 8.2: NAFE linkages between the MSC and LEAs
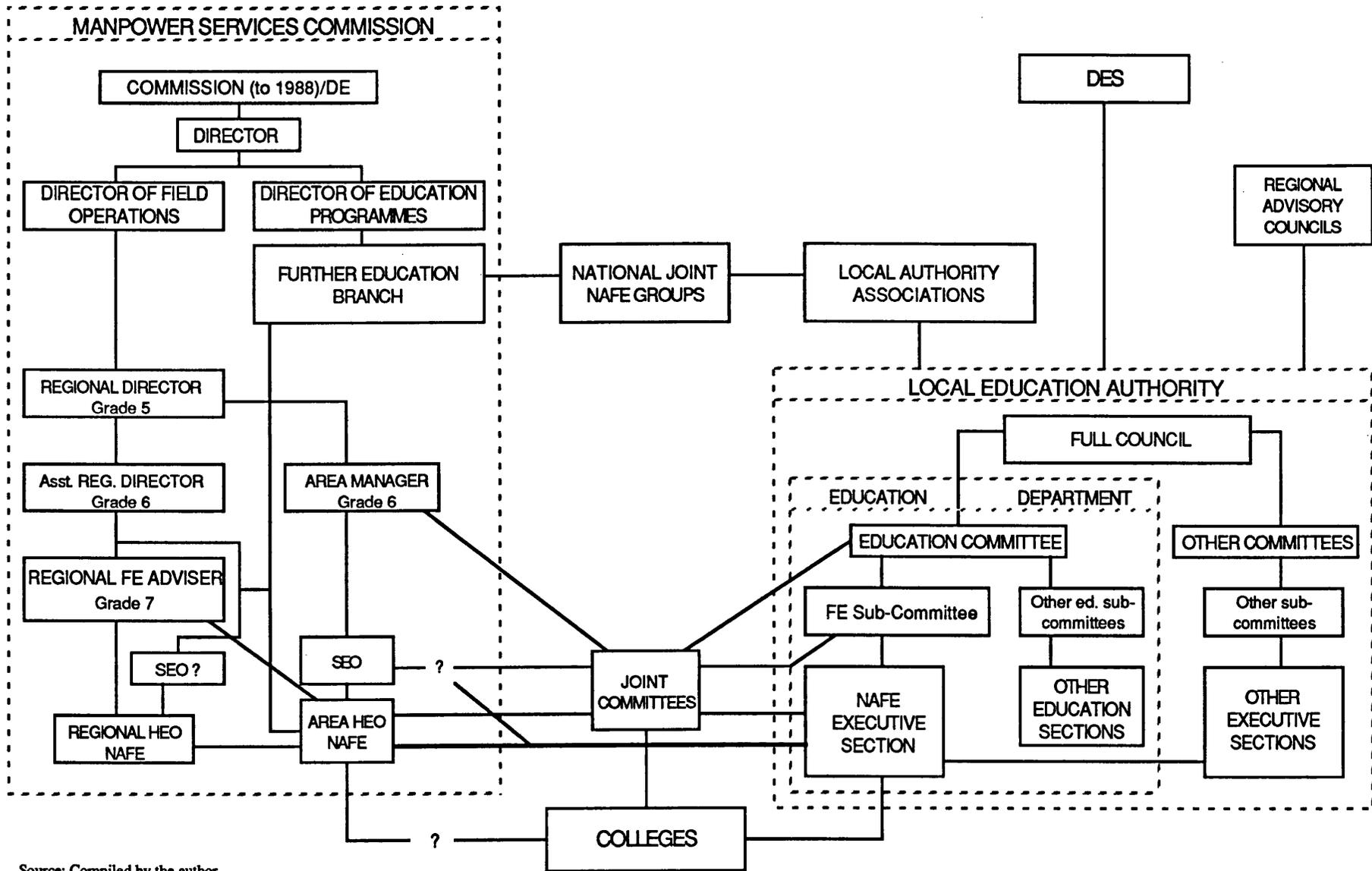
Source: Compiled by the author.

question mark over the possibility of these links occurring.

The joint MSC-LEA local NAFE committees shown in the figure varied from one locality to another, and were likely to involve differing combinations of LEA, college, MSC and other participants, as outlined in Chapter 7. The involvement of Area Office SEOs in local joint committees is indicated to be uncertain, the nominal role of these officers having been found seldom to lead to much active participation in NAFE planning. The box indicating 'national joint NAFE groups' refers to the NAFE Evaluation and Implementation Groups established as fora for liaison at the national level between the MSC and the local authority associations with whom the NAFE Agreement was forged. These fell with the Commission in the restructuring of 1988; after this date the MSC Director reported directly to the Secretary of State for Employment.

Interaction over NAFE within the commission followed the shape of its line management structure. This meant that there was very limited contact between one Area Office and another, or even between Regional Offices. Neither would Area Offices be in contact with the NAFE unit at the Moorfoot Head Office unless in exceptional circumstances. There was also very little contact between MSC NAFE operations and other programmes such as YTS and TVEI, even within local offices, leading to problems of coordination between different post-16 areas.

Contact between LEAs over NAFE was also very limited, occasional informal regional fora being the most common examples. There was much more coordination of LEAs at the national level, through the machinery of the local authority associations. Evidence was found of interaction of LEA NAFE sections with other departments within their authority, the most common links being to planning, treasurer's and economic development departments.

The degree to which the restructured policy network altered from the previous situation may be assessed by recourse to Rhodes' resource categories outlined in Chapter 3, used there to describe the pre-1984 resource dependencies. In terms of authority, the first category, the circumstances after the implementation of the NAFE

Agreement had altered, despite there having been no reallocation of LEAs' legal responsibilities. A new source had been introduced into the system, and LEAs were forced to follow to an extent the guidance which they received from the MSC. This authority hinged entirely upon the MSC's control over financial resources, the second of Rhodes' categories, which was the most significant change affecting the reshaping of the network. The consequences of this new power were a change in the distribution of Rhodes' third category, legitimacy, in the network, with the MSC's new role creating some shift in the balance between the influences of the central and local electoral mandate. LEAs had less discretion to exercise their own policies than before, but the erosion of this discretion must not be overstressed: it remained considerably more intact than had been envisaged in the original *Training for Jobs* proposals.

The fourth category, information, concerns an area which saw much change as a consequence of the NAFE Agreement. The writing of LEA Annual Programmes and the gathering of significantly greater quantities of labour market information (LMI) indicate a much greater concentration at the LEA level of detailed knowledge about each authority's NAFE provision. The effect was to increase the power of the LEA over colleges, giving it a greater source of authority on the basis of which to enforce its strategic policies. There was some equivalent increase in MSC Area Office power as a consequence of its having more information about NAFE, but the concentration in LEA hands, those with the ultimate discretion over implementation decisions, was the most significant development*.

The final category, organisational resources, saw no change as a result of the NAFE Agreement. NAFE continued to be delivered through the same media, local authority colleges and education department administrators. The MSC remained non-executant, and continued to rely entirely upon the purchase of delivery systems provided by other parties.

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* This increase in LEA power was significantly counterbalanced by a devolving of discretionary powers to colleges under the subsequent Education Reform Act.

8.4   The development of the MSC-LEA partnership in NAFE

Chapter 6 found much evidence to justify the portraits of the MSC and the NAFE sector outlined in Chapter 3. There it was suggested that the Commission's bureaucratic style was based on flexible and speedy adaptation to changing circumstances, fixing its policies and plans on very short-term horizons. The NAFE service, in contrast, was tied in to an education sector tradition of gradualist change, and unused to a market-oriented style of management.

If these generalisations were valid it would be expected that they would create tensions between the two bodies as they became engaged in a joint planning exercise imposed from above. So it proved in practice, as demonstrated by the nature of the problem areas identified in Chapter 6. Leaving aside the inevitable problem of an increased administrative burden, the most significant sources of difficulty LEAs reported in dealing with the MSC were the unpredictability of its policy and its associated demands on LEAs, and the allocation of specific support funding for insufficient periods of time. The speed with which the MSC expected LEAs to make decisions also scored highly. LEAs were clearly not comfortable with the Commission's year-by-year approach to decision making, seeking a stability of development not congruent with its constantly revised national guidance. Similarly, evidence was presented of a feeling in the Commission at both national and local level that the response of LEAs was often unnecessarily slow and insufficiently adaptive to changing conditions. This feeling applied more to the administrative bureaucracy than to colleges, who as practitioners were seen as being more closely tied to changing demands.

There was also clear evidence of clashes in outlook, which ranged from a lack of educational experience and understanding on the part of MSC staff, which sometimes led to unfair assumptions about past college performance, to philosophical differences over the objectives of NAFE. Whilst the MSC was firmly committed to the development of labour-power planning as a central plank of its policies, respondents to the LEA survey indicated that out of a whole range of NAFE objectives, an overriding emphasis upon such planning received the least support of all. An emphasis on the

needs of employers, with which the MSC was also associated, was the second least supported of 14 objectives LEA respondents were asked to comment on.

Further evidence of tensions between the MSC and LEAs consequent upon their bureaucratic styles emerged in the difficulties experienced in coordinating the MSC planning timetable with LEA committee cycles. The difference in operation between a political, committee-run authority on one hand and an organisation with a rigid line-management structure on the other was not easily overcome, and only several years into the joint planning exercise was significant progress being made.

Nevertheless, despite these anticipated tensions, the MSC-LEA relationship was found to have developed very positively after an inauspicious beginning. The evidence presented in Chapter 6 indicates that the initial refusal on the part of LEAs to have any dealings with MSC Area Offices at all gave way after the Agreement to a tense period in which the two parties tentatively sought common ground upon which some form of cooperative procedure could be established. Once this got underway in the first year, there followed a fairly rapid thaw in relations as LEAs became aware that the threat to their position suggested by the White Paper had largely evaporated, and that a disarmed MSC could actually be a beneficial influence over their NAFE activity. The evidence presented in Chapter 6 indicates that relations between the two bodies were at no point very poor, outside the immediate aftermath of the White Paper. These steadily improved throughout the period of study, to the point where in many localities Area Office and LEA staff enjoyed a relationship of close colleagues which in some cases surpassed in quality their relations with other sections of their own institution. There was much evidence of high levels of confidence and mutual trust between the parties, examples of continuing LEA stand-offishness being relegated to a small minority.

The reasons behind this development can arguably be attributed to the tendency, noted in Chapter 3, of 'street-level' bureaucrats to 'routinise' policy positions into a set of pragmatically-arranged day-to-day activities. Thus they seek to reduce uncertainty, and create circumstances in which their regular work pattern is not threatened by major upheaval. This accounts for the unanimity of opposition at both the political and officer level to the *Training for Jobs* plan for NAFE, a consequence of its threat not just to the

status quo, but to the likelihood of renewed stability. The White Paper's proposal to have funding decisions made on a course-by-course, year-by-year basis threatened an ongoing situation of uncertainty which the street-level bureaucrats of the education service could not comfortably contemplate.

It therefore follows that the NAFE Agreement led to an improvement in relations, with its guarantee of greater certainty in NAFE adminstration, but that the development of full cooperation and mutual trust was not achieved at first due the continuing possibility of MSC seeking to use its power of sanction to cajole LEA officers into a form of administrative behaviour to which they were opposed. As each planning year succeeded, LEA confidence mounted that the MSC would not use its powers thus, and a new bureaucratic equilibrium was established in which a new set of routine procedures replaced the old. Joint relations were thus able to improve to a position of considerable cooperation and mutual trust.

Other reasons for the development of positive relations may be attributed to a compromise between the 'bureaucratic dynamic'* of both MSC and LEAs. Again partly a product of the translation by street-level bureaucrats of initially contradictory pressures into routine procedures, this saw a partial acceptance on the part of LEAs of the MSC's requirement for a more flexible and rapid approach to administration and planning, with decisions being based as far as possible on rational, measurable criteria; similarly, an acceptance on the part of (particularly Area Office) MSC staff that NAFE could not be run with the same dynamic flexibility of other MSC programmes, such as YTS. This was very much confirmed by the claim of one MSC officer interviewed that within his Area Office, the NAFE operation was perceived as slow - as not getting quick, clear results like the Office's other programmes[1].

The above evidence very much supports the idea that for the successful integration of two institutions, each with a bureaucratic dynamic potentially conflicting with the other, compromise involving adjustment of this dynamic must be an inherent aspect.

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*   see Chapter 3

It is significant to note that the fears which were expressed at the time of the White Paper, that the transfer of resources from LEAs to the MSC was only the first stage in a plan to hand the Commission much more financial responsibility for NAFE in due course, proved groundless. Whilst political changes and the Commission's eventual loss of favour have played a part in this, the combination of LEA resistance to change and the MSC's concerted efforts to compromise and win acceptance in the LEA community have acted strongly against the likelihood that this carefully-nurtured situation would be threatened by renewed upheaval.

8.5   Impacts of the Initiative upon NAFE practice

Chapter 7 identified a series of areas in which the NAFE Initiative significantly influenced the practice of planning and administration. The most significant was the introduction under the terms of the NAFE Agreement of the Development Plan and Annual Programme which all LEAs were required for the first time to produce.

Whilst some LEAs had conducted effective planning for some time, the new demands placed upon them led to a radical advance in the clarity with which LEA NAFE objectives were identified and articulated, and a specification in considerably more detail of what activities their colleges took part in each year. Whilst the quality of these Plans and Programmes varied widely, there is considerable evidence of a steady improvement across the board with each successive planning round. Particular reasons for this improvement included a greater acceptance on the part of LEAs of the Plan's role as an integral part of regular NAFE activity, and the associated spreading out and down of the process of Plan compilation so that the more effective 'circumference-in' approach to Plan construction came to be more common than the early, and sometimes rather cursory, top-down efforts.

A significant fact which emerged in the empirical evidence was a considerable variation in both the content of Development Plans and the overall approach taken to planning between LEAs. What is most significant about this is the evident scope for local discretion it indicates. The possibility that the involvement of a single, centrally-

directed national body might impose a rigidity on planning, and thus hamper the development of local solutions to local problems and NAFE needs, was not borne out in practice. Whilst a certain uniformity was required in the broad elements of local implementation, the policy clearly saw a wide range of outcomes between localities.

An area where such local discretion became most manifest was the monitoring of NAFE by LEAs and Area Offices. A clear impact of the Agreement upon the practice of NAFE planning was the universal introduction of extensive LEA activity in this area. Whilst previously some LEAs had been involved in monitoring, many gained its benefits as a direct result of the Agreement's measures. As a consequence, NAFE provision at the end of the period of study was based on a plan for delivery which was much more firmly-rooted in an LEA understanding of what was happening in its colleges. The evaluation by LEAs of their colleges' courses had similarly advanced greatly. Both activities, however, were hampered by a still primitive level of development of management information systems in most LEAs, a situation which promised to be rectified sooner rather than later.

The growth of mutual MSC-LEA trust in this area had removed the concern that LEAs were not being altogether candid in their statements to the Area Office about their NAFE provision - the fear that LEAs would deceive the MSC in order simply to retrieve their lost money proving groundless. Whilst better monitoring made the possibility anyway more remote, it ceased to be an issue through the development of a sense of common purpose between the two bodies as to the development of better NAFE provision.

Considerable benefits accrued from the implementation of centrally-funded project work in NAFE, despite early difficulties in devising an equable system of fund-allocation. The projects provided an entirely new focus in NAFE for the development and dissemination of examples of successful planning practice, providing a previously highly-localised operation with the benefit of a national perspective, in which a wider range of experience could be drawn upon to improve provision.

Other areas had seen less evidence of the potential NAFE benefits sought from the

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provisions of the NAFE Agreement. Labour market information (LMI) in particular had not been developed to the extent hoped for, and the MSC had come in for a lot of LEA criticism for not performing well in its area of greatest responsibility in NAFE. The intended improvements in the responsiveness of college provision to labour market needs based on a thorough and up to date bank of LMI data did not materialise to the envisaged extent, partly as a consequence of the inherent difficulty and workload involved in generating such information. At the end of the period of study the collection and use of LMI, despite widespread evidence of improvement, remained an area yet to emerge as a major beneficial impact of the NAFE Initiative.

In seeking to form judgements about the effectiveness of the impacts of joint MSC-LEA NAFE planning upon college provision, Chapter 7 investigated curriculum change in the period following the Agreement's introduction, and the assessment of LEA practitioners as to the role of the Agreement in influencing such change. The results of this enquiry demonstrated that there had not been truly dramatic changes in any curriculum area, and that such changes as did occur were not generally perceived to have been strongly influenced by the NAFE Agreement. The one area of extensive change where joint planning was cited as a significant contributory influence was the increasing amount of distance/open learning offered in colleges.

8.6   Evaluation of the NAFE Initiative's overall impacts

The last section of Chapter 7 explored the perceptions of a range of interested parties as to the overall benefits which had accrued in NAFE as a consequence of the White Paper and the subsequent NAFE Agreement. On the basis of these comments, combined with evidence derived from the rest of empirical analysis presented in this thesis, it is possible to draw a series of general conclusions about the impact of the NAFE Initiative on the process of NAFE planning as a whole.

First, it has undoubtedly 'changed the shape of the paperwork'[2]. LEAs throughout England and Wales were by the end of 1989 engaged in administrative procedures relating to NAFE planning which went far beyond anything most of them had been

engaged in prior to 1984. One of the most striking impacts of the new policy was the undoubted 'galvanising' effect of the MSC in prompting new activity in LEAs which otherwise would not have occurred at the same pace. Whilst its effect was greatest in the 'backwoods' LEAs who had the least experience of a proactive NAFE planning stance, the speeding-up of development in this whole area was brought about in every LEA, to a greater or lesser extent.

Another key impact was the raising of the profile of NAFE from being very low on the list of most LEAs' priorities to a position of considerably greater prominence. This was most evident in the immediate aftermath of the White Paper, but the increased level of activity in NAFE ensured that its administration and planning could never retreat to the backwater it had previously occupied in some authorities.

Improvements in the collection, assimilation and presentation of information were a clear product of the joint planning process. These accrued from the considerably enhanced role of monitoring and evaluation on the part of LEAs, and to a lesser extent from greater attention to the collection of labour market information. Related to the possession of greater information was the sharper definition specific of aims, objectives and targets in NAFE: LEA policy and planning was able to become increasingly founded on an informed *rationale*, rather than solely on the more subjective judgements of individual practitioners.

The NAFE Initiative and the resulting exhortation on the part their MSC partners led to a greater acceptance on the part of LEAs of the value of rational resource management approaches. The use of these became more widely recognised to be beneficial to the maximising of efficiency in NAFE, the only way to boost effectiveness in circumstances where resources are fixed.

There developed improved coordination between LEA colleges, which resulted both in a more rational and efficient division of activity between them, and a raising of mutual awareness through the greater spread of information about each others' NAFE practice. The latter was also true between LEAs as a consequence of the NAFE Initiative.

An empirical finding, three years into the practice of joint planning, that a clear majority of LEA respondents wished the MSC to stay involved in NAFE indicates a large measure of success to have emerged from the exercise. Whilst partly this could be explained by a desire to avoid further upheaval, clear evidence of considerable LEA support for most of the NAFE objectives championed by the MSC indicates a widespread acceptance of the value of the processes set up under the NAFE Agreement.

Negative impacts of the Initiative include the heavy administrative burden it placed upon already stretched LEAs. Whilst partly the inevitable consequence of any new initiative, this was exacerbated by MSC policy-makers with insufficient experience or understanding of educational matters making unreasonably burdensome requests for information. There was a tendency at first for the MSC to ask for everything it might want in order to guarantee getting what it needed. Whilst this situation had markedly improved by the end of the period of study, greater sensitivity in this area would have been an ultimately more fruitful approach.

Further negative impacts derived from the tendency of MSC planners to emphasise outcomes over processes. This could be traced to the Commission's need to deliver measurable results to its political masters at the DE. The opportunity to establish a carefully-considered and effective set of processes which could have furnished NAFE with an effective and durable framework for future development, based on long-term improvements in results, was partially lost as a consequence of this factor.

Whilst the process of NAFE planning might not have developed to its full potential under the Agreement, it was nonetheless in this area that the NAFE Initiative had its greatest discernable effect. Its impacts upon the actual NAFE curriculum are at best unclear. The evidence presented here does not indicate significantly marked curriculum change, and suggests that the influence of the NAFE Agreement on such change as occurred was very limited. An FEU report on NAFE found 'no major change in the direction of the curriculum', and suggested that the changes which were in evidence would have occurred with or without the joint planning exercise[3].

It is not apparent, therefore, that the impact of the Agreement led to any major changes in provision - what it did do was to produce a form of delivery which was more clearly monitored, each of its components having a clearer *raison d'etre*, founded upon a sounder database of up-to-date information, against which achievements could be better evaluated. Whether or not actual NAFE provision prior to *Training for Jobs* was in need of major change, judgements which could clearly not be made then were possible now as a consequence of these developments.

In considering the impacts of the NAFE Initiative on planning and provision it is important to stress that it was only one amongst a series of factors contributing to change. Other factors, such as the role of Audit Commission, the DES/LAA Joint Efficiency Study, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, and in particular the changing social, economic, political and demographic conditions in Britain in the 1980s, all played their part. The influence of MSC intervention in NAFE planning against these other factors is difficult to weigh with any certainty.

Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that the involvement of the MSC in joint planning as a consequence of *Training for Jobs* and the subsequent NAFE Agreement had a very significant impact in terms of establishing planning and monitoring processes which would otherwise not have occurred at the same point in time, and which, in some LEAs, might not have occurred at all. Its effects, if any, upon provision, its responsiveness and relevance to the needs of employers and individuals, are not clear. A different type of study would be required to assess these effects.

8.7   Theoretical implications

Rhodes' conceptual framework dealing with policy communities and networks has been used in this thesis as a tool for describing and delimiting the range of organisations who have been involved in the policy fields at issue, both before and after the initiative under study. In the light of the thesis' empirical findings we should consider whether the use of links founded on resource dependencies, and delimitations based on breaks in the structure of resource dependencies, has emerged as an effective

tool for analysis.

The purpose behind the use of Rhodes' framework in the thesis was to describe a system of institutions linked in the delivery of certain policies, to distinguish different systems, and to understand how such systems can be changed as a consequence of policy innovation. To assess how well Rhodes' framework for 'policy networks' provides this, it helps to return to his criteria, and reconsider them in the light of the new information gathered. Rhodes defined five key dimensions along which he claims networks' dependency structures to vary, as explained above in section 3.2*. In the case of the two networks under discussion in this thesis, did they provide a means of distinguishing and understanding the differences between the systems ?

To take first the *constellation of interests*, the variables cited of service/economic function, territory, client group and common expertise undoubtedly provided such distinction: the systems in which LEAs and the MSC operated differed in all these respects. Data collected from the LEA survey (see section 7.8 (iii)) confirmed the view outlined in Chapter 3 that in terms of service/economic function the former were engaged in provision geared as much to individual needs as those of employers, whereas the MSC was much more oriented towards servicing the economic dynamic by means of national labour planning and serving the market needs of industry; the client group and related expertise varied for the same reasons; and, territorially, whilst the MSC operated at a national level through a system of tiered offices, the education service was much more locality-oriented. The identification of these forms of differences are clearly one useful means of independently establishing a basis for analytical comparison, since they identify real and meaningful differences between the policy networks in which the relevant bodies operated. The same can be argued to be true of Rhodes' four other variables. In terms of *membership* there were clear differences, for example, in terms of his criteria of public-private sector balance between the 1984 NAFE field, which as Figure 3.1 shows was completely dominated by public bodies, and the employment and training network, which Figure 3.2 shows to have contained a mixture of public and private sector interests. The two networks

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*   see page 55.

were also found to vary considerably in terms of *vertical interdependence*, in the public sector parts at least, the evidence presented on MSC internal structure in Chapter 6 indicating its well developed national-regional-local administrative interaction system to contrast with LEAs' relative local autonomy beyond their financial dependency on and specific legal obligations to the DES. Similar difference emerged in terms of *horizontal interdependence* and the *distribution of resources*. The crucial issue here is not to reconsider the detail of the issues specific to the present context, but to assess the overall theoretical implications of these details. The criteria Rhodes uses are simple, and comparatively unambiguous; they appear to have utility as a method for determining variation. Their value for drawing up a conceptual 'map' of a policy field is demonstrated in the devising of Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 8.1. It seems fair to argue that the genuine distinctions, as outlined above, which are apparent in the present context along the lines of his criteria make Rhodes' approach to identifying such distinctions a valid means of drawing a consistent and replicable schema for the description, division and analysis of policy networks.

Rhodes' distinction between policy *communities* on the one hand and *networks* on the other was also employed in the thesis as a means of distinguishing between the two principal fields covered. Policy *communities* are defined by Rhodes as being characterised by

> stability of relationships, continuity of a highly restrictive membership, vertical interdependence based on shared service delivery responsibilities and insulated from other networks and invariably from the general public ... They have a high degree of vertical interdependence and limited horizontal articulation. They are highly integrated.[4]

Policy *networks* are defined by Rhodes only in a negative sense - he declares simply that 'they are less integrated'. The key distinction can be argued to be over the degree of closure exhibited by the system. This latter aspect can be argued to have genuine utility, in that a more closed system is likely to be more susceptible to a policy intervention which can influence the whole; in a more open system, any attempt to influence all parts of it with a new policy would present considerably more difficulty. The idea is of value in indicating how the NAFE policy community moved from a fairly closed position in to a much more open system of influences in the combined network shown in Figure

8.1; which is to say that it became a network. In this sense it can be stated that the scheme proved fruitful for the analysis of the thesis' case study, as it helped to identify the precise manner in which the changes initiated affected the field upon which they were brought to bear.

One difficulty with the distinction between policy communities and networks (highlighted principally by the interview material used in Chapter 4) arises from the multidimensional nature of the 'resource dependencies' which Rhodes argues to cement communities and networks. The problem is that a network which may be defined in terms of one of the five resource categories may not exist in terms of another. Hence, in the present example in terms of *financial* resources, the NAFE sector was a highly vertically integrated policy community, because it relied upon a system of grant allocation via the DES and DoE. To take other resources, however, the empirical data discussed in Chapter 4 shows that, for example, authority and legitimacy were not highly integrated into a national-local network, rather LEAs proved themselves to have a considerable degree of independence in opposing the White Paper and pursuing their own version of a local NAFE policy, through the medium of their national associations. It was not that they were free of central authority, rather that the set-up was much looser in these senses than it was in terms of grant funding. On the other hand, the NAFE sector followed the definition of a community by virtue of its exhibition of a high degree of closure, stability of relationships and insulation from other networks and communities. The distinction of a community from a network therefore emerges as rather more complicated than Rhodes allows for; recognition of variations by resource *type* need to be taken into account in determining the nature (community or network) of an organisational policy system.

An additional factor highlighted frequently in the empirical findings is the significance of proximate day-to-day personal relationships. To the extent that connections between individual actors are manifestations of the association between their institutions, their dealings reflect the exchange of resources indicated in Rhodes' work. However, the personal relationships which develop (or fail to) between those who operate at the interface of two bodies are of such crucial importance to the manner in which the institutions interact that no analysis of the patterns of relationships can be

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complete without the inclusion of this aspect. Therefore, whilst a policy network drawn on the basis of the presence or absence of resource links is a valuable construct, the need to identify those areas of personal contact most significant to a policy area is clear. Hence the consideration of what might be termed the 'core area' of the policy network, as in Figure 8.2, which shows the core of the full policy network which appears in Figure 8.1. This is the region of the network in which the personal relationships are most likely to come significantly into play.

To move on to some of the implications for other theoretical areas raised in Chapter 3, it is important to return to Salter and Tapper's notion of the 'bureaucratic dynamic', and the distinctions made between various organisational types*. The first of these was represented as a means of identifying a bureaucracy's institutional characteristics, as expressed by its structure, procedures, guiding principles and the style of its operating culture. The manner of this expression was indicated to have been categorised by various authors. Included were Burns and Stalker's distinction between 'mechanistic' and 'organic' types, the former being more rigid, hierarchical and ordered, the latter less rigid and more flexible; Merton's dichotomy between rationality and rigidity in an organisation; and Lipsky's stress on the autonomy of individuals within an bureaucracy**. In section 3.5, a concluding discussion offered a contrast between the bureaucratic dynamics of the MSC and the main education sector institutions as an explanation for the advancement of the Commission in the vocational education and training field under the Thatcher administrations. There is no need to repeat that discussion here, but it may be of interest to consider the general implications of the empirical findings.

The argument made in Chapter 3 built on Merton's idea that the maximisation of rationality in a bureaucracy's form is contingent, the utility of flexibility and rigidity varying from case to case, each organisation combining them in differing quantities. The empirical findings support this view. That is, they underline the fact that a bureaucracy may combine the rigidity of a strict line-management structure with the

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* see section 3.3

** see pp. 73-4.

flexibility of an organisational culture amenable to frequent and rapid change. Evidence for this from the thesis is in the MSC's clearly-defined structure (outlined in section 6.2), which combined with the considerable flexibility indicated by the immediacy of its response to the White Paper, its 'goalpost shifting' tendencies (outlined in section 6.4(iv)), and its rapidly developing practice on NAFE monitoring (section 7.3). The flexibility in part *depended* on the rigidity of the management structure, which made it a broad institutional characteristic, rather than one rooted in personal action.

A clear difference of bureaucratic type which emerged from the data concerned the speed and flexibility of decision-making between a business-style line management structures and organs of local democracy, with the attendant political and legitimising processes that the latter imply. This situation involves a contrast in which the former is able to move rapidly on the basis of swift executive decision-making, whilst the latter is hamstrung by procedures geared to involve a range of actors in finalising any position. These must ultimately involve political decision-making by elected representatives, which will nonetheless always be based upon earlier work by executive officers. Whilst the discussions in Chapter 3* about the operation of the policy-making continuum indicate that decision-making will occur at a range of levels in any organisation, there is a clear difference between an operation in which key decisions must always be referred to the political level, and one where the local executive manager is able to take decisions single-handedly. Quite apart from the executive manager's capacity to act independently is the freedom of this officer to act at any time. In contrast, political committees can meet only on certain timetabled occasions, for which decisions must generally wait. The deliberately-cynical observation quoted earlier that 'democracy is inefficient'** is undoubtedly an exaggeration, but does express to a degree the manner in which the implementation of policy by local elected bodies appears, relative to non-political organisations, to be slow-paced.

Given such differences in the operation of two bodies' bureaucratic dynamic, it can be generalised that problems will arise should they be required to work together, and

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* section 3.6

** see page 96

the two dynamics have an opportunity to clash. For example, an executively-managed body keen to move swiftly on a new initiative is likely to be frustrated in waiting for its elected partner to conduct the process necessary for it to take a legitimate decision, and this tension is likely to be replicated in any circumstance where two such bodies meet. Evidence in support of this view emerged in the empirical work of the thesis. The incompatibility of the MSC planning timetable with council committee cycles and the speed with which the MSC expected LEAs and colleges to take decisions both scored prominently in the investigation of the significant NAFE problem areas discussed in Chapter 6. The slow pace of LEAs' response also emerged as a specified problem. Other problems of this kind arose through the difficulties experienced in harmonising budgetary cycles. A number of respondents to the MSC survey were indicated to have experienced difficulties in dealing with councils at the political level, in contrast with smooth officer-level relations. The preference of officers in a body such as MSC for working with executive rather than political actors, evident in some of the data presented in section 6.4 (ii) which contrast good officer-level relationships with difficulties at the political level, appears to confirm the existence of problems in this area.

The empirical work afforded evidence of a further problem created by a contrast in bureaucratic styles where two differing bodies are brought together. This is that in such a case, differences in the institutions' operating characteristics will not only create problems in themselves: a mutual lack of understanding about what these differences are, or even (initially) that they exist, will considerably hamper the forging of cooperative and effective joint practices through compromise in the early phases of their partnership. Compromise can only succeed an appreciation of whether and where it must be made. A number of examples of this problem emerged in the empirical work. The lack of experience and understanding of educational matters on the part of MSC staff was indicated to be a serious problem by respondents to the LEA survey, as was the making of inaccurate assumptions by Area Office staff about past college performance. When it came to devising a procedure for monitoring NAFE, authority staff complained of the Commission raising 'hoops' for them to jump through, based initially on guesswork about what might be important. In addition to these were complaints about the administrative burden placed upon LEA staff by their MSC

counterparts, a burden insufficiently well understood because of an inadequate appreciation of: (a) the work involved in putting the required changes through the local authority system; and (b) the paucity of resources available at the LEA NAFE section to deal with it, particularly at a time of severe financial constraint from the centre. All these specific examples support the general point that such factors, based on contrasting bureaucratic characteristics, will significantly hamper inter-organisational arrangements.

These considerations lead on to an important question which emerges from the findings surrounding the issue of institutions which are brought together into partnership. It centres on the matter of likely differences between voluntary associations on one hand, and involuntary ones on the other. The principal cause of the differences between the two situations (voluntary and involuntary partnership) hinges on motivation. Voluntary partners are likely to enter joint arrangements with a set of needs which they believe can be met by the other, and will pursue as effective a partnership as possible either until such time as the needs are met, or until any clash of bureaucratic styles becomes so great as to render the whole process ultimately unrewarding, at which point the initial motivation would be negated and the partnership would be likely to end. In the involuntary partnership however, if one partner or both are reluctant participants, the motivation to tackle bureaucratic contrasts for the sake of effectiveness is subordinated to one which seeks merely to meet the minimum conditions required by the enforced partnership to avoid incurring sanction. Only if the reluctant partner experiences a change in attitude will this situation alter, as it did in the case of the LEAs who came to recognise the value of planning and resource management in NAFE, and developed something more like a genuine partnership, if still involuntary and in some cases still unpopular.

The other aspect of institutional characteristics mentioned above is that of the autonomy of individuals within the organisation. Argued to be an inherent aspect of the policy-making continuum in section 3.6, this emerged as an essential aspect of local-local relationships, as actors at these levels were found to forge arrangements suited to local circumstances and the positions of other local actors. The challenging by lower tier actors of positions handed down by superiors evident in both the MSC Area Offices and LEA executive sections in the empirical findings support this view. The

implications with regard to inter-organisational relationships are considered more fully below, but the key point here is that in attempting to define organisational type by the level of autonomy of participating actors, it is essential to recognise the virtually universal tendency of local bureaucrats to develop an independence of stance realistically compatible with the demands of their daily tasks.

To move on to further implications raised by the thesis' findings for the theoretical areas considered in Chapter 3, two ideas which need to be considered are: the tendency noted by Selznick for institutions to develop internal objectives unrelated to their original function; and the role of Lipsky's 'street-level' bureaucrats in structuring the lower-tier policy-implementation process***. These concepts are effectively related: Selznick's idea was noted to centre on the development of a secondary and informal internal structure which accompanies a bureaucracy's transition from being a more neutral and purely rational 'organisation' to a more responsive and adaptive human organism Selznick sees as an 'institution'. This structure is gradually constructed by the individuals employed by the organisation. It is this factor which ties the concept in with that of the street-level bureaucrat, whose interest it is 'routinise' the policy-implementation process into a set of day-to-day tasks in which a renewed equilibrium serves the officer's own administrative interests, principal amongst which is a guarantee of stability and a maintenance of the *status quo*. How far did the evidence of the empirical work presented here support that view, and what additional implications are thrown up by it for the analysis of informal, 'secondary' institutional interests and street-level bureaucratic behaviour ?

The chief evidence which relates to this matter emerging from the empirical work is the data gathered on the changing local relationships between MSC and LEA staff after 1984. It suggests a pattern of development in cases where two bodies are thrown together in an asymmetric way, i.e. where one is reluctantly forced to accept the involvement of the other. Using the evidence for the development of LEA-MSC relations outlined in Chapter 6, and the conclusions drawn on the mater in section 8.4, this pattern can be summarised (using the same principle as the discussion on

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*** see page 74.

voluntary/involuntary partnership above) as follows. The initial state of relations is likely to be extremely cool, a factor principally attributable to the actors operating in the institution which has been the more reluctant partner. These actors will feel themselves to be threatened by the new situation, and their main concerns will centre upon loss of control over activities hitherto solely in their domain; uncertainty replacing stability; and the danger of further powers and responsibilities being sapped away as the arrangement proceeds. The internal and private, 'secondary' institutional objective, that is, the 'maintenance and aggrandisement'[5] of the organisation's existing roles, is an important consideration in this regard. It accounts for the intensity with which the above concerns are felt in such a situation, an intensity which will often be expressed as open hostility in the early meetings between the two sides. As time passes, two main processes may begin to occur, provided that no new initiative intervenes to alter the emerging equilibrium. First, an incrementally increasing confidence that there is not to be a continuing erosion of powers and responsibilities. Second, familiarisation with the other body and its staff. This stems from becoming acquainted with the other partner's working practices, and a gradually improving understanding of what the other partner is seeking from the joint relationship. Fears of a hidden agenda are likely to be ameliorated as the other partner's real objectives become separable from any erroneously-perceived and more sinister goals attributed to it. Judgements made about the other partner's affairs come to be based on a working knowledge of how it operates, leading to the abandonment of unfair assumptions and the development of more realistic expectations of what the other partner can be reasonably asked to do in a given time frame. Policy areas which seem uncontroversial to one partner but which are highly contentious for the other become mutually recognised, allowing sensitive areas to be treated with the required diplomacy. Recognition of how far the other partner can be moved in a particular direction tends to lead to the successful avoidance of violent conflict, and reasonable expectations only are likely to be imposed. Each partner will change its institutional behaviour, at least in regard to its work involving the other partner, both bodies compromising and altering their usual bureaucratic dynamic for the sake of developing cooperative mechanisms.

As a consequence of this enhanced knowledge and understanding of the other partner, mutual trust and confidence is likely gradually to develop. Absolutely crucial in

this regard are the relationships which develop between the particular individuals on either side. The initial hostility when the partners first meet is very often founded upon a perception of the other body as a faceless institution which is ascribed a series of characteristics and motivations. When the institution instead becomes personified as a set of familiar faces who are seeking to do a job in the same area - people who are personally equally keen to avoid conflict - the response of one to the other is likely to become gradually transformed. This will not happen in every case, not least because sometimes the personalities of the individuals involved will clash. But the evidence of the survey data presented above suggests that in the considerable majority of cases, individuals originally perceived as members of the 'opposition' instead become viewed as genuine partners. The two groups of staff tend to develop the relationship of · colleagues working towards a common end, and the institutions themselves move from being virtual foes to something more like allies. It is important to stress that this view is one developed from the experience of the thesis' particular case study. There are grounds for generalisation, as the experience of over seventy local authorities is built into these observations. However, the possibility of a less harmonious outcome emerging in other policy areas must be borne in mind, and this matter will be raised as an area for further work in the next section.

One important consequence of personal relationships between individuals working in two different institutions being such a significant factor is the following: there may develop a 'two-tiered' relationship between the partners which reflects the proximity of different actors to the point of interface. In the case of NAFE planning, this meant that whilst officers in the LEA executive department commonly had a very good working relationship with their 'colleagues' in the Area Office NAFE section, it was not always reflected at the higher levels. The key consideration here is that interests of the individuals involved are determined to a significant extent by the impacts of their attitudes and actions upon their day-to-day routines: a senior-ranking officer voicing stringent opposition to the partner's policy does not have to follow this up with regular contact in an atmosphere of hostility with its staff. There is an overall tendency for administrative actors to seek compromises in the direction which will minimise sources of stress in their daily tasks. This is the manifestation of and the motivation behind the 'routinisation' of policy in action, arguably a much more important consideration for

such actors than the policy goals themselves, which are likely to impinge upon their daily routines in a less disruptive manner.

There is an additional problem which arises in the 'two-tiered' relationship for the street level bureaucrats who seek personal working stability. It is that, where there is a mismatch between good officer level relations and more strained relations at the political or other higher level, they find themselves in a position of having to seek compromises not only with the other institution, but with their own internal superiors who may take a different view of how they should proceed than their own immediate interests would suggest. (Hence an MSC officer quoted in Chapter 6 cited problems of his being perceived to be 'batting for the LEA' by his Regional Office, with whom he had to seek a form of compromise solution to the differences at issue.) It must be recognised of course that such differences are not necessarily the product of pursuing administrative self-interest. In many cases the lowest tier actors will take a different view because of their greater understanding of the local imperatives and contingent factors which restrict the possibilities for action, a matter following from the growth of mutual understanding discussed above. The lowest tier, 'street-level' actors are likely to be most attuned to these factors as a consequence of their more frequent contact with the other partner. Both of these factors need to be taken account, therefore, in portraying the development 'two-tiered' inter-organisational relationships.

The evidence supports the idea that the two areas under discussion - i.e. the tendency noted by Selznick[6] for institutions to develop internal objectives unrelated to their original function; and the role of Lipsky's[7] 'street-level' bureaucrats in structuring the lower-tier policy-implementation process - are in one sense fundamentally linked. It supports the view that the development of Selznick's secondary, informal internal structure, argued to accompany a bureaucracy's transition from being a more neutral and purely rational 'organisation' to a more responsive and adaptive human organism, the 'institution', is a consequence of gradual construction by the individuals employed by the organisation. Many of the 'secondary' goals are reflection of street-level bureaucrats' desire to tame uncertainty and maximise the security and predictability of their task. In making evident the reluctance of local officers to change their procedures and practices (e.g. early LEA resistance to written plans, monitoring and evaluation),

the data supports the suggestion that a principal interest of the administrator is the maintenance of the *status quo*, or, where this proves impossible, the creation of a new equilibrium which can be defended. Other 'private' institutional objectives, such as the aggrandisement of the organisation and movement into new policy areas, are unlikely to be motivated (or encouraged) at the local levels, where such aims are likely to be perceived as disruptive. This further emphases the 'two (or more)-tiered' quality of bureaucratic structures.

Whilst considering the theoretical significance of the thesis' findings *vis à vis* local institutional relationships, further conclusions may usefully be drawn by considering the data's implications for the bargaining process as expressed between two organisations with different interests to promote. These implications involve: the nature of the organisations involved; and the relative effectiveness of different kinds of sanctions and incentives which can be employed.

In considering the type of organisation involved, the focus of the discussion of this here centres upon the process as expressed by a 'quasi-local' body on one hand dealing with a truly local body on the other (as was the case between the MSC and each LEA), the 'quasi-local' institution being in reality only an extension of a regional arm of a national body. The implications of this are that whilst a truly local body in such a situation will bargain and negotiate on the basis of local factors, its partner will be operating under pressure from above to meet requirements developed at a more generalised national or regional scale. It has already been noted that local sections can experience tensions with higher tiers over developing local policies which differ from the broader vision. The problem for the local office in mediating between two sources of pressure, one internal, one external, is that its bargaining power is undermined by a lack of flexibility. In an institution which allowed extensive discretion to its officers at each level this would not be as great a problem, but in the case of a more rigid line management structure, difficulties are bound to occur. The real difficulty in terms of negotiation is that as a process it requires sensitivity to local factors. Local staff, working 'at the coalface' have to deal with people upon whom the impacts of the demands made from above will actually fall. On the basis of the empirical evidence, it seems fair to suggest that only local negotiators can truly appreciate the importance of

local factors, and need to be able to make a response on the basis of their own judgements based on these. For this reason it appears that when such circumstances arise, local officers may take it into their own hands to exercise a discretion which is not necessarily consistent with their official duties (as made evident by some local-Regional disputes within the MSC - see section 6.4(iv)). Nonetheless, difficulties do arise as a consequence of negotiating actors being constrained to follow national guidelines where local judgement might suggest another course. The lack of a clear, locally formulated *rationale*, it being handed down from an institution's upper echelons, can weaken the position of the officers who have to negotiate on its behalf. And whilst local bodies are able to take self-contained decisions, responsible directly to no higher authority, local managers of national bodies are not playing with a full deck of negotiating cards. The implications for the bargaining process are that compromise is likely to be achieved most rapidly in circumstances where local actors are given significant powers of discretion. This will inevitably be at the cost of losing uniformity, a factor whose degree of conflict with national or regional priorities will vary, but the problem does reflect a fundamental difficulty experienced by national bodies negotiating with local partners.

Another factor concerning the impacts of the nature of the organisations involved upon bargaining concerns the geography of the local institutional framework. Where negotiations are between bodies situated in the same town or city, the potential for the development of close bargaining relationships is considerably greater than if the offices are physically distant, as is often the case in more rural areas. Personal, face-to-face contact is crucial to the development of colleague-style relationships discussed earlier. A local office dealing with a larger number of partners will similarly be more hard-pressed to improve personal bargaining links than an office dealing with only one partner, and with a consequently greater amount of time available for face-to-face negotiation (see the discussion on frequency of MSC-LEA contact in section 6.4(i)). Other factors which come into play in dealing with a local authority include whether it exhibits the characteristics of an active, centralised body keen to meet new developments head-on, or those of a more *laissez-faire* variety, in which case the process of reaching agreement is likely to be altogether more difficult. The degree of autonomy of the individuals within the organisation, noted earlier to vary from one

institution to another, will clearly have a role to play in determining the particular outcomes in a given situation. Furthermore, there is the extent to which a particular locality exhibits the characteristics of a close community, in which actors brought together into a new partnership are likely to have encountered their opposite numbers in other local settings, or whether alternatively they are likely to be dealing with complete strangers who move in quite different circles. The evidence from the empirical work presented here suggests that the former situation is much more likely to produce cooperation and agreement at an earlier stage in the bargaining process.

The above series of theoretical implications have considered matters arising from the thesis concerning institutional-level, local-local relationships. It is necessary at this point to move on to the more central-local aspects of the theoretical positions outlined earlier. To take first the subject of the dual-state thesis position outlined in section 3.4, an important question arises form the supposed inability of local government to resist the central government will in England and Wales.Saunders was quoted as stating that local councils

> have in recent years tried yet failed to resist central government[8],

and that strategies open to local government in the organisational, political, economic, were at best of limited effectiveness. The most local government could hope for was a rearguard action, delaying the inevitable. The evidence of the thesis, however, indicates that in the case of *Training for Jobs* local authorities were very much able to resist and alter policy as a consequence of opposition to the central government line; the ultimate policy implemented differed considerably from the original proposals. The implications for the dual state thesis appear to lie in its emphasis upon the role of the legal powers of the centre to alter local responsibilities. The present example is one where an alternative approach was employed, which sought to effect change through a strategy of financial transfer without altering existing local government responsibilities. The lesson is that through a strategy of organised political opposition based on their control of organisation resources, local councils are able to successfully influence policy outcomes in circumstances where the centre has not committed its full legal weight.

To interpret this shifting of central goals through local implementation we used in Chapter 3 the concept of the 'policy-making continuum'. Chapter 3 cited arguments against the use of a top-down model, and in particular its three major assumptions - that the decision making or élite group has sufficient authority to guarantee that its requirements are met by lower-tier actors; the ability of this élite to formulate a policy which is sufficiently comprehensive; and the existence of policy as a recognisable entity. The empirical evidence of the thesis shows the unreliability all three of these assumptions in the case of the NAFE Initiative.

To consider first authority, the power of the decision-making élite - in this case the central government - to compel its lower tier agents to carry out its policy decisions was clearly found wanting by the successful LEA opposition to the original policy, and the renegotiation of a considerably revised version in the NAFE Agreement. This demonstrated beyond question the existence of other sources of power within the NAFE policy-making system. These lay in the local mandate held by LEAs, supported by the organisation of a national pressure group in the form of the local authority associations, which was able to invoke this local legitimacy as a means of politically opposing the White Paper. The power afforded by the possession of professional expertise, and the control of organisational resources in a large and complex field, also caused a diminution in the effective authority of central government to impose its wishes.

As for the comprehensiveness of the policy, it was stressed earlier that policies contain both elements which are abstract and generalised, and elements which are case-oriented, both being crucial aspects of the whole. Given its distribution across the LEAs of England and Wales, it is clear that NAFE had not one but 104 policies, one for each authority, the local diversity of the case-oriented aspects in each instance requiring considerable specification of detail. The ability to devise a policy suitable to each such locality required not only the expertise of a practitioner with a grounding in such grass-roots policy requirements, but of a practitioner with such a grasp of detail in each specific locality. The possibility of such knowledge being directly available to central decision-makers is clearly unreasonable. The impossibility of a NAFE policy existing as a recognisable entity, such as in the form of a document, replicable across all 104

LEAs follows from the above. The nearest to such a document in the field of NAFE planning was the *Guidance Handbook*, which covered only the broad outlines of recommended local action, and was in any case more procedural than substantive in terms of policy.

The process of review and development which was established to formulate a policy which could be agreed between all partners is an interesting case example of policy-making, which can be articulated through the theoretical perspective outlined in section 3.6. In that discussion, it was argued whilst upper echelon actors make key decisions in the abstract about policy stances and broad implementation criteria, the detail of policy is worked out at lower levels in the 'policy-making continuum'. The upper-level 'policy-oriented' decision makers were held to 'make choices between policies presented to them' by lower-tier actors, who 'define their nominal masters' decision space'****.

The procedure by which the NAFE Policy Group constructed the NAFE Agreement illustrates the policy-making continuum in operation. As the upper tier of a three-level structure, it made decisions on policy options presented to it by a Working Group, which in turn was serviced and informed by a Technical Group. As observed in Chapter 4, the direction of policy-making thus involved movement up, as well as down, the policy hierarchy, the final policy decision being taken by the group of actors who actually had the least involvement in developing it.

The above process adds to other evidence vindicating the model of the policy-making continuum. In the case of *Training for Jobs*, a clear policy was laid down by the central government, with the intention that its measures would be implemented locally. In practice, they were not, because the logic of negotiation within the NAFE policy community forced modifications upon it. Barrett and Hill were noted earlier as identifying a tension between 'the normative assumptions of government' and the reality of the 'struggle and conflict between interests - the need to bargain and compromise'. They state compromise to be an inherent aspect of all policy-making,

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****see section 3.6.

because of the need to resolve different values and interests and the effects of underlying structural forces. This view was confirmed by Bryan Nicholson's comment in the introduction to the first Guidance Handbook, where he stated that the document offered

> the best match between the interests involved although various parties have reservations about particular elements.[9]

Ham and Hill were noted as stating that policy is in a constant state of change, that interaction structures are complex, that the outside world must interfere, and that implementing actors are inherently difficult to control. The reality of the inevitability of compromise is forcefully demonstrated by the translation of *Training for Jobs* into the NAFE Agreement.

A further theoretical position to which the empirical findings of the thesis can add comment, which stems from the recognition of NAFE's policy-making complexity, is one forwarded by Rhodes. He states that

> The failure to appreciate that service delivery systems are complex, disaggregated and indeterminate has led to the failure of policies.[10]

It would appear that such failure occurred in the case of the government's 1984 NAFE strategy. Rhodes' comment on the experience of the Thatcher administrations' attempts at authoritarian treatment of sub-central government in general appears to be appropriate, at least in part, to the *Training for Jobs* experience:

> The command code confronted the messy reality of the disaggregated, differentiated polity, and, rather than simplifying the state apparatus, the government made it more complex, confused and ambiguous.[11]

The restructured NAFE policy network indicated in Figure 8.1 supports the idea of a state apparatus for the delivery of NAFE which had become more complex. Whilst, as argued in the previous section, clear benefits quite evidently accrued from the introduction of the NAFE Initiative, the creation of another layer of bureaucracy did

much to add to the administrative burden of operating the NAFE system in England and Wales, the scale and complexity of which did not make the prospect for successful new innovations in the field an attractive one for any future government. Recent additions to this complexity in the form of the ERA legislation have not eased this situation, although they do indicate the tenacity of central government in seeking to pursue its chosen ends.

8.8   Avenues for further work

The work presented in this thesis has opened up a number of fruitful avenues for further research. These can be usefully divided into the subheadings of: theoretical issues; the further restructuring of the NAFE bureaucracy; and NAFE practice.

Theoretical issues

Whilst much of the theoretical context upon which the thesis has been based is vindicated by the empirical evidence, there are a number of areas which suggest the need for further research attention.

To consider first the Rhodes framework dealing with policy communities and networks, it was argued in the last section that this required some alteration in terms of the definition of policy communities. The reason was held to be the variations possible in terms of resource type that could affect judgements made over whether an organisational system was a community or a network. Additional work might explore this argument further by considering other examples of organisational systems, seeking to identify whether the circumstances commonly arose in which a 'community' defined according to one resource type might appear as a 'network' in terms of another. The utility of the existing framework, or alternatively the importance of developing a revised version, could be established through such work.

To move on to matters concerning bureaucracies, the chief implications derived from

the present work were shown in section 8.7 to surround the question of inter-organisational relationships between negotiating partners. In that section a series of generalisations were made on the basis of the research findings. Clearly, whilst these stand on the basis of the present *Training for Jobs* example, it cannot be said that they represent anything more than hypotheses at this stage. Each of these areas therefore requires further work to establish the validity of such generalisations, which may confirm, refute or modify the impressions derived from the thesis' empirical data.

To take first the matter of involuntary as opposed to voluntary partnerships, it was argued on the empirical evidence that the former exhibited a tendency for institutions forced into associations without consent to leave fundamental incompatibilities unresolved, seeking instead to meet a minimum level required to avoid sanction. This was held to contrast with voluntary partnerships in which conflict would alternatively be resolved or the partnership terminated. The presence or absence of institutional motivations which supported the partnership was held to be significant in this regard. In the particular context studied it was argued that local education authorities had not in fact pursued the 'minimum response', as a consequence of the revision of the original partnership proposal and a growing acceptance of the importance of the new arrangements being suggested within that revised context. Further work might interestingly explore a situation where enforced partnership had not involved the successful revision of the circumstances by the dissenting partner, and where opposition had continued throughout the period of partnership. Against such a case, the above hypothesis about the likely behaviour of such a body could be tested.

In the same context, the question arises of whether the occurrence of enforced partnership of this kind is a peculiarly public sector phenomenon. That is, whether the creation of such involuntary partnerships must be seen as restricted to circumstances governed by the legal decree of central government; or whether similar situations can arise where purely private sector institutions are involved. Further work might firstly explore the matter of whether private sector examples might be found, and subsequently conduct some form of comparative analysis as to how such bodies' behaviour might compare with that of a public sector organisation in the same situation.

A second generalisation derived from the thesis' findings was suggested for patterns produced by 'asymmetric' partnerships, i.e. those involving partners with differing levels of enthusiasm for the connection. The hypothesis suggested a process of transition from hostility to cooperation involving a number of stages and some underlying pre-conditions, the effects of renewed stability, familiarisation, improved mutual understanding and compromise, associated with the development of good personal relationships, tending towards a new equilibrium. The idea is based on the particular experience of the two bodies studied here: whether such developments are as likely to occur as has been suggested here requires further work considering a range of other experiences in which partners exhibiting contrasting degrees of enthusiasm are brought into association over the development and implementation of policy. The degree to which ultimate cooperation is probable in such 'arranged marriages' between organisations would be of particular interest.

Similar attention, in the form of additional work searching for evidence of trends suggested here, also needs to be paid to: the matter of 'two-tiered' relationships developing between different levels of the partner organisations; the 'shake-up effect' of new initiatives which forces local bureaucrats to move to some extent in order to reach a compromise position which is the prerequisite of renewed equilibrium; and the significance of the offering or withholding of cooperation as a strategic resource available as a 'bargaining chip' to organisations who have power through discretion over this. Further light could undoubtedly be cast upon these matters by the pursuit of further empirical work. In addition, there are advantages to be gained in subjecting the present empirical material to the analysis afforded by the wider literature on bargaining and organisational behaviour that has not been considered in this thesis. Amongst other work, it may usefully be discussed in the context of such work as that of Cyert and March[12] and Downs[13].

To move on to a further area for additional work, this concerns the questions raised about the dual-state thesis with regard to central-local relations. In the last section it was noted that whilst Saunders claimed that local councils had in Britain in recent years 'tried yet failed to resist central government'[14], there was in the case of *Training for Jobs* clear evidence that local authorities had successfully opposed central government -

not to the point of causing a complete policy climb-down, but certainly to the extent of significantly blunting the intended impacts of the strategy.

The question emerges as to how this was possible, given the extent of central government power so clearly demonstrated to exist. Reasons given in this thesis' particular instance have been strategic miscalculation of an attempted financial manipulation; the non-executant nature of the agency through which the government was seeking to act; the solidity of local government opposition; and the significance of key individuals outside central government in allowing the policy to be revised. The requirement of future research is to investigate whether each or any of these factors, or this particular combination of factors, was effective in this instance due to unique circumstances, or whether there are broader theoretical implications to be drawn. Only by considering a range of other examples against which the circumstances of the NAFE Agreement may be compared could such an evaluation be attempted.

A further question arises from the complete effectiveness with which the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) was able to impose similarly unpopular policies upon LEAs without meeting any effective opposition which was able to revise it in any way. The use of a large and unwieldy bill which required extensive use of parliamentary time to achieve this raises the question of whether significant change in the administration of further education can be achieved between periodic upheavals such as ERA, which by their very nature can only be accorded sufficient parliamentary time at extended intervals. The experience of *Training for Jobs* suggests that attempts at short-term strategies which circumvent major legislative change can be only partially effective; investigation of comparative examples would be necessary to arrive at a more definitive answer to this question.

Another aspect of potential work in this area which, given its more generally-focussed attention to nationally-driven issues, has not been conducted in this thesis is the relation of local geography to the factors impinging upon the need for local discretion in policy-making on vocational education and training. Such variables as local industrial and employment trends, skill shortages and demographic patterns are bound to influence decision-making in local further educational planning. A theoretical

examination of the influence of such matters in NAFE would provide an interesting additional angle to the material presented here.

The further restructuring of the NAFE bureaucracy

Focussing first upon the area of the thesis' particular enquiry, two highly significant changes have come into effect which have caused further restructuring of the NAFE bureaucracy since the empirical work for this thesis was carried out. These are the dismantling of the Manpower Services Commission, and its eventual replacement by a system of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) overseen by the Training Agency; and the new arrangements for the administration of NAFE set out in ERA, which gave LEAs a statutory responsibility for strategic planning whilst devolving a considerable amount of management and budgetary responsibility to individual colleges. These measures together thus remove the two players in the bureaucracy created by the NAFE Agreement - LEAs partly , through a diminution of their managerial role, and Area Offices altogether. Responsibility for NAFE planning within the Training Agency has been taken over by its Regional Offices.

A key development in this process has been the abolition of the annual Contract signed between Area Offices and LEAs, a central element to the NAFE Agreement, made redundant by the new responsibility imposed by ERA. With it went the last vestige of formal MSC authority in NAFE. The effects of this extensive changes upon the structures through NAFE is managed requires renewed work of the kind carried presented here, and would particularly seek to establish:

- how the removal of a formal Training Agency role in NAFE, whilst it retains control over the former LEA money it still contributes to their annual NAFE budget, affects the security of the financial basis upon which the joint planning process was originally based;

- what level of contact between LEAs and Training Agency personnel remains given the transfer of the operation to Regional level;

-   the extent to which contact between LEAs and TECs over NAFE planning has emerged, if at all, under the changed circumstances;

-   how the new powers of colleges to independently manage their own affairs has affected the LEAs ability to retain its supposedly continuing strategic role.

To consider the wider focus, an important future area of investigation involves attention to the wider issue of how the policy network responsible for vocational education and training (VET) should, ultimately, be structured. Given the evident difficulties which have emerged from the division at ministry level between 'education' and 'training', it is worth considering how the consequent tensions could be resolved. This would require considerable research enquiry of an intensive nature, exploring the feasibility of realigning long-standing responsibilities into a new structure without increasing the present complexity. It would rest heavily on further investigation of the role of bureaucratic interests in preserving existing policy networks for reasons quite aside from the maximisation of effectiveness in delivery.

NAFE practice

Again, to first consider further work at the most focussed level of the thesis on the practice of NAFE planning, a number of issues emerge. Whilst the continued development of all the areas considered in the course of Chapter 7 would be of future research interest, particular attention should be addressed to those areas which at the time of this study had not seen the progress for which the potential clearly existed. The principal area in question is the gathering of labour market information (LMI). The inadequacy of existing sources was a very evident difficulty hampering the development of NAFE planning at the time of this study, the MSC having still not adequately fulfilled its intended role in providing such a service. There were extensive suggestions made that the situation was being improved, and further research should be aimed at establishing whether this has in fact been the case. Particular foci of such enquiry would be:

- whether the MSC's successor, the Training Agency, has succeeded in meeting the widely identified need for LMI to be more localised;

- whether progress has been made in terms of converting raw labour market information, in the form of extensive data, into labour market *intelligence*, which would be much more expressive of the requirements of NAFE that the information implies.

Another area for further research is the progress made by LEAs in the monitoring of NAFE. Whilst their performance was by no means inadequate at the time of the present study, it was noted that progress was still being hampered by the lack of adequate computerised management information systems in most LEAs. Since this situation was anticipated to improve considerably in the short term, an investigation of how this had impinged upon the effectiveness of NAFE monitoring would be of considerable interest.

The analysis of LEA NAFE Development Plans indicated that the quality of these had increased considerably during the early years of planning, with moves towards slimmer, more succinct documents with sharply-defined statements of aims and objectives. The extent of subsequent progress in this area would be of considerable interest. Particular aspects which might be attended to are:
- whether progression from one Plan to the next has continued to show marked improvement, or whether there is evidence of a 'learning curve' already causing a slowing of development within each time period;

- whether there is any evidence of the emergence of a 'model Plan' which has come to be commonly replicated across England and Wales, or whether Plans remain diverse and highly locality-specific. This would include an investigation of which have proved more useful, short, concise documents or longer, more thorough Plans.

Another key area for further research is the investigation of curriculum change in

NAFE. The influence or otherwise of the NAFE Agreement upon the delivery of NAFE courses is likely to become increasingly measurable as each year goes by, and curriculum trends can be more reliably identified. Research in this area represents an opportunity for an ongoing enquiry which may be continually updated as new information progressively becomes available. Particular areas of interest would be the addition of the new and discontinuation of the redundant, as well as courses which continue in a redesigned form. However, such work would need to be coupled with an associated enquiry into the reasons behind such changes, in order to establish the significance of NAFE planning as a factor of change. The use of college sampling would probably be the most effective approach, a strategy of enquiry quite different to that planned in the present thesis.

Leaving aside the finer detail of the specific components of the thesis' enquiry, it is important that more work be done at a wider level identifying the processes through which vocational education and training can be most effectively planned and administered. The dangers of concentrating attention upon a strategy seeking immediate results have been highlighted here; the need is clear to move towards a greater understanding of what in the longer term are the most appropriate VET delivery mechanisms. This requires a greater emphasis upon developing processes above the sometimes random pursuit of particular outcomes. Only with such understanding can the broad objective of making provision responsive and relevant to all VET clients become attainable.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1. Interview with local MSC NAFE officer, 1.11.88.
2. Interview with ACC officer, 21.3.88.
3. FEU, 1989.
4. Nicholson, 1986.
5. McGrew and Wilson, 1982.
6. Selznick, 1957.
7. Lipsky, 1980.
8. Saunders, 1984.
9. Nicholson, 1986.
10. Rhodes, 1988, p.87.
11. *Ibid.*, p.95.
12. Cyert and March, 1963; March, 1988.
13. Downs, 1957; 1967.
14. Saunders, 1984.

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INTERVIEWS

The following is a list of interviewees cited in the text. In addition there were conducted a number of preliminary interviews which were not directly cited, but nonetheless significant in the development of the thesis. These were mostly at MSC Head Office at Moorfoot, but also at its TVEI unit in London. Interviews with Pamela Young and Michael Young at the Institute of Education, University of London were also of early importance to the work.

Apart from academics, the names of the interviewees are not revealed; this is an aspect integral to the research methodology as outlined in Chapter 5. The localities in which interviews were conducted are listed at the end.

Informal interviews were conducted with:

LMI Unit officers at MSC Head Office, Moorfoot, 17.2.87.

Leonard Cantor, Loughborough University, 8.1.88.

Officer in NAFE operations division at Moorfoot, 29.3.88.

NAFE finance officer at Moorfoot, 29.3.88.

NAFE Development Fund officer at Moorfoot, 29.3.88.

Further Education Unit officer, 20.5.88.

Association of County Councils officer, 21.3.88.

LEA NAFE officers: 9.2.88; 2.3.88; 16.3.88; 23.3.88; 6.5.88.

MSC Area Office NAFE HEOs: 5.5.88; 1.11.88; 7.11.88.

MSC Area Office NAFE EO, 5.5.88.

Senior MSC NAFE administrator at Moorfoot, 27.4.89.

MSC survey interviews

The nature of the localities in which MSC interviews were conducted is shown, along with the letter by means of which are referred to in the text of the thesis.

a - an office covering a single midlands county authority, the office being located in its largest city. Here two officers were present, one from the local Regional Office;

b - an office covering two northern metropolitan districts;

c - an office covering two counties in the east of England;

d - an office covering one large and one small LEA in the south of England;

e - an office covering a single county authority in the industrial north-east of England;

f - an office covering two LEAs in south Wales;

g - an office covering five London boroughs;

h - an office covering three metropolitan districts in a north-western city;

j - an office covering a west Midlands shire.

Eight of the nine MSC regions in England and Wales were represented in this sample.

Interviews of one type or another were conducted in the following localities:

Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Hampshire, Leicestershire, London (inner and outer), Manchester, Sheffield, South Glamorgan, Staffordshire, Suffolk.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AFE	-	advanced further education
ACC	-	Association of County Councils
AMA	-	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
AO	-	Administrative Officer
ATS	-	Adult Training Strategy
B/TEC	-	Business and Technical Education Council
CALLMI	-	Computer-assisted local labour market information
CBI	-	Confederation of British Industry
CEE	-	Certificate of Extended Education
CELP	-	College Employer Links Programme
CEO	-	Chief Education Officer
CGLI	-	City and Guilds of London Institute
CPVE	-	Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education
CRF	-	Central Reserve Fund
CTC	-	Central Training Council
DE	-	Department of Employment
DES	-	Department of Education and Science
DoE	-	Department of the Environment
DTI	-	Department of Trade and Industry
ED	-	Employment Division (of the MSC)
EO	-	executive officer
ERA	-	Education Reform Act
ESA	-	Employment Services Agency
ESF	-	European Social Fund
ESGs	-	Eduction Support Grants
FE	-	further education
FEU	-	Further Education Unit
FESC	-	Further Education Staff College
FESR	-	Further Education Statistical Record
FTE	-	full-time equivalent
GCE	-	General Certificate of Education
GLC	-	Greater London Council
GRP	-	grant-related poundage
HE	-	higher education
HEO	-	Higher Executive Officer
HMI	-	Her Majesty's Inspectorate

ILEA	-	Inner London Education Authority
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
ITBs	-	Industrial Training Boards
ITOs	-	industrial training organisations
ITC	-	Industrial Training Council
ITeCs	-	Information Technology Centres
JES	-	Joint Efficiency Study (by the DES and LAAs)
LAAs	-	local authority associations
LCPs	-	Local Collaborative Projects
LEA	-	local education authority
LMI	-	labour market information
MDF	-	Mutual Development Fund
MIS	-	management information system
MSC	-	Manpower Services Commission
NAFE	-	non-advanced further education
NATFHE	-	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
NCVQ	-	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NEDC	-	National Economic Development Council
NSTOs	-	non-statutory training organisations
NVQ	-	National Vocational Qualification
OMSC	-	Office of the Manpower Services Commission
PER	-	Professional and Executive Recruitment
PCFC	-	Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council
RAC	-	Regional Advisory Council
RFEA	-	regional further education adviser
RSA	-	Royal Society of Arts
RSG	-	rate support grant
SEO	-	Senior Executive Officer
SPD	-	Special Programmes Division (of the MSC)
TD	-	Training Division (of the MSC)
TECs	-	Training and Enterprise Councils
TOCs	-	Technical Occupation Categories
TOPs	-	Training Opportunities Programme
TSA	-	Training Services Agency
TTWA	-	travel to work area
TUC	-	Trade Union Congress
TVEI	-	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
VET	-	vocational education and training
WJEC	-	Welsh Joint Education Council
YOP	-	Youth Opportunities Programme
YTS	-	Youth Training Scheme

Appendix A

Policy provisions of the NAFE Agreement.

The section below offers a summary of the various proposals which together made up the provisions formulated under the NAFE Agreement. This is drawn largely from the *Guidance Handbook*, and represents the nearest thing to a concrete written policy that emerged from *Training for Jobs* and its aftermath.

Summary of the Agreement's provisions:

(i) *Development Plan* - to be produced by LEAs at the beginning of each academic year, starting in 1986-7, covering work-related NAFE provision. This was be an overview for a three-year period, and to be updated to cover a new three-year period at the start of each new academic year.

The Development Plan would be owned by the LEA, but drawn up after consultations with employers, trade unions, the local RAC, HMI, the careers service and other interested parties, and subject to approval by the MSC.

The Plan would set out the LEA's NAFE aims and objectives for the three year period, and set targets for their achievement. As a means of satisfying this requirement a list of criteria were identified, indicating that the Plan was to include:

- a list of organisations consulted for collection of labour market information (LMI) and for liaison with employers/employees;
- explanation and review of arrangements for consultation;
- sources of information about needs;
- review of existing provision;
- trends in enrolments and employer demand;
- extent of expected changes in demand;
- effectiveness of resource allocation;
- priorities and emphasis on certain areas;
- any rationalisation of provision;
- proposals for institutional or structural change;
- priorities for in-service training;

- indication of how capital and revenue resources were to be allocated;
- description of the major employment issues of the area;
- assessment of the likely main structural changes in employment;
- characteristics and changing balance of the student population;
- description of all LEA and other local training facilities;
- expected changes in range and nature of provision.

The guidance recognised that many LEAs would not be able to meet all of these criteria in the first year, and asked that they attempt to pursue them 'as far as practicable'.

(ii) *Annual Programme* - this was to set out the detail on proposed provision of courses during the first year of the Plan, and how they related to the LEA's objectives. It was to cover the whole of its work-related provision, not a portion of it funded separately by the MSC. On an institution-by-institution basis it should specify:

- new courses;
- redesigned courses;
- existing courses;
- courses to be discontinued,

with justifications in each case. It should also provide information about course levels, entry requirements and staff-student ratios. Other items to be included were:

- in-service training and staff development;
- proposals for new forms of delivery, such as open and flexible learning;
- institutional changes;
- major items of capital expenditure;
- changes in marketing/resources/systems;
- improvements in information systems.

The programme was to be fully costed in the format used for FE budgets,

identifying expenditure by each institution. This information was to be the basis of the transfer of funds from the MSC and of the annual contract.

(iii) *Contractual agreement* - to be signed between the MSC Area Manager and a senior officer representing the LEA, this was to formalise the transfer of MSC's NAFE resources to the LEA. It would cover the same period as the Annual Programme, i.e. the first academic year of the Development Plan. It would depend on the Area Manager's being satisfied with the proposals contained in the Annual Programme, and its continuing validity throughout the year would rest on the programme being satisfactorily delivered.

(iv) *Financial arrangements* - The national MSC NAFE fund was to be devolved to its regional offices on the basis of the number of NAFE students in that region, as indicated by the FESR. This would in turn be devolved for allocation to individual LEAs, based again largely on the FESR, but with a 0.5 per cent margin for discretion on the basis of other factors taken into account by the Regional Office, such as identified changes in the labour market or in skill demands. The MSC funding given to LEAs was seen as a contribution to the whole of its provision, not as covering a specified portion, reflecting its 'shareholding' role identified earlier.

Transfer payments would be made monthly to LEAs, and their continuation would depend upon delivery of the Annual Programme. Should the Programme or a portion of it not be delivered, the contract provided for the abatement of MSC payments. This was seen very much as a last resort, LEAs and MSC Area Offices being asked to seek to deal with problems before this stage was reached; provision for re-negotiation, on the basis of a revised programme, was made to minimise the possibility of abatement taking place. Area Managers could suspend payments whilst re-negotiation was conducted, and re-commence monthly payments at a different sum once a new agreement had been reached. The full sanction was available if required nonetheless, and the abated sum would be calculated according to the size of the MSC's contribution to the courses not delivered.

At the end of each financial year the LEA's chief financial officer was required to

certify that all MSC contributions had been spent on work-related NAFE and that no part of the costs was borne by or claimed from any other source.

No funding was to be allocated to either MSC Area Offices or LEAs for administering the new arrangements. Each was expected to finance the additional workload from its existing budget.

(v) *Monitoring* - this was to be conducted to ensure that delivery of the Annual Programme was continuing as planned, and to satisfy the MSC that the LEAs contractual obligations were being met. Key aspects for scrutiny were to be:

- the numbers of students starting and remaining on each course;
- the number of staff employed at each grade;
- total expenditure at each institution.

Emphasis was placed on local arrangements in this regard, reflecting the existence of peculiar local monitoring requirements, but the guidance nonetheless laid out certain minimum procedures. This involved a joint review in November/December to assess the opening of the Annual Programme, and a second joint review 'towards the end of each programme year' to examine the extent to which courses followed the plans for the year.

(vi) *Evaluation* - to be conducted alongside monitoring, this was to assess the extent to which the Programme objectives and their achievement (or otherwise) helped to further the overall aims of making NAFE more cost-effective and responsive to labour market needs.

(vii) *Central Reserve Fund (CRF)* - this was the proportion (5 per cent) of the MSC NAFE budget retained centrally for disbursal to strategic initiatives of national benefit, and to assist individual LEAs with sudden unexpected needs. This would include research and development into improving responsiveness, and also the possibility of funding non-LEA providers where the MSC felt this necessary. This represents the last remnant of the White Paper's notion that the great bulk, 'though

not necessarily all' of the MSC's NAFE resources would be spent in the public sector. The guidance indicates that any spending on non-LEA providers from the MSC mainstream NAFE fund could only occur with the agreement of the LEA.

(viii)*Labour market information (LMI)* - In line with the White Paper's statement that it would be the MSC's role to assist the flow of information about skill needs, the Commission was given the role of providing much of the information for the labour market report in Development Plan. The MSC was asked to provide:

- structure of employment by occupation and by industry;
- redundancy notifications;
- local demographic trends by age, sex and ethnic origin;
- trends in the number and composition of jobcentre and PER vacancies, long duration unfilled vacancies and other (mainly national) skill shortage indicators;
- level and composition of people seeking work through local jobcentres;
- information on MSC plans relevant to work-related NAFE in the area.

It was to be the LEA's role to coordinate this information, and to provide certain information of its own. This included information from local planning, economic development and housing departments, and the LEAs own information on enrolments, participation rates and student destinations.

It was recognised that in the first year of planning the quality of LMI would not be as high as would be expected in subsequent years the information base being as yet 'fairly rudimentary'. Expected improvements in MSC's national and local LMI were to facilitate this process.

Appendix B

The LEA questionnaire survey.

L S E   DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
HOUGHTON STREET
LONDON WC2A 2AE

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF LEA OFFICERS ON NAFE MANAGEMENT AND PROVISION IMPACTS OF THE MSC

1. Authority : _____

2. Your name and telephone number : _____

3. Your title : _____

Section (a) NAFE planning process

1. Please indicate :

for office use

(1) the number of officers in the authority education department
   directly responsible for the preparation of the NAFE Plan .... _____

(2) the grade of these officers (e.g. 1st tier, 2nd tier etc.) .... _____

(3) total staff time devoted to NAFE planning centrally at the authority
   (please give approximate answer in staff weeks per year) .... _____

2. Does the authority budget the process of NAFE planning separately ?

YES ☐   NO ☐

If yes, please indicate the amount budgeted for the 1988-9 financial year .... _____

3. Who has compiled the authority's NAFE Plan ? Please answer for both the most recent and for the first plan.
   tick as appropriate]:

	first plan	most recent plan
(1) single LEA officer	☐	☐
(2) LEA team	☐	☐
(3) LEA/college team	☐	☐
(4) college staff writing those parts of the plan relevant to their institution	☐	☐
(5) LEA officer/team editing submissions written by college staff	☐	☐
(6) other (specify)	☐	☐

4. Which of the following make final decisions as to what is included in the draft NAFE Plan submitted to the elected members for approval ? Again indicate this for both the present and first year of planning [tick as appropriate]:

most recent
first plan   plan   for office use

(1) authority staff ....

(2) college staff ....

(3) a combination of authority and college staff ....

(4) other (specify) ....

5. Please indicate which if any of the following statements apply to your authority's NAFE planning process [tick as appropriate]:

(1) New staff posts have been created centrally at the authority since 1984 specifically for work on the NAFE Plan ....
   - If so, please indicate number of temporary [   ] and permanent staff [   ].

(2) New staff posts have been created in colleges specifically for work on the NAFE Plan ....

(3) Staff duties at authority level have been redistributed specifically to enable one or more officers to concentrate more fully on the preparation of the NAFE Plan ....

(4) New commitments generated by the NAFE Agreement have been met without significant alteration in the education department's staffing arrangements. ....

6. Which of the following members of the authority's colleges' staff are now, or were in 1984-5, involved in the compilation of the authority's NAFE Plan (please indicate whether they play an active, participatory role, or merely a consultative one) :

	1984-5		1988-9	
	Participatory	Consultative	Participatory	Consultative
(1) senior management				
(2) departmental heads				
(3) lecturing staff				
(4) inter-collegiate staff committees				
(5) other (specify)				

Please indicate if possible the approximate average staff time devoted to NAFE planning in the authority's colleges, giving your answer in staff weeks per year :

7. Please indicate for the following authority departments (a) the nature of any participatory role they may have in the preparation of the plan, and (b) whether their relationship with the education department has strengthened since 1984 [tick as appropriate]:

Department	Supplies information	Participates in planning	Relationship strengthened
(1) Planning			
(2) Chief executive's			
(3) Treasurer's			
(4) Economic Development			
(5) Personnel			
(6) Social Services			
(7) Other (specify)			

8. Do any other elected committees other than the education committee take on some direct responsibility for compiling the NAFE Plan ?

YES [   ]   NO [   ]

If yes, please indicate which ....

9. Does the authority have a board or committee specifically responsible for the production of or for comment on the NAFE Plan ? YES ☐ NO ☐

for office use

   If yes, which if any of the following are represented on it ?

   (1) elected authority members .... ☐

   (2) authority staff .... ☐

   (3) college staff .... ☐

   (4) MSC officers .... ☐

   (5) Careers Service officers .... ☐

   (6) HMI inspectors .... ☐

   (7) individual employers / employers' representatives .... ☐

   (8) Chamber of Commerce members .... ☐

   (9) trade union representatives .... ☐

   (10) other (specify) .... ☐

10. Please indicate whether the authority undertook for the purposes of its NAFE courses any of the following arrangements 1984-5, and whether it is doing so in 1988-9 [tick as appropriate]:
   Did or does the LEA :

	1984-5	1988-9
(1) Require its colleges to collect and and supply data on:		
(a) first destinations of leavers	☐	☐
(b) total enrolments	☐	☐
(c) enrolments for each course	☐	☐
(d) completion/drop-out rates by course	☐	☐
(e) information about when and why students leave courses early	☐	☐
(f) attendance figures by course	☐	☐
(g) examination results	☐	☐
(h) applications received annually by course	☐	☐
(i) relevance of leaver's acquired skills to their first destinations	☐	☐
(2) Hold a comprehensive record of all NAFE courses offered in its colleges	☐	☐
(3) Place such data onto a computerised management information record	☐	☐
(4) Have a planned NAFE marketing strategy	☐	☐
(5) Have a statement of proposed NAFE provision in the authority beyond the current academic year	☐	☐
(6) Develop information about teaching staff requirements beyond the current academic year	☐	☐
(7) Have a clearly defined set of NAFE objectives	☐	☐
(8) Produce a documented NAFE plan	☐	☐
(9) Conduct its own monitoring of NAFE provision in LEA colleges	☐	☐
(10) Conduct its own evaluation of NAFE provision in LEA colleges	☐	☐

11. Please indicate which if any of the following changes have occurred in your authority since 1984:

   (1) reorganisation of the education department .... ☐

   (2) reorganisation of the authority's colleges .... ☐

   (3) increase in the share of financial resources devoted by the LEA to post-16 activity .... ☐

12. In which of the following ways does the authority approach TVEI and YTS courses in drawing up
the NAFE plan. Are they: TVEI   YTS   for office use

   (1) fully integrated into the Plan with other courses ....

   (2) included in the Plan but under separate headings ....

   (3) not included in the NAFE Plan ....

13. To what extent is the authority involved in consultations with
other LEAs over NAFE :

                                                    Heavily   Actively   Little   No active
                                                    involved involved involvement involvement

(1) on a regional basis ....

(2) as a participant in the AMA/ACC NAFE Officers' Liaison Group...

Section (b) NAFE curriculum

14. Please indicate trends in the following for your authority, between 1984-5 and 1988-9, and the degree to
which you feel the NAFE Agreement has been a significant factor in any change:

                                                               Impact of NAFE Agreement

	large increase	increase	no change	decrease	large decrease	major impact	minor impact	no impact
(1) new courses								
(2) redesigned courses								
(3) discontinued courses								
(4) full-cost courses								
(5) short courses								
(6) certified modular courses								
(7) traditional apprenticeship courses......								
(8) amount of distance/open learning								
(10) number of TVEI 16-18 students								
(11) number of YTS students								

15. Does the authority at present, or did it in 1984-5, promote any of the following policies for course quality
    assessment in its colleges ?
(1) Follow-up questionnaire or interview survey of any of the following to investigate
    client satisfaction, course relevance, teaching quality etc.:   1984-5   1988-9

    (i) students ....

    (ii) employers ....

    (iii) Industrial Training Organisations ....

    (iv) Chambers of Commerce ....

    (v) students' parents ....

    (vi) community groups ....

    (vii) ethnic minority groups ....

    (viii) others (specify) ....

(2) Regular self-evaluation by course lecturers ....

(3) Course monitoring by committees representative of college clients ....

(4) Regular course monitoring by senior college staff ....

(5) Regular course monitoring by LEA inspectors ....

16. Is the authority's current NAFE plan :

   (1) treated as a discrete aspect of post-16 provision ....

   (2) integrated with other post-16 provision as part of a full FE programme ....

17. Does the authority / its colleges actively seek additional NAFE funding from or hold frequent discussions with any of the following :

	seeks funding	frequent discussions
(1) Industrial Training Boards		
(2) Non-Statutory Training Organisations		
(3) MSC		
(4) private-sector training bodies..		
(5) European Social Fund		
(6) Education Support Grants		
(7) PICKUP		
(8) College Employer Links Programme		
(9) Responsive College Programme		
(10) Local Collaborative Projects		
(11) others (specify)		

Section (c) Labour Market Information

18. Did the education department in 1984-5, or does it in 1988-9:

	1984-5	1988-9
(1) Engage in a systematic consultative process with employers		
(2) Record the number of consultations between college/LEA staff and employers		
(3) Record the nature of consultations between college/LEA staff and employers................		
(4) Assemble or employ any of the following labour market information:		
(i) written description of local labour market		
(ii) records of labour market data sources		
(iii) information on expected changes in local population and student numbers		
(iv) details of anticipated future employer needs		
(5) Hold discussions with employers about future training needs		

Please indicate any other form of labour market information collected by the authority which you consider important : _____

19. Please indicate the relative importance of the following sources of information on local NAFE requirements in terms of their degree of prominence with which they figure in the drawing up of planning priorities

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not used
(1) MSC - provided local labour market information (LLMI)				
(2) LLMI produced by authority-sponsored surveys				
(3) LLMI from other sources (specify)_____				
(4) comments volunteered by employers to colleges				
(5) information gathered from employers by college staff				
(6) informal sources, e.g. press reports				
(7) judgement of college staff				
(8) others (specify)				

20. What is your view of the LLMI provided by MSC ?

(1) excellent ....

(2) adequate ....

(3) inadequate ....

    - if so, please indicate whether you feel it is:

    (a) too detailed ....

    (b) needs to be more summarised ....

    (c) not sufficiently localised ....

    (d) too localised ....

    (e) other inadequacy (specify) ....

(4) improving ....

(5) not improving ....

Section (d) Factors of change.

21. Please indicate which of the following statements you would most agree with.

Changes which have occurred in NAFE since 1984 would :

(1) not have occurred without MSC involvement ....

(2) have occurred without MSC involvement but would have taken longer ....

(3) have occurred regardless of MSC involvement ....

22. Please rank the following factors in terms of their overall significance in altering the delivery of NAFE provision since 1984, adding any other factors you consider to have been important :

Rank

(1) MSC involvement ....

(2) other national influences, e.g. Audit Commission, Joint Efficiency Study etc. ....

(3) direct budgetary constraint through Rate Support Grant ....

(4) changes within the authority, e.g. in its political complexion, in its officer personnel etc. ....

(5) overall changes in economic, industrial and employment conditions in the 1980s.......................

(6) others (specify) ....

Section (e) YTS

23. Do any of the following act as a managing agent for YTS :

(1) the education department ....

(2) other authority departments ....

(3) authority colleges ....

(4) college departments ....

24. Please indicate if YTS has had any of the following effects on the authority's colleges :

(1) provision of new courses ....

(2) new staff appointments in colleges ....

(3) new cross-departmental structures within colleges ....

(4) adverse pressure on non-YTS courses ....

(5) others (specify) ....

Section (f) Relationship with MSC

25. Is there an officer appointed by the authority specifically to coordinate liaison with the MSC over a range of programmes ?

        YES ☐   NO ☐   If yes, date post established ..... _____

26. Please indicate the frequency of contact between the MSC Area Office and the authority education department over NAFE planning [tick as appropriate]:

    (1) day-to-day .... ☐

    (2) more often than once per week .... ☐

    (3) more often than once per month .... ☐

    (4) more often than once every three months .... ☐

    (5) less often than once every three months .... ☐

27. Please indicate the frequency of direct contact, if any, between the MSC and the authority's colleges in the three areas of NAFE planning, YTS and TVEI:

	NAFE planning	YTS	TVEI
(1) day-to-day	☐	☐	☐
(2) more often than once per week	☐	☐	☐
(3) more often than once per month	☐	☐	☐
(4) more often than once every three months	☐	☐	☐
(5) less often than once every three months	☐	☐	☐
(6) no contact	☐	☐	☐
(7) don't know	☐	☐	☐

28. For the same three programmes, does the authority:

	NAFE	YTS	TVEI
(a) welcome direct college-MSC contact	☐	☐	☐
(b) discourage direct college-MSC contact	☐	☐	☐
(c) neither encourage nor discourage contact	☐	☐	☐

29. Please indicate which if any of the contacts identified in the following matrix regularly occur(i.e. at least three times per year) between the MSC the authority's colleges [tick appropriate box / boxes] :

MSC: Colleges	Area Office staff	Area Manager	Regional FE advisor	Regional Director	TVEI Unit staff
Senior management					
Departmental Heads					
Lecturing staff					

30. Can the authority's relationship with the local MSC Area Office best be described as:

	1984-5	1988-9
(1) highly co-operative and productive working relationship	☐	☐
(2) good working relationship	☐	☐
(3) fair working relationship	☐	☐
(4) poor relationship	☐	☐
(5) very poor relationship	☐	☐
(6) distant and irrelevant relationship	☐	☐

for office use

31. Please indicate (a) whether the authority and the local MSC Area Office have engaged in any staff exchanges since 1984, and (b) if so, the number of staff involved :

	has occurred	no. staff	for office use
(1) MSC staff have been temporarily seconded to the education department			
(2) LEA staff have been temporarily seconded to the Area Office			

32. What level of support do you consider the authority to lend to each of the following MSC objectives in NAFE :

	Strongly supports	Supports	No view	Opposes	Strongly opposes	for office use
(1) Improving further colleges' responsiveness to employers' needs						
(2) Raising the profile of NAFE planning amongst LEA priorities						
(3) LEAs to develop a clearly defined set of NAFE objectives						
(4) Emphasis on manpower planning above other NAFE objectives						
(5) Tailoring shape and content of courses to employers'/other clients' specific requirements						
(6) Emphasis amongst client needs upon those of employers						
(7) Development of an LEA marketing strategy for NAFE						
(8) Heavy authority involvement in the collection of labour market information						
(9) Improving college cost-effectiveness						
(10)Increasing student-staff ratios						
(11) Increasing the scope and volume of curriculum and student data collected by LEAs						
(12) Greater monitoring and evaluation of NAFE by LEAs						
(13)Development of new learning strategies e.g. open learning, short courses						
(14)Greater course flexibility e.g. in lengths, starting dates, hours per week etc...						

33. Please indicate the nature of any problems you have experienced in dealing with MSC in the following areas :

(i) MSC Policy and Structure:	Major problems	Minor problems	No problems	for office use
(1) insufficient clarity of MSC objectives				
(2) unpredictability of MSC demands, i.e. problems of 'goalpost-shifting' at short notice				
(3) incompatibilty of MSC planning timetable with LEA committee cycles				
(4) incompatibilty of MSC and LEA budgetary cycles				
(5) rapid MSC staff turnover				
(6) uncertainty over criteria for allocation of Central Reserve Fund				
(7) insufficient integrartion of CRF projects with rest of NAFE planning				
(8) insufficient assistance with set-up costs of plan-related activities				
(9) specific funding allocated for insufficient periods of time				

(ii) Administrative Relationship

	Major problems	Minor problems	No problems	for office use
(1) lack of experience/understanding of educational matters by MSC staff				
(2) inaccurate assumptions made by MSC about past college performance				
(3) rigidity of MSC adherence to details of annual contract				
(4) speed with which MSC expects LEAs and colleges to take decisions				
(5) intervention in local matters by MSC head office				
(6) intervention in local matters by MSC regional office				
(7) unnecessarily larger burden of administrative work				
(8) duplication of demands already made by other bodies, e.g.DES,HMI.				
(9) duplication of demands between different branches of MSC				
(10) unnecessarily large requirement for information				

(please state which information, if any, proves

particularly problematic to collect) _____

34. Please give details of any other particular aspects or problems experienced by your authority has in dealing with the MSC : _____

_____

_____

35. Notwithstanding the provisions of the current Education Reform Bill, do you feel the needs of post-16 non-advanced provision would best be met:

(1) with continued MSC involvement in its present form ....

(2) with continued MSC involvement in a modified form ....

(3) without continued MSC involvement ....

- if so, would your authority prefer to see NAFE planning to be:

(a) left to individual LEAs ....

(b) overseen by an alternative national body. ....

- what form of alternative body would be more preferable ? _____

*****

Please insert any additional comments you would like to make on any of the above areas:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank-you for your time and co-operation in completing this questionnaire.

Please return it, enclosing if possible copies of your NAFE Plan and Programme and any other relevant material, to :

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