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Quality issues in post-16 education and training: Perceptions of the impact of quality systems on teachers

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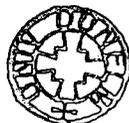
2004

Abstract:

The primary emphasis of this thesis is on the potential impact of quality systems on teaching staff and post – 16 education institutions as a whole, with a particular focus on Further Education, the author's area of work. A further emphasis is on the process that attempts to measure quality and an analysis is made of quality systems and various quality models adopted by educational organisations. The variety of quality systems introduced into organisations to promote quality is examined and investigated including the OfSTED/ALI Common Inspection Framework (CIF), Investors in People (IiP), the IS0 9000 series, Total Quality Management (TQM), Excellence for Quality Model (EFQM), the National Health Service Commission for Health Improvement and the Self Assessment process. There is a particular focus on the factors that can affect the quality of provision. Broad contextual issues are discussed, particularly the unique, historical background of Further Education and the associated ideological questions that arise in response to this focus. There is recognition within the research and the literature of both external and internal pressures on education and training organisations within the sector from systems that are designed to promote quality. The thesis explores the effect of different systems on individuals within a range of organisations. The research focuses on eight teachers in the post-16 sector who explore the impact of quality systems in their organisations and their perceptions of the effect on themselves and their colleagues. Issues relating to the impact of quality systems on staff are identified; the relationship between the intended and the actual effect of the systems are discussed and ways forward to improve quality in the sector are suggested and explored.

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1.0   Introduction – The Importance of Quality in the Sector

The post-16 sector is continually being asked to provide evidence that it is meeting high standards and providing a quality service, both nationally and at a local level. It is widely recognised that quality systems are used to provide evidence of performance that can be used to improve the quality of organisations. Although there is a large amount of published work describing and often promoting the application of quality systems there is relatively little published research examining teachers' perceptions of the impact quality assurance and quality control systems can have on them and their colleagues. Recent research by Common (2003) analysed the views of senior managers in Further Education as to the effect of quality systems on the development of their organisations. The systems referred to in Common's study included self-assessment and Investors in People, two of the systems referred to in my research. Common's recommendations for further research suggest exploring the same issues with a wider range of college staff. Rennie (2003) focused her research on exploring the impact of an OfSTED/ALI inspection on six individuals from three different FE Colleges. The six staff, five lecturers and a librarian logged their personal experiences of inspection as diary entries during the inspection week.

My thesis considers the perceived impact of quality systems across post-16 education and training. It includes a case study based on a small group of practitioners, eight newly qualified teaching staff who examine the affect of a variety of quality systems used in their organisations. My research is designed to highlight and analyse the quality issues that exist in the post-compulsory sector, with a particular focus on Further Education, the author's area of work. The literature review and the case study examine the effect of quality systems on staff working in the sector in the context of an analysis of why quality is deemed to be such an important issue.

Before the potential impact of the systems on colleagues can be explored, the wider contextual picture in the post-compulsory sector needs to be considered, with a particular focus on the factors that can affect the quality of the provision. In Chapter 2, broad

contextual issues will be discussed, particularly the unique, historical background of Further Education and the ideological questions that arise in response to this focus. There is a wealth of historical baggage within the sector that relates to quality. The present Government's agenda of skills and targets is cultivating a climate in which there is a major emphasis on the concept of quality – where the bottom line is the viability of organisations and their courses and the continuation or cessation of their funding. The research will explore the reasons for what is seen by practitioners in the sector as an excessive emphasis on quality systems, noting the tensions and suggesting possible solutions.

Different perceptions of quality will be discussed in Chapter 3. The effect of quality control and quality assurance and the credibility of various quality models within educational organisations will be examined critically in Chapter 4. Once we have examined different concepts of quality, how we measure it and whether the measures are effective for the post – 16 education and training sector become an issue.

Quality models tend to be presented as a given by writers such as W. E. Deming, in their various 'how to improve' manuals; however it is wrong to take them for granted. In addition to examining predominant concepts in education, the usefulness of business models in an education and training context will be considered and analysed. There tend to be few conceptual challenges around the use of business models in education and training; their effectiveness in promoting quality will be considered.

Where there is a public commitment to quality, quality control and quality assurance, the focus for quality improvement is often associated with the introduction of systematic institution - wide monitoring and evaluation systems. In Chapter 5, the variety of quality systems such as BSI, ISO 9000 and Investors in People will be explored. The systems are introduced into organisations to help to promote quality and standards; their potential impact on teaching staff and the organisation as a whole is the focus of this chapter.

There is recognition within the research and the literature of both external and internal pressures on education and training organisations within the sector from systems that are designed to promote quality. The research in this thesis will explore the effect of different systems on individuals within a range of organisations. The Government skills agenda and the effect such initiatives have in raising quality issues within post-16 provision will be considered. The introduction of the new Sector Skills Councils and their role in raising quality in the sector will be examined.

The plethora of organisations that exist, all applying external pressures to education and training institutions to ostensibly promote 'quality' standards in the delivery of their curriculum will be referred to throughout the thesis:

1. OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education),
2. ALI (Adult Learning Inspectorate),
3. The examination boards themselves through internal and external assessment procedures, City and Guilds, EdExcel, AQA, RSA, with a large part of their remit being to promote and monitor the quality of curriculum provision within the sector
4. FENTO, the national training organisation for Further Education exists to improve standards
5. DFES has shown direct interest in the sector

The diversity of the organisations listed above makes research on 'impact' more complex; the various organisations apply and promote their standards differently which can lead to subtle differences in impact.

In addition to the external quality systems, in their supportive or punitive guises, (the nature of their roles will be discussed later in the thesis), internal systems have been introduced and developed in education and training organisations across the sector. The White Paper, Education and Training in the 21st Century (DES 1991), encouraged and necessitated colleges to put in place effective internal systems to improve their quality and contribute to

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their own efficiency and effectiveness. Training organisations have since been encouraged to adopt similar systems of 'self-assessment'. The diverse methods adopted to manage internal quality systems add to the complexity of the research into the 'impact' on individuals and their organisations. The research methods employed in the thesis are discussed in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 7, the part of my research relating directly to impact involves case studies focused on the workplaces of a small group of students. They are under-graduates following a part-time BA (Hons) Education and Training. All eight students are teachers, delivering post-16 education and / or training, in both the private and public sector. Their work involved them considering the quality systems in place in their institutions and the effect of the systems on their colleagues and their organisation as a whole. They were able to use their work as part of a module they are studying on their BA programme. Their views and their findings will be discussed and evaluated as part of my research with conclusions and recommendations in Chapters 8 and 9.

2.0 The Wider Contextual Issues: Have they affected the Quality of Provision?

- ## A Brief Contemporary Background to Further Education

Further Education carries a vast amount of historical baggage, unique to this sector. Explaining the historical context in this thesis will help to define and lead to an understanding of how quality, quality control and quality assurance are perceived by post – 16 practitioners today.   Some statistics may help to understand the scale of the sector:

- The 400 colleges educate 4 million students, 7% of the population – every year
- 2 million vocational qualifications were awarded between 1997/8 – 2000/01
- 40% of students enter HE through the FE college route

<p align="right">(www.wired.gov July 2003)</p>

Training the workforce to the highest standards has been regarded as vital to be competitive in the world market. Government initiatives in the late 80s supported the view, with Neil Kinnock asserting investment in training would be 'the highest priority of all' (DfES, 1989), and the Department of Education declaring that 'British businesses must raise the skills profile of its workforce' (Ibid).

When the new Conservative Government targeted education as one of the public services that needed radically changing they had a strong commitment to a free enterprise culture. The Education Reform Act (1988) was underpinned by ideology that reflected a free market economy which supported competition, privatisation and efficiency. Newton and Tarrant, 1992:147 describe the conservative legislation as 'setting up the ideal 'night watchman' – style state... In such a situation the state sets minimum standards and provides minimum financing and then monitors the results'.

The Education Reform Act (1988) introduced financial delegation and self-governance to colleges. The responsibility for education moved towards a more centralised model that effectively reduced local government control:

<p align="center">8</p>

'Educational provision was generally regarded as a three-way partnership between central government, local government and the teacher unions and was probably understood as a national system, locally administered'. (DES, 1988)

The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) launched the new national Further Education Funding Council, (FEFC) that took over the financing of colleges from the Local Education Authorities, (LEAs). This ended nearly a century of local support by local authorities. The FEFC acquired exchequer funding that transferred from the LEAs. This resulted in some advantages of efficiency but many disadvantages, one being the demarcation between young people, pre and post -16. Also, the local knowledge of the LEA and regional judgements based on the needs of the potential post – 16 learners in specific areas was lost as the new funding methodology introduced by FEFC in 1994 was applied blindly to all colleges. The necessity to apply criteria mechanistically, and with an inability to take account of local problems where colleges did not conform to the national norm, was directly related to the fact that the power was concentrated at the centre:

'...the most serious consequence was to make colleges less responsive to education and training needs in their localities.' (Wymer, 1996:30)

'The pressures on individual colleges were considerable during this time, especially the frequent audits as the FEFC attempted to collect reliable information.' (Ibid: 5)

The Act incorporated FE and sixth form colleges as independent FE corporations. They acquired new responsibilities with control passing from the LEA. Financial, personnel and premises management, payroll systems, internal and external auditing, legal advice, banking insurance and taxation were all functions previously taken by the LEA – now they were to be performed by the college and its agents, all adding to the administrative burden for each individual college. As far as quality is concerned, the numbers of 'support staff', supporting the administrative systems, multiplied during this time whilst academic staff experienced diminished funds for their curriculum development, staff development and resources.

Wymer (1996:1) argues, rightly in my opinion, that the main reason the Act 'failed to tackle the main problems' was that the Department for Education, 'knew very little about further

education colleges'. The Act was introduced on a fairly tight time-scale; the Government belief was that FE was over - funded and uneconomic and there was room to be more efficient. The intention of this change was to make colleges more directly responsible and independent with cost - effective management made more accountable and with colleges more responsive to the market place; this was part of a growing 'accountability' agenda.

Ranson and Stewart (1994:112) talk of a 'new order', which began to emerge signalling a greater interest in the public accountability of institutions:

'Public services will become more accountable when they are made to respond directly to the choices of the individual consumers'.

They outline the Conservative Government view of the public sector:

'...Public organisations have purportedly been self – interested and unresponsive to the public... If public organisations were only private, it is contended, then problems of efficiency and bureaucracy would disappear'. (Ibid: 112)

When Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Education introduced the white paper, Education And Training for the 21st Century; he knew 'very little about further education'. (Wymer, 1996:1)

'For the majority of politicians and civil servants, further education colleges have some sort of vague role in the grey area between schools and universities'. (Ibid:1)

The effects of the Act were wide - ranging. A new competitive spirit was born amongst colleges. Agreements that had existed between local authority colleges had allowed specialisation in given areas of the curriculum; under the new act they were scrapped and existing franchises were terminated. This new competition heralded the beginning of the focus on quality issues and accountability.

Competition within the sector was enhanced further by the Act ending the requirement that potential new post-16 providers must gain the sponsorship of an existing college before receiving FEFC funding. Smaller training providers who had previously looked to the

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colleges for partnership and support were now able to approach the FEFC for their own individual funding. This often led to similar or identical courses being offered in direct competition by colleges and training providers who had previously worked in partnership. The Government took the view this more highly competitive market was to be useful and beneficial, improving standards and discovering new sources of talent and energy but ignored the fact that the creation of this competitive ethos ran the risk of damaging the quality of provision and distracting the sector in its educational goals.

The previously regarded 'historical strengths' of FE, its 'responsiveness to community need and hence diversity', became a perceived weakness following the Act of 1992 in terms of complying with FEFC regulations. (Wymer, 1996:33) In terms of the purpose of the Act, which were to improve, expand and make more efficient education and training at 16 plus – Wymer claims that 'the Act did less than half a job.' (Ibid: 5)

The Act itself did nothing to address the structural problems which prevent a unifying approach post-16: the divisions between school sixth forms and colleges, academic and vocational studies, education and training, vocational and non-vocational education persisted. The vocational role generally assigned to colleges tends to perpetuate a bilateral system at 16 plus, with academic GCE A levels (the route to traditional universities) in sixth-form colleges and school sixth forms, and vocational courses in general further education colleges. The growth of work-based training providers has served to increase the complexity of the sector. The Dearing Report, Review of Qualifications for 16-19 year olds (1996), recommended that the two systems of academic and vocational qualifications should continue within a coordinating framework; the potential impact of the report that could have tackled the inequalities was diluted, it needed to go further to iron out the inequalities present in the system. Vocational qualifications delivered by general further education colleges are still seen by the majority as second – class, trailing behind the gold standard of the academic route provided by school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. There has over the last two years been a growth in vocational GCSEs and an increased flexibility programme aimed at combining academic and vocational curriculum subjects for students post-14. There has

been some slight movement away from the widely - held view that 'the contribution of colleges is assumed to be largely confined to young people disadvantaged by a raw deal at school.' (Wymer, 1996:94)

Historically, FE institutions have grown up to serve the educational and career aspirations of a distinctive occupationally defined social stratum; it will be argued that this complexity is not taken into account enough in creating quality systems. Frankel and Reeves (1996:38) explain how the past and current selection of knowledge that distinguishes the FE curriculum is closely related to the functions performed by this strata: 'accordingly, any study of the FE curriculum which did not mention its social-class basis would be incomplete'. A broad generalisation can be made that 'technical education coalesced around the education of young people from groups, such as lower professionals, trades - people, and skilled workers, to the exclusion of the upper and middle classes whose children stayed at school to eighteen or went to University' (Ibid: 38). The children of the semi and unskilled working class tended to begin to work at the earliest possible age and gained any necessary experience they needed on the job and historically became the typical customers of the Further Education sector. It is not generally the high flying academic school leavers who use this sector; it is often students being given a second chance to succeed having failed, or having been failed by, the school system. Target-setting uses national benchmarks and league tables which are applied uniformly to the sector as a whole, instead of measuring 'value-added', the improvement and development of the young people learning within organisations in the sector. It could be argued that the quality of the provision is not always being judged fairly.

The funding of the sector is also ultimately a major issue affecting quality. The funding for FE is still focused on the 16-19 age range to the virtual exclusion of people of retirement age, despite a growing recognition of the concept of life-long learning. (Ibid: 41) A key factor in determining the quality of the provision to its students is FE's cost and who is to bear it. Are FE students to be supported by their families, themselves, the state, or employers?

A common view of quality relates to customer satisfaction; that if you find out what the customer wants and give them what they want then you will have happy customers and ones who will want to return. To research into what the customers want you need to first identify the customers. In the FE sector they are of a wide age - range and ability, (a fact which is sometimes under-estimated, as will be described).

Prior to the Education Reform Act (DES: 1988) and then the Further and Higher Education Act (DES: 1992) young people under the age of 16 were sent on link courses from schools into FE colleges. The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) introduced Technical & Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), that supported projects promoting vocational education in 11 – 16 schools. LEAs then had responsibility for schools and colleges. Following incorporation, in 1992, link courses began to disappear as colleges were separated from the LEAs and post – 16 courses became established as qualifying for finance from the Funding Council. New initiatives have since been encouraged with the birth of the Local Learning Skills Councils, (LLSCs), replacing the Further Education Funding Council, (FEFC) as the main funding body. (Finkel, 1979:42) The Government's 14-19 agenda has led to a move to increased flexibility in the 14 – 16 curriculum, with a return to TVEI - type projects.

Finkel (1979) describes the historic emergence of the pattern of age – related, 16-19, college attendance as a consequence of such factors as the statutory age at which pupils could leave school, day – release arrangements of employers for technical and vocational courses, and the common age of University entry. He explains how the concentration of post 18/19 advanced FE courses in the polytechnics, which have since migrated to higher education, served to reinforce the construction of 16-19 FE.

The stereotype of Further Education institutions supplying mainly 16 – 19 provision can be wildly inaccurate with colleges providing opportunities for large numbers of adult students. Students who are registered as unemployed can continue to draw benefit providing they remain available for work. Mature, women - returners attend college to gain qualifications

prior to re-entering the labour market. There is also a demand for training from adults who have lost jobs, are threatened with redundancy, or need to update their skills to succeed or gain promotion. Advanced qualifications and a highly skilled and flexible work force are in increasing demand as, simultaneously, industry sheds unskilled and semi – skilled manual jobs, (Ibid: 43).

There has been a large increase in the last twenty years in the number of both men and women in FE and HE – the largest increase being of women. Of the 2.4 million students in FEFC – funded FE courses in 1994-95 53.6% were women: only in the minority category of sandwich courses did men outnumber women, (FEFC, 1996). The expansion of opportunity has not been accompanied by the disappearance of male – dominated or female dominated areas of employment or of the FE curriculum. The vast majority of students studying science, engineering, and construction are male, while women form the majority on nursing, child –care, and lower – level commercial courses.

Despite the fact that large numbers of students in FE are poor, unemployed, and train for crucial intermediate – skilled jobs in industry, FE has been consistently funded well below the level of HE and sixth forms in schools. 27% of college students come from the 15% most disadvantaged wards, (www.wired.gov). 'The FE curriculum is conceived in terms of social class – of provision for intermediate and lower social strata – and funded accordingly', (Finkel, 1979:54). The level of funding can only result in affecting the quality of the provision. There is such a wide range of students using the sector, the customer – base is so diverse, quality systems may assume too much and not take into account the value – added aspect of education and training in their application.

The sector has gone and is still going through, massive change. The quality of the provision has been subject to many external pressures with funding at the heart of the problem. Compared to both HE and sixth forms – the level of funding is smaller. There has been a lack of understanding of the sector shown at the highest levels. With the emergence of New

Labour both David Blunkett and Bryan Davies had experience of FE and understood the issues, but 'it was not party policy to give it priority' (Wymer, 1996:3)

Further education colleges carry no political weight: 'the conventional wisdom is that there are no votes in it', (Ibid: 2).

FE is widely referred to as the 'Cinderella sector' with a lack of parity in pay and conditions. More recently the sector has been the focus of a range of Government initiatives including reports by Kennedy (1997), Tomlinson (1993), Dearing (1996), and Higginson (1996). Of the £100 million of extra funding being promised to FE in 2003, £60 million of it was promised to encourage 'widening participation'. 'It has long been recognised that the true costs of teaching widening participation students have not been recognised by the government', (Guardian, May 30th 2000). Perhaps now this is beginning to be addressed. In considering quality issues within the sector, the teaching staff play a vital role. The next section will consider the contextual issues impacting on teaching and ultimately the effectiveness of a sector where there is often no security of tenure for staff and their pay and working conditions have been eroded.

- **The Post – 16 Teaching Profession**

Investment in staff development is vital to quality. The staff in the post – 16 sector have seen massive changes in the last twenty years; the quality of the sector in relation to the teaching profession has been influenced by key events affecting the initial training and staff development of its teachers and their conditions of service. Some of the key dates will be discussed in relation to these issues.

a) **The 70s and 80s**

In 1973, lecturers in colleges of education and further education were grouped with lecturers in polytechnics; taken together colleges had a full-time teaching force of approximately 66,500. On the basis of the best available estimate the total teaching force required by 1981

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was expected to be about 90,000; the expansion in the teaching staff required in the sector encouraged the 1975 Advisory Committee to report that FE teachers were not required to have 'qualified status'.

In the 1970s only about one third of the existing teaching force in colleges and polytechnics were trained, in the sense of having successfully taken a full course of professional teacher training leading to a Certificate in Education. Some of the remainder had taken part – time courses leading to 'other qualifications', RSA, City & Guilds courses. The Advisory Committee (1975:3) reported that, 'The absence of a pre – service training requirement for FE teachers had led to the development of a variety of methods to encourage teachers to train voluntarily'. The Committee described the need for professional teacher training in FE to be as great as that in schools, 'we cannot therefore regard as satisfactory one third of the teaching force is in fact fully trained', (Ibid: 4). 'Our first recommendation is therefore that not later than 1981 there should be a training requirement for all new entrants to full – time teaching in FE who have less than 3 years F/T equivalent teaching experience', (Ibid: 5).

With the introduction of University status for the polytechnic system in 1992 FE lecturers were isolated between the compulsory sector and the HE system. The recommendation from 1975 was not supported by government mandate until twenty six years later, leaving staff during the interim period without qualified teacher status and organisations open to the criticism of a lack of qualified staff able to deliver a quality service.

b) 1993 – The Incorporation of Colleges

Following the incorporation of colleges in April 1993, staffing became an issue that was to have a bearing on quality in the sector. The Colleges Employers' Forum (CEF) encouraged college management to gain a new commitment from their staff in the form of a more flexible contract of employment. The CEF began negotiations with the unions on the new contract: the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, (NATFHE) withdrew due to what was seen as the high-handed approach taken by the CEF. The aggressive stance from CEF towards the settlement led to colleges having funds withheld by

the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) until their employees had signed the new contract with academic staff having any salary increase withheld until they agreed to sign. Eventually, after a bitter dispute, NATFHE recommended their members moved to local negotiations, which led to colleges drawing up their own contracts and FE lecturers across the country signing up to a wide variety of differing working conditions. Generally, the commonality of the new contracts included vastly reduced holidays, longer weekly hours, substantial increases in teaching contact hours and reduced entitlement to sickness benefits and maternity leave. Some staff refused to sign and remained on the original 'Silver Book' conditions, working conditions that had been negotiated nationally; as a result they suffered loss of negotiated pay awards and, in some cases, victimisation.

Since 1993 and incorporation, staff in FE have seen their conditions of service worsen, the gap between lecturers' and school teachers' pay has widened to around 10%, (NATFHE letter to MPs 2000). The use of agency staff, cheaper to employ than directly employed lecturers has led to fewer full-time opportunities in the sector with some colleges now employing part-timers to teach as much as 50% of their curriculum, (FEFC, 1997). Quality systems have to involve everyone in an organization to be fully effective. Part – time staff members have a key front – line role and yet are often marginalized. Quality surfaced as an important issue at the same time as incorporation when staff were faced with aggressive disputes over contracts and major curriculum changes. Quality systems appeared as yet another set of externally – imposed initiatives to add to the heavy workload of already stretched staff in under – funded colleges.

c) 1994

A further blow to the staffing in FE came in 1994. The House of Lords held that different thresholds to statutory entitlement for part-time workers were discriminatory on the grounds of sex. Where this should have worked in favour of part – time staff in the FE sector, it resulted in 'the large - scale dismissal of part-time employees, who were then re-employed as agency staff on self – employed contracts…employed to do exactly the same work as before,

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usually on a reduced rate of pay... in many cases the same people; the only reason for the change in status was to avoid providing part-time workers with equal rights' (www.natfhe.org.uk). This is another example of the abuse that the staff in FE suffered with many experienced and well – qualified staff dropping out of the system in frustration.

d) 1998 – Birth of FENTO

Robson (1998:585) describes the further education teaching profession as being 'in a state of crisis'. Wymer (1996:4) points out that the 'absence of a single voice speaking on behalf of further education', has led to the sector being used and abused. The Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) is beginning to supply the 'voice'; the organisation was inaugurated in 1998 as the body that supports the sector and promotes quality in education and training. It has a major role in introducing standards for staff development to improve the quality of the provision, although this is not as straight-forward as it sounds; there are sensitivities to be discussed. National Training Organisations (NTOs) are employer – led bodies, 'responsible for the development of skills to meet the business needs of employment sectors throughout the UK' (DFES, 2001). The main thrust of NTOs is to improve the quality of provision of organisations. Their primary role is described by the DfES as:

'galvanising employer involvement in the development and uptake of competence-based standards, education, training and qualifications to help businesses and improve competitiveness at home and abroad'. (DfES 2001)

It seems the promotion of competency – based standards and the drive to improve the quality of provision are inextricably connected in the NTO remit. FENTO's main activity is to develop national standards for all staff working within the FE sector and to raise the professionalism of those staff by disseminating good practice based on the standards. FENTO's aim is to move FE closer to having a full qualifications framework – giving lecturers and all college staff greater opportunities for continuing professional development.

The standards are designed to improve the quality of teaching. Hyland's (1996) view, is that the 'notion of a good teacher is not synonymous with the idea of a person who possesses a range of skills'. Such conceptions need to incorporate the vital ethical dimension of working life in which virtues, attitudes and values shape social practices by determining how people actually use the skills they have acquired in pursuing aims and goals. FENTO includes 'domain – wide knowledge' and 'critical understanding' as part of the teaching and learning standards and stresses the importance of both.

FENTO has produced standards and competences to support the professional development of lecturers but the focus has succeeded in being more holistic in its approach, promoting knowledge, skills and understanding of the role and its requirements, with reflection on virtues, attitudes and values included.

Hyland's (1996, 155) view that 'the inferior status of Vocational Education and Training (VET) has meant the moral high ground would always be occupied by academic studies with its links and associations with the classical ideals of liberal education' could mean that the introduction of standards, designed by FENTO to lift the profile of employees in FE could result in a lowering of status for FE lecturers in the academic world. Ideally, post – compulsory PGCEs and Certificates in Education need to provide a currency for employment, they need to be recognised in mainstream education and HE and regarded as a valuable tool to raise quality in the sector. The recent OfSTED survey, November 2003, and the DfES response later in the month made recommendations that will be reported later in the thesis. The complexities of initial teacher training for the sector and the effect on the quality of provision will be discussed later in this section.

E) April 2000 – The European Directive on Part-Time Work

This directive gave parity of pay rates and the right to take holidays and maternity leave, and equal access to pensions and training to part-time staff. Colleges reacted in a similar way as in 1994 by replacing part-time lecturers with agency staff; NATFHE interpreted FE reaction

as a 'pre-emptive strike by employers before the directive came into effect' (Lecturer, April 2000). One in five FE colleges now employs part-time lecturers through agencies. The FEFC staffing statistics 1996-97 indicated that 'nearly two thirds of the teaching force is made up of part-time lecturers'. (www.natfhe.org.uk)

The changes in the conditions of service and the casualisation of the sector led to many disillusioned skilled staff leaving and others being forced out; the loss of so many experienced staff from the sector had an impact on sustaining quality. In September 2000 an article in The Guardian pointed out that there have been 'roughly 25,000 redundancies from a full - time workforce of 135,000' this comes at time when there has been a huge increase in the number of students in the sector' (Guardian Education, September 19th, 2000).

f) April 2001 – The Introduction of the Local Learning Skills Councils (LLSCs)

The forty-seven regional Local Learning Skills Councils came into being in April 2001 following the Learning Skills Bill (DFEE 2000); the LSCs replaced the Further Education Funding Council and the Training Enterprise Councils, TECs. The regional LSCs are responsible for all planning, funding and evaluation of post – 16 learning provision and have produced new targets for 2004. Their work encompasses the changes in this sector including promoting widening participation, equal opportunity and diversity, and learning partnerships.

In 2001, the LSC in the Tyne and Wear region carried out an evaluation of the quality of skills and learning needs, identifying skills gaps in FE staff. Research skills, pedagogy and an awareness of new curriculum developments were highlighted as weaknesses. Both teaching and support staff were reported to have weaknesses relating to teaching or supporting the learning. The analysis focused on standards and yet revolved around the core of FE i.e. teaching and learning. The report concluded that skills gaps weakened the 'quality of provision'; they summarised this must result in students being taught and supported by less – qualified staff and therefore being disadvantaged:

'Extreme 'skills deficiencies' lead to situations where colleges could not meet the demand for learning opportunities, and the ultimate result is a lowering of skills in the economy. A small but significant proportion of teaching staff is neither trained nor qualified in teaching. Nearly half the support staff in FE appears to have no relevant qualification' (LSC skills audit Tyne and Wear, 2001).

g) February 2001 - Introduction of the Common Inspection Framework, (CIF)

A new inspection framework has been introduced into the sector with joint college inspections incorporating Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Office for Standards in Education, (OFSTED). The framework has changed its focus to put learners at the centre of the new arrangements. The inspection remit is wider and post -inspection action plans need local LSC approval if the college is judged as adequate and the curriculum areas are found to be satisfactory. The CIF and its effect will be examined more closely in Chapter 5.

h) September 2001 - Statutory Requirement for Initial Teaching Qualification

The teaching and learning standards became a statutory requirement for all new teaching staff entering the FE sector in September 2001. For existing staff there is no statutory requirement although the introduction of the teacher's pay initiative, (TPI) in 2001, remuneration that rewards initial teacher training, (ITT), continuous professional development, (CPD) and good classroom practice has been an encouragement for existing staff to gain a teaching qualification and to indulge in some continuous professional development.

- ### The Complexities of Initial Post-16 Teacher Education

Initial teacher training and CPD for staff are vital to support quality in the sector. The complexities within the initial teacher training system are often confusing for students, teachers and employers. FENTO, in consultation with practitioners in the sector, produced standards for teaching and learning that must be included in the initial teacher training qualifications for FE teachers; these are different standards to the competences that mainstream teachers need to complete during their training. Within the college system, it is accepted that mainstream teachers can transfer from teaching in schools into FE. I made this

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transition myself as did many of my colleagues. The reverse is not the case; qualified FE staff are not welcomed into schools generally, post-compulsory PGCEs and Certificates in Education do not confer Qualified Teacher Status, (QTS). One of the students involved in my research gained his Certificate in Education (FE) and is an excellent teacher; he is paid on the 'classroom assistant scale' because his teaching qualification is not recognised by the LEA Music Service, his employer.

During initial training mainstream students on PGCE courses can opt to do one teaching practice in an FE college, or sixth form. They will not be following a course designed to address the FENTO standards for teaching and learning, although there will be some commonality. When they are qualified they are able to work in the post – 16 sector, if they choose, although they will earn substantially less than their peers in the schools sector. With the growth of the 14-19 agenda and the blurring of the pre-16 / post-16 provision, staff in the post-16 sector are vulnerable; despite following FENTO approved qualifications and CPD courses they are often classed as sub-standard in mainstream education. The recent OfSTED report on ITT supports this view;

'The current system of FE teacher training does not provide a satisfactory foundation of professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers'

OfSTED, 2003

All HEI teaching qualifications for FE must be endorsed by FENTO. The question of initial training and continuous professional development for FE lecturers will be considered in the light of recent developments in the sector arising from external pressure to improve performance. The FE sector is being encouraged to meet the needs of the learning and skills agenda, 'the learning and skills era' referred to by David Hunter, the Chief Executive of FENTO, the Further Education National Training Organisation, (FENTO News vol2 no3 autumn 2001). When John Harwood, the Chief Executive of the LSC, overstated the poor performance of colleges in the media, claiming that 40% of the provision across the whole of the FE sector was unacceptable there was an outcry from FE staff leading to an abject apology from the chairman of the LSC within the week, (TES, 30/10/01); 'a blunder from which Harwood never really recovered' (TES, 16/1/04). More recent OfSTED figures show

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90% of colleges lessons as satisfactory or better, and a major LSC survey found 93% of college learners are at least satisfied with their learning experience, probably the highest public sector rating, (www.wired.gov July 2003). FE continually needs to prove that it is providing a quality service.

Stephen Grix, Head of the Post-Compulsory Education Division for OFSTED, highlighted a number of important quality issues for the FE sector at the 2001 FENTO Conference. The sector – wide issues he referred to included poor teacher recruitment, the need for staff development, putting students first – with the new focus by the inspectorate on learning, and the need for stability in the sector. The initial work by FENTO in its Skills Audit recognised that, although many lecturers are exceptionally well qualified, weaknesses do exist in the overall profile of qualifications as, for example, '12% of course and programme managers and 28% of part-time lecturers are not qualified as teachers'. (FENTO 2001)

2.1   Summary: Quality Issues set in Context

To summarise, it is clear that the scale of provision in this sector is vast; few educationalists would argue that the overall quality of the service is not vital. The FE sector is by far the biggest provider of learning opportunities outside of the school system. The sector serves four million students, most of them adults returning to learning. It is also the biggest provider of education and training to 16-19 year olds, serving 500,000 young people, compared with 400,000 in schools. The sector has grown in response to demand across the regions. Where FE has survived it has continued to respond to local / regional needs.

The present Government echo the view that investment in education and training can improve the economy and make the country more competitive, 'Education is the best economic policy we have'. (Tony Blair 1998).

Robson (1998:586) argues that many professional groups would have had difficulty withstanding the kinds of pressures that have been brought about by the Further and Higher Education Act, (1992):

'The FE teaching profession may have been particularly vulnerable, not for reasons that have to do with the competence of its members, but because of its history, its composition and its marginality within the education system, as a whole'.

The post – school agenda is ambitious and exciting but it cannot be delivered without the investment in the core of the sector. New learning initiatives are generally welcomed, as is the new professional qualifications structure for FE. Measures to increase access to higher education are positive but the teaching unions argue that there is a yawning chasm in the programme – under investment in college staff, sometimes exacerbated by discrimination in the institutions themselves.

'Quality invariably becomes entangled with cost – quality items are seen as expensive...'
(Chapman et al, 1993, pg 24)

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If high quality is associated with cost, which it generally is, then the 'Cinderella' sector lags behind mainstream education, and higher education and the quality of the provision is threatened. NATFHE, the Further Education lecturers' main union, outlines the central priority for the Labour Government is action to tackle the cash deficit at the heart of further education and to challenge institutional discrimination. NATFHE's message to the Government is: 'Cherish and invest in those charged with delivering your ambitions', (www.natfhe.org.uk, 2001).

The sector has suffered by a lack of representation, FENTO now exists to represent the sector and safeguard and promote quality. FENTO is a young organisation about to be engulfed into the new 'sector skills councils' system working with the Association of Learning Providers (ALP), the Higher Education Skills Development Agency (HESDA) and probably PAULO, the NTO for adult and community education. Whilst it is vying for position within the new system it is concurrently representing the FE sector on major issues and influencing government policy across the sector.

As a lecturer in FE for the last thirteen years I have witnessed a tremendous amount of change within a sector generally seen as providing a 'second class' service not utilised by the powerful in this society. A lack of understanding of the sector is repeatedly shown by MPs and Civil Servants generally who have a greater understanding of the traditional routes to Higher Education via sixth forms. If FE is to survive (and government promises are to be believed) the staff in the sector need to be strong and to prove their high quality.

The initial training and continuous professional development of staff therefore is important, along with motivation and high morale. The sector needs to show it has a highly skilled workforce that is able to provide a 'quality service'. In the next section the concept of quality will be discussed and the systems designed to promote and measure it will be introduced. The impact of quality systems on the teaching staff in the sector will be explored in later chapters.

3.0   Examining Concepts of Quality

The thesis centres on quality within the sector. Some time needs to be spent considering definitions of the concept from those practitioners within the sector and those involved in industry where most of the quality models derive to see how the industrial models can be applied to FE. The complexity of the definition and the models that attempt to enhance quality will be explored in the first section. The systems that attempt to measure the concept will be explored in the second section.

Since incorporation, colleges have become more 'business-like'; without the support of local government to cushion any overspend in their budgets, business and education have been brought closer together. Institutions have become more competitive with colleges and training providers encouraged to develop a business-like approach to their existence; target – setting, funding and budgeting having a higher profile. Even the post-16 terminology, the language we use to describe the teaching and learning process has become industrialised; the vocabulary of the market place has been adopted with students as 'customers', 'clients' and 'consumers' being the final arbiter of the 'product', courses being 'delivered' often in 'bite – size', 'pick and mix' modules. 'Service quality', 'customer loyalty', 'retention' and 'market share gain' can be best 'optimised' through a clear focus on the needs of the current and potential 'customers'. Industrial concepts have become more familiar and therefore maybe more acceptable with Education and Training now 'viewed as a product, a commodity to be marketed alongside holidays, house improvement, a new car', (Frankel, 1996:114).

If we can recognise that education and training is now moving closer to industrial models and education is now classed as a product, the quality of the product is important; the definition becomes vital. Evans and Lindsey (2002:11), list the responses of managers of 86 firms in the US when asked to define quality in relation to their product:

Perfection
Consistency
Eliminating waste
Speed of delivery
Compliance with policies and procedures
Providing a good usable product
Doing it right the first time
Delighting or pleasing customers
Total customer service and satisfaction

The above definitions from Evans and Lindsey's refer to products rather than people. Some of the definitions could be used to describe quality in education and training but others would be unsuitable and lead to serious questions about the relevance of the sector adopting industrial quality models. Harper (1997) poses the question whether it is always useful to compare, 'educational processes to the manufacture of goods'? (Harper, 1997:47) Since the incorporation of colleges, the sector has been encouraged to adopt quality models from industry; however, there is a complexity attached to educational processes that is not present in manufacturing and industrial models.

The FEFC recognised the 'human context' in education processes and provides a more humanistic definition of quality:

'high quality is an aspiration; quality, although not measurable, is amenable to professional judgement; and comparisons of quality between institutions must take into account the differences in mission and values', (FEFC, 1998).

There is a human component that is overlooked, or even irrelevant, in the business models; the process of teaching and learning is not dealing with identical, complete products.

In the commercial and industrial world, quality is usually taken to mean that which best satisfies and exceeds the wants and needs of the customer. Evans and Lindsey (2002:11) describe how quality can be customer-driven, 'the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy given needs', the official definition of

quality by American National Standards Institute and the American Society for Quality. By the end of the 1980s many companies were using the definition of quality as meeting or exceeding customer expectations. In FE, it is more difficult to use this type of definition as it is not necessarily clear who the customer is. Customers may be students, parents, employers, government, the community, HE or tax – payers. We have considered who the students / the customers are earlier, although the wider definition is more complex. Different criteria can be used to unpick the complex concept of quality; Evans and Lindsay (2002:12) suggest alternatives to the customer - driven model definition. The different perspectives are equally problematic:

- Judgemental criteria – highlights how quality is synonymous with superiority or excellence: Quality becomes the goodness of a product.

This perspective can uncover bias; the GCE A level system could be regarded as high quality but some educationalists would argue level 3 vocational courses were superior.

- Product – based criteria – a function of a specific, measurable variable and that difference in quality reflect the differences in quantity of some product or attribute.

In educational terms, league tables use this perspective; value – added, so important when considering student progression is not addressed by this criterion.

- User – based criteria – based on the assumption that quality is determined by what a customer wants – 'a fitness for intended use' (Ibid: 12)

This perspective could be the most useful in educational terms; the definition of 'customer' is problematic, but generally 'students' are the 'users' who require relevant courses and support.

- Value – based criteria – the relationship of usefulness or satisfaction to price

This perspective is used in the sector by the financers of the courses; the individual students, or the LSC question value – for – money when deciding whether to enrol or whether to provide funding. The perspective would not always be consistent; courses with small numbers are not viable and therefore not funded, the four students on a GCE A2 course do not get to complete their course, the usefulness of the course is viewed differently.

The definition of quality is complex; is it purely in 'the eye of the beholder'? Crosby (1995:6) argues it is an 'achievable, measurable, profitable entity that can be installed once you have commitment and understanding and are prepared for hard work'. I would argue that unless quality can be defined and agreed initially in a specific context then it is impossible to improve measure or control it.

In an introductory meeting organised in connection with my research, the BA students, all teachers in the post-16 sector, were sharing their perceptions of quality and came up with the following list:

Definitions of quality:

Process of standardization

Benchmark – fit for purpose

Levels of competence

Accreditation of acceptance

Approved system of product

ISO / IiP / BSI

High standards / consistency

Reputation

Measurable

Effective

Targets

The wide variety of definitions displays the complexity of the views of practitioners in defining the concept. The students' views and their evaluation of the effect of quality systems on themselves and their colleagues will be explored later in the thesis.

Some examples of the exponents of quality need to be discussed in the next chapter. There is a school of quality theory similar to, and often linking with, the school of management theory that is in existence; formulaic writings based on seemingly, common sense approaches to achieving and improving quality within organisations. Much of the theory came into existence in an industrial, production - based context and has been applied to an education and training context, where it sits, often uneasily and ill – fitting.

4.0   Quality Models

It is useful to explore some of the industrial – based quality models to consider what post – 16 education and training can take from them. Originally, quality models, designed to achieve and promote quality, had their roots in industry, particularly in post – World War II industrial Japan. Two U.S. consultants, Dr Joseph Juran and Dr W Edwards Deming, advocated that models can be applied to industry to improve quality. The Japanese aimed to develop a 'culture of continuous improvement - kaizen', (Evans and Lindsay, 2002:7). The quality models being applied to organisations today have their roots in Japan. This post, second - world war concept of quality took on a new meaning of 'organisation – wide performance – excellence' rather than a narrower view of an 'engineering – based, technical discipline'; 'Businesses have seen that increased attentiveness to quality is vital to their survival', (Ibid: 7).

As part of the background to this section I informally gathered information from a small group of teaching staff within the same FE College. As part of an informal survey of their attitudes to quality in the sector they were asked how quality could be maintained and improved. They suggested the following:

Motivate staff and students

Fund the sector well

Well equipped rooms, equipment

Experienced and skilled staff

Professional updating

Student support, individualised attention

Small groups

Time to plan new courses, prepare sessions

A number of the above points are not being addressed very effectively within the sector. The funding issues, the exodus of experienced staff from the sector, the lack of support within

organisations for professional development and the lack of time given to already stretched staff to prepare and plan new courses are all affecting quality.

Joseph M Juran's (1989) maxims include the observation that 'Quality must be planned'. Juran emphasises that there must be a structured approach to company – wide quality for it to be most effective. Quality systems must have:

-Quality planning
-Quality control
-Quality improvement

Juran defines quality as 'fitness for purpose or use', (Ibid: 89). His scheme refers to an industrial product, so it fits poorly within an education context; it spans the product's entire life from conceptual design, procurement, manufacturing, inspection, distribution and customer service.

Where his model becomes more relevant to education and training is when it refers to the management of organisations. He suggests that most of the problems encountered by quality systems lie with the management, not the workforce or the processes. His main tool for quality improvement is the setting up of teams, and of problem – solving by those teams. He recognises communication between the workforce and management are a major barrier, so improved communication using quality improvement teams, project groups and problem – solving teams is essential.

Deming's approach to quality was to 'satisfy the customer'; not merely to meet their expectations, 'but to exceed them', (Deming, 1993). Deming's model focused on the differences between 'special' and 'common' causes. 'Special' causes, Deming described as being due to changes in staff or procedures, 'Common' causes are due to the design of the process system. Deming suggests that only management can eliminate 'Common' causes. Management, he estimated, are accountable for up to 94% of potential improvement in any

organisation. He stressed that the responsibility for the success of any quality approach was for the management to take the lead and demonstrate their commitment to quality. Deming advocated that management should define tasks clearly and state clear standards of acceptability

In promoting quality in an organisation, Deming encouraged a systematic approach to problem solving, the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Action) cycle.

Action   Plan

Check   Do
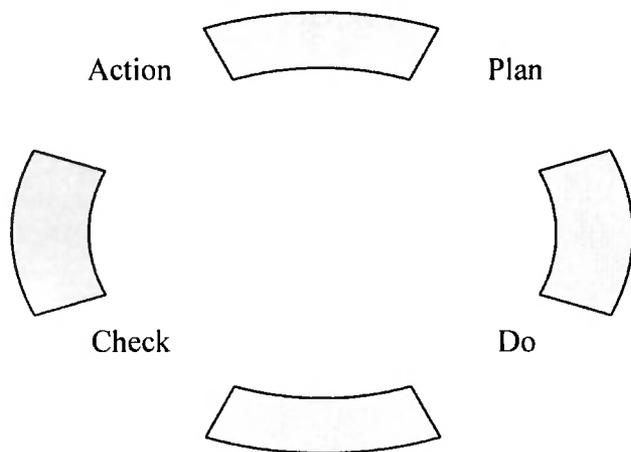
Deming's Quality Cycle (1993)

In his best known book, 'Out of the Crisis', (1986:23) Deming describes his '14 Points for Management' as the 'basis for the transformation of American industry'. They have since been applied to industry, health, education and government across the world to focus on quality assurance in organisations.

The role of 'Quality Managers' was introduced into colleges since incorporation in 1993; their remit is to improve the quality in the organisation. Simplistic models, such as Deming's are being applied to support the systems; some points are of more relevance than others:

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Deming's 14 Points

1. Create constancy of purpose to improve product and service
2. Adopt new philosophy by management learning and leadership for change
3. Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality – build quality into the product
4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag – instead minimise total cost and single suppliers
5. Improve constantly … the system
6. Institute training on the job
7. Institute leadership: supervision should be to help to do a better job
8. Drive out fear so that all may work effectively for the organisation
9. Break down barriers between departments
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations and numerical targets for the workforce.
11. Eliminate quotas or numerical goals, substitute leadership
12. Remove barriers that rob people of their right to pride in their work
13. Institute a vigorous education and self - improvement programme
14. Put everyone in the company to work to accomplish the transformation

(Ibid: 24)

Fourteen sensible pieces of advice, a 'How to Improve Your College' checklist. Educational organisations, however are too complex to apply Deming's points directly and expect immediate results. Earley (1996:173) suggests that the 14 points are not meant to be a checklist for transformation they 'might be said to be the manifestations of the method, not the method itself. What is required is a deeper understanding of the underlying philosophy'.

When unpicking Deming's points the complexity of the sector becomes apparent. The first point addresses the constancy of purpose; how to define the purpose of the FE sector? Sallis (1996) highlights the need to define the expectations of quality systems within organisations. Students achieving their learning aim could be an expectation; although Sallis points out that some would see this as an over-narrow view and posits 'a broad and rounded curriculum for citizenship, transferable skills and personal confidence' as axiomatic to quality. A contentious view, in my opinion and one obviously held by the Government at the time, is that pre-incorporation there was a lack of focus on students and a lack of responsiveness in

the sector, (Lumby, 2001). Lumby argues that there has been a cultural change since 1993 that has attempted to put students' needs at the centre. The students, their learning and the concept of lifelong – learning is the purpose of the FE sector and at the heart of Deming's 'constancy of purpose'

Sallis (1996:4) identifies four quality imperatives for every educational institution:

1. The moral imperative – the link with customers
2. The professional imperative – the link with the professional role of educators
3. The competitive imperative – the link with the competitors
4. The accountability imperative – the link with constituent groups

Sallis (1996:1) rightly describes quality as 'an enigmatic concept' and 'slippery' (Ibid: 12) to define, indicating an awareness of the complexities. He recognises the tension that exists in the sector between what students want and the professional imperative for staff in educational institutions to provide for their students' education and training whilst being exposed to the pressures of quality checks.

It is not so easy to apply Deming's first point to education and training, although organisations within the sector have mission statements and strategic objectives that define their common purpose.

Deming's second point refers to management learning and leadership for change. Evans and Lindsay (2002:9) highlight how 'quality of management' is as important as the 'management of quality'. Lumby (2001:76), talks about how closing the loop between gathering the information and taking action in response is important. There should be a 'tight connection between self – assessment and management planning'.

Considering the vast amount of change highlighted within the sector, the management of change is a vital part of any quality system. McBeath's (1997) research in Western Australia was focused on curriculum change in the vocational education and training sector. She describes the 'severe trauma' being felt in the system due to the amount of change in their

current reform movement. Her study is very focused on curriculum change and the dissemination of information through the hierarchy of college management structures. Her findings stressed the importance of quality management structures to enhance communication. Similarly, in this country the vast changes in the sector require excellent management and leadership as outlined in Deming's second point.

The third point is very useful to any organisation, although it is defined in terms of a product rather than people in the workforce who are autonomous and often unpredictable. Internal quality systems will be discussed in the next chapter. The importance of the perception of being part of a quality system, not relying on outside inspection to verify the quality is an important aspect of any model.

The 'price tag' attached to products is referred to in the 4th point; in relation to education, Lumby (2001:149) outlines how much of the literature since 1993 has argued that previously quality of teaching was paramount and that students have suffered since incorporation because their learning has been sacrificed through an espousal of business values which place money at the forefront. The second part of the argument is that lecturers were the guardians of learning quality and have been displaced and disempowered in this role.

Lumby describes the management of FE as having always been about managing learning – 'better learning for more people at a lower cost', (Ibid: 169). This cynical view is one held by many in the sector.

Sallis (1996) argues that concepts of quality fall into two groups: definitions which are 'procedural' or definitions which are 'transformational'. Deming's fifth point focuses on the procedural aspects of seeking to constantly improve the systems within the organisation. Sallis (1996) describes the systems of the procedural concept of quality as being established to measure products against agreed standards. The transformational concept of quality links to Deming's points relating to leadership, points 2, 7, 11 and 14, centred on transforming the culture of an organisation.

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Point 6 and point 13 refer to staff development and the importance of updating skills; the relevance of the importance of professional updating to maintaining and improving quality are a theme running through this research.

When considering Deming's 8th point Lumby (2001) refers to the 'micropolitical aspects of collecting and working with data – one group commenting on activities, 'to which another group were devoting their lives'. Where there are weaknesses, honest self-assessment which would expose weakness is most difficult to get. Quality systems such as external inspections do not encourage open, honest reflection. Sallis (1996) takes up Deming's (1986) exhortation to remove fear so difficulty and weakness is discussed openly. A multiplicity of sources of information could provide triangulation, so that areas of weakness and strength can emerge.

There is a general belief that the collection of hard statistical data and soft data e.g. student perceptions can contribute to improvement; Deming's 11th point suggests that leadership is a better way of driving quality than quotas and numerical goals.

The 12th point refers to professional pride; Lumby refers to challenging complacency as being viewed as supporting the professional pride of staff in that it assumed that they would want to do the best for their students. Some of the resistance to the quality movement has come from those who see professional autonomy as the proper means of assuring quality in education.

Lumby (2001:69) agrees that there 'May be universal support for a theoretical concept, in practice the debate on how to define it and achieve it, fractures.' For quality improvement to be effective, the improvement must be owned. Enforced change is likely to be resisted and ineffective, (Ibid: 78). For transformation to take place everyone in the company needs to be working together, Deming's fourteenth point.

Oakland's (1993) view of quality processes links to Deming's points closely. The senior managers and the SMP (strategic management process) can affect the culture of an organisation, stimulating increased professional participation, development and ownership by staff.

Quality issues are often associated with the culture of an organisation. If the culture is positive then it will promote motivation in the staff, communication of ideas will be paramount and the commitment of all the staff is gained. Wallace (1999:99) describes how culture may be recognised by managers as a critical element of how organisations function, 'but they have difficulty capturing just what it is'. Bush (1998) warns that a single perspective on culture may be too limiting and explores the possibility of dual or multiple perspectives. There is a growing conviction that managing culture is one of the most important tasks of leadership. At the same time there is no agreement that the culture of an organisation is manageable.

Oakland (1993) describes effective quality processes as requiring;

- Communication
- Culture
- Commitment

Schein (1997:5) states that 'One could argue that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture. If one wishes to distinguish leadership from management or administration, one can argue that leaders create and change cultures, while managers and administrators live within them'.

The foundation of change is to move staff from habitual patterns which reflect a lack of interest in the connection of their actions to the fortunes of the organisation, both educationally and financially, to a belief that their activities are central to success, not just in teaching, but in their whole attitude and in their planning and management.

Deming (1993) shaped his philosophy around the concept he called the 'Profound Knowledge', which is referred to under four headings. His common -sense style maxims are listed below:

- Appreciation for a system: All organisations form a system of interrelated components. Everyone needs to understand their relationship to the whole and recognise the aims of the organisation as having meaning and relevance to them. System thinking involves understanding the interdependence of functions and people – when this 'system view' happens, everyone should gain.

- Knowledge about Variation: It is essential to understand the variability of processes and how to minimise the variation to achieve consistency. Variability will always be present; rather than reacting to single data points, we analyse the processes that produce the data. Process variation, process capability, control charts, must be understood for effective leadership and teamwork.

- Theory of knowledge: This requires an understanding of the importance of prediction to bring about improvement. Plans usually based on past experience. Success cannot be successfully copied unless the theory is understood. A rigorous cycle of 'planning applied improvement efforts' is the main feature. Study is used to describe in depth analysis of the process, collecting detailed data and evaluating it. The need to understand the process clearly is vital.

- Knowledge of psychology: Involves understanding motivation and optimisation of all people in an organisation in order to galvanise improvement and innovation. An understanding of human interactions and that people are intrinsically motivated. Real improvement can only be achieved with the participation of those involved; win/win approach is a powerful philosophy for improvement.

(Deming, 1993:134)

Earley, Fiddler and Ouston (1996:71) describe the Deming approach to school improvement, citing one school that adopted his approach. The results of their research supported that it is unequivocal that inspection itself never brings about improvement; improvement comes from a systematic transformation in organisational culture, and not from end – of – process inspection.

Tom Peter's (1987) quality model includes philosophy focused on customer orientation; his concepts of quality include 'Twelve Traits':

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- Management obsession with quality
- Passionate systems
- Measurement of quality
- Quality is rewarded
- Everyone is trained for quality
- Multi – functional teams
- Small is beautiful – *no such thing as a small improvement, all change is significant*
- Create endless 'Hawthorn effects'
- Organisation structure devoted to quality improvement
- Everyone is involved suppliers, distributors, customers
- When quality goes up costs go down
- Quality improvement is a never – ending journey

Peter's 'traits' are inter - related closely with the culture, commitment and communication of organisations, having a similar focus to Deming's 14 points and other quality models. The culture, commitment and communication within an organisation have obvious impact on individuals; where quality systems are embedded into the culture they too will have an effect on staff.

Interestingly, there is no explicit mention of teaching and learning, the core business of the post – 16 education and training sector, in any of the systems; they were designed as business models and are designed to have a broader, more generic application across organisations. The impact of the various quality models on individuals and their education and training organisations would perhaps be more positive amongst staff if the systems had a greater explicit focus on teaching and learning. In the next section the variety of quality systems will be discussed and the potential impact on individuals and organisations will be explored more closely.

5.0 Systems and Regulators to Measure Quality

Sallis (1996:19) describes the delineation between quality control and quality assurance:

* Quality control involves the detection and elimination of components or final products which are not up to standard... It is an after – the - event process

* Quality assurance is a before and during – the - event process. Its concern is to prevent faults occurring in the first place.

Both systems are designed to work together to improve the quality of an organisation. An example of a typical quality strategy for an FE College is shown below, the chart clearly highlights internal quality assurance and control systems; also external systems are listed:

Quality Strategy 'Culture of Continuous Improvement'	
Quality Assurance Self – assessment Learner surveys Course review Curriculum Audit Comments complaints, complement system	**Quality Control** Internal Inspection Observation of Teaching and Learning Curriculum Audit Internal Verification Action Plans Course Validation
External Systems Validating Bodies OfSTED / ALI LSC External Verification / Exam Boards IS09000 Investors in People	
Quality Management Integration with corporate strategy Target setting and Benchmarking Course status sheet and Analysis Course Audit Curriculum Procedures Course Teams / Academic Managers	
Quality Outcomes Satisfied successful learners Improved attendance, increased enrolment and achievement Quality culture	

Stockton Riverside College, 2003

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How we measure quality using control methods or assurance methods will be analysed in the following section to consider their effectiveness in measuring 'quality'. The variety of systems is illustrated in the chart above, focusing on both quality assurance and quality control. The external systems of quality control, in place at the moment in many post – 16 organisations, will be explored initially and their potential impact considered.

A key factor related to the focus of my research is the diversity of the systems in relation to the role of the post – 16 sector; their relevance will be considered in the next section. The empirical work will consider the potential effects of the different systems in their application to the education and training context.

One of the students involved in my research works for the National Health Service, evidence of the variety of post – 16 education and training. Within the next section I have included information on the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), the statutory body in the National Health Service (NHS) responsible for monitoring standards.

The systems explored in more detail are:

1. BS 5750 / ISO 9000
2. Investors in People (IiP)
3. Total Quality Management (TQM)
4. Excellence for Quality Model (EFQM)
5. OfSTED/ALI The Common Inspection Framework (CIF)
6. Commission for Health Improvement
7. Internal Systems – Self Assessment

- **BS 5750 / ISO 9000 series**

The term ISO stands for International Organisation for Standardisation, a body based in Geneva. Founded in 1947 for the purpose of advancing standardisation around the world, it now comprises 130 member countries. Each country is represented by its respective national

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standards body and participates in developing standards to facilitate trade of goods and services in the global market place. 'The standards developed apply not only to economic related activities but also cover the related technology and science involved in these pursuits.' (www.iso-standards-international.com, 4/2/03) The British Standard certification scheme directly parallels the International Standards Organisation in its quality management standards. From 1st August 1994 the BS 5750, became ISO 9000 with some changes in its clauses and standards statements.

The ISO 9000 series sets out to create a framework of the fundamental generic elements that would form the basis for a series of internationally recognised quality management standards. The series is potentially a powerful marketing tool for an organisation, which can gain kudos by displaying the internationally - recognised registration logo.

'The ISO 9000 series of standards represents the essential requirements that every enterprise needs to address to ensure the consistent production and timely delivery of its goods and services to the market place. These requirements make up the standards that comprise the quality management system, and their generic nature allow for their application in any type of organisation'. (Ibid)

The philosophy behind the series is that quality should be built into the systems and procedures of the organisation so that the quality control is internal, Deming's (1993) third point.

The standard does not apply to the product or service that is provided to the customer. It is applied to the policies and procedures that exist within the organisation and is measured by the adherence to those procedures that have been put in place by the service provider to satisfy that they are being followed and comply with quality regulations.

BSI describes a standard as 'a published specification that establishes a common language and contains a published specification that establishes a common language and contains a technical specification or other precise criteria and is designed to be used consistently, as a rule, a guideline, or a definition' (Ibid). The quality system is written by the service provider

not the ISO; the ISO's role is to make sure there is conformity to the quality systems and the documentation of the provider. 'The ability to be audited by an independent, third party organisation is the foundation of its acceptance world-wide. Companies may now objectively determine an organisation's capacity to supply goods or services that meet the specific requirements of the customer.' (Ibid)

The potential impact is positive; however a major criticism is that the excess paperwork produced by the system can stifle initiative. ISO 9000 is described as being 'about saying what you do and doing what you say' (Bicheno, 1998:111). Under the IS0 system an organisation needs to have a document for every activity concerned with its systems. In educational organisations this will include the delivery of courses, including selection of students, interviewing, induction, records of achievement and advice and guidance. Sallis (1994), comments that 'everybody in the institution needs to understand its implications and to work to the systems and follow the procedures that have been put in place. Many teachers might consider the emphasis on following detailed written instructions stifling to initiative and excessively bureaucratic.' (Ibid: 61) Many educational establishments have found difficulties in initiating the ISO9000 series as many teachers and lecturers dismissed the whole procedure as nothing more than a paper exercise completed merely for a logo on the organisation's letterheads, web-sites and corporation vehicles.

The system's standards describe what requirements need to be met, not how they are to be met; each organisation can meet the system requirements 'by implementing the standards in a manner that suits its own unique needs' (www.iso-standards-international.com). This allows for diverse organisations to apply the same standards, allowing each organisation to meet the requirements by implementing them in a manner fashioned to their needs. The focus of attention can be on the student requirements and ownership can be reflected in the quality performance criteria and the self – imposed targets for all organisational activities. Walkin (1992:86) points out that, 'The aim of the BS5750/ISO9000 series of standards is to prevent faults and errors in the activities of the organisation which affect the quality of the product or service the customer receives. It does so by requiring that management systems

and procedures are established.'. A major problem can be the difference between what is presented during the audit and what is actually being carried out within the organisation. The annual audit is paper-based with interviews with staff – in practice it could, potentially be easy to mislead the auditors.

Having the standard can assure customers who often see compliance with a standard as an indication of quality and safety, 'customers, both new and old can have increased confidence in your organisation's ability to meet their expectations', (www.iso-standards-international.com). Accreditation can be misunderstood as an endorsement of the quality of the product or service being on offer; it is after all, merely guidance to the implementation of the systems and procedures. Redman et al (1993) found that amongst small businesses the pressure from customers to gain accreditation to the BS system was based on 'no BS5750 no contract'. Comments from businesses included that the system was 'mechanical', 'costly' and 'that the cost of membership far outweighs the benefits' - comments endorsed by The Federation of Self-employed and Small Businesses, and the Small Business Research Trust (Batchelor, 1991, 1992).

Another criticism of the IS0 series is that although it may help to establish viable company, quality systems it does not necessarily advocate employee involvement.

- **The Investors in People Standard, (IiP)**

The Investors in People standard, (IiP), in contrast to ISO, is a quality system that does encourage employee involvement or at least employer involvement focused on the staff in an organisation.

'It is a national quality standard which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Since 1991 tens of thousands of UK employers, employing millions of people, have become involved with the Standard and know the benefits of being an 'Investor in People'. With the continued growth and up take of the Standard in the UK, international interest has been stimulated and continues to grow.' (http://www.iipuk.co.uk, 14/9/03)

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Investors in People UK maintains close links with a range of regional delivery partners and National Training Organisations (NTOs) and professional and educational institutions. Shelley, (1996) comments that IiP can play a vital role in the life-long learning debate that is relevant to the drive for continuous professional development being promoted in the sector.

'As the only people quality standard, Investors in People provides a framework for interacting Human Resources strategy with Business Strategy. This allows effective action to maximise the region of the investment made in people.' (Ibid)

It encourages organisations to take the opportunity to review current training and development, provides an accurate audit of current strengths and weaknesses, gives the organisation a framework for planning future strategies and the ability to action those strategies. It also gives a structured way to improve the effectiveness of training and development. The benefits of working to achieve the National Standard are many, all of which may enhance the individual working for the organisation as well as the organisation.

The standard is designed to bring public recognition from customers, suppliers and employers alike. It is also aimed to provide evidence of improvement through monitoring and evaluating. As with the ISO series, by having the standard, organisations aim to gain a competitive edge over rival organisations with the IiP logo bringing kudos to the company.

The standard has four main principles:

1. Commitment – to invest in people to achieve goals
2. Planning – how skills of individuals and teams are to be developed to achieve these goals
3. Action – To develop and use necessary skills in a well-defined and continuous programme
4. Evaluation – of processes towards goals, value achieved and future needs

The system is designed as a continuous improvement cycle that is self-propelling and in permanent motion. Once the standard is gained it is reviewed every three years and it is aimed at staff at all levels of the organisation.

'Managers at all levels understand what they need to do to support the development of people. People understand what their manager should be doing to support their development. Managers at all levels can give examples of actions that they have taken and are currently taking to support the development of people. People can describe how their managers are effective in supporting their development' (Ibid).

The system has the potential to be effective in promoting quality, but it can be dogged by administrative procedures. Earley (1996:6) states that gaining the standard should not be a rigid, bureaucratic or paper – driven exercise, 'the process is about 'Investing in People' not 'Investing in Paper!'.

The standard is gained by the organisation producing evidence that it is supportive of its employees. One of the students referred to in my research in Chapter 7 focuses on Investors in People and is very positive about its effect within his college. The focus of IiP is centred on the development of the staff, a focus that could really drive forward the quality of an organisation; however, as with the ISO series the external auditors visit the college every three years and meet a only a selection of staff, they do not gain the complete picture during their audit. Although the selection of staff is supposed to be random, in my last college the same member of staff was chosen each time and rehearsal interviews were arranged by senior management for her before the 'real' auditors appeared. Clearly, organisations want to gain the standard but the system is open to abuse.

- **Total Quality Management (TQM)**

TQM evolved as a quality system when it was acknowledged that the most effective system needed to combine the effective utilisation of human resources with systems and written practices in organisations.

Feigenbaum (2003) had recognised the importance of a comprehensive approach to quality and coined the phrase 'total quality control' in the 1950s. In post – war industrial Japan the term was adopted and the concept was renamed as 'companywide quality control'.

In the 1970s a General Electric task force studied consumer perceptions of the quality of various GE product lines. They concluded that quality must not be viewed solely as a technical discipline, but rather as a management discipline. The concept of total quality (TQ) emerged. Oakland (1993) defines TQM as 'A new way of managing to improve the effectiveness, flexibility and competitiveness of a business as a whole'.

As organisations began to integrate quality principles into their management systems, the notion of TQM became popular. TQM incorporates quality assurance, and extends and develops it. 'TQM is about creating a quality culture where the aim of every member of staff is to delight their customers'. (Sallis, 1996:19)

Much of the quality management in education rests on evaluation, which is retrospective and matches the quality control model. Improvements are made on the basis of yesterday's not tomorrow's students. West-Burnham (1994:167) argues, 'Evaluation is a classic exemplification of a reactive culture at the micro level however significant it may be at the macro level. Inspection and evaluation are in the same relationship to the daily learning experiences of the current generation of young people as the post – mortem is to preventative medicine'. The dissatisfaction with Quality Control explains the growth of TQM. Mullins (1985:774) describes TQM in general terms as;

'a way of life for an organisation as a whole, committed to total customer satisfaction through a continuous process of improvement, and the contribution and involvement of people'.

Proctor and Gamble define TQ as 'the unyielding and continually improving effort by everyone in an organisation to understand, meet and exceed the expectations of customers' (Sallis, 1994a: 16)

In theory the holistic care of staff is a fine altruistic goal to aim for, but in practice financial considerations, staff numbers and time factors are major deliberations. TQM adopts the concept that quality can be managed and that it is a process; perhaps its focus on process made it more acceptable to education organisations. It is described as a continuous way of life, a philosophy of perpetual improvement in everything we do. TQM focuses primarily on customers, processes, workplace empowerment, continuous improvement, leadership, and measurement. The customer becomes the centre of management focus; in educational organisations the student is the focus. Sallis (1994a:11) emphasises the point, 'Quality is what makes the difference between things being excellent or run-of–the-mill. Increasingly, in education, quality makes the difference between success and failure'. The following six points need to be addressed for TQM to be successful:

- Requires an holistic approach
- Requires customer orientation
- Needs empowered staff
- Requires attention to process
- Requires quality systems
- Requires continuous improvement

(Ibid: 11)

TQM is seen as a change in organisation's technology, its way of doing work, the way the students are processed, the service delivery methods applied to them and ancillary organisational processes such as paperwork and other procedures. It also embraces changes in the organisation's culture, its norms, values and belief systems about how organisations function. It also effects changes in the organisation's political system: decision making processes and power base. Tichey (1983) states that for substantive change to take place changes in the three dimensions must be aligned, TQM as technological change will not be successful unless cultural and political dimensions are attended to as well.

Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993:63) suggest that successful implementation of a quality management approach depends on the following five key features:

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1. Shared vision, there must be commitment by all in the organisation

2. Strategy based on a shared understanding of the customer - driven and process – orientated basis for quality, with a better understanding of the customer needs and wants

3. The organisation needs to be designed with teamwork as the basis of its activity

4. Tough targets and goals need to be set to challenge the level of performance and move the organisation forward

5. There must be a systematic approach to managing the organisation through the use of tools for measurement and feedback

Echoing Deming's (1993) 2nd point, without a commitment from the senior management team to ensure all of these components will be put in place and maintained, this total quality management approach will not succeed.

Hanson (1996:301) argues that TQM should be developed into TQEM (Total Quality Educational Management), stating that:

'the relatively recent appearance of TQEM is a good example of planned change. TQEM is an educational adaptation of the total quality management… TQEM is based on a management – worker philosophy that actively challenges organisational structures, processes and cultures that accept anything less than excellence'.

This gives education and training a framework from which they can develop holistic and needs - based educational programmes that fit the criteria of quality and excellence.

- **Excellence for Quality Model, (EFQM)**

The leaders of 14 large businesses founded EFQM as an alternative quality framework. Many of Europe's best-known multi – national companies are among its most active members. As with other quality systems the focus was originally for business; how easily

the system converts to an education and training setting is an issue. The EFQM model is a key framework for helping organisations in their drive towards being more competitive. Again, the focus is on competition and competitiveness – is this wholly relevant to an educational setting? The EFQM excellence model's effectiveness is its widespread use of a management system and the association with organisational self-assessment. Regardless of sector, size, structure or maturity, to be successful, the mantra is that organisations need to establish an appropriate management system. The EFQM excellence model is a practical tool to help organisations do this by measuring where they are on the path to excellence, helping them to understand the gaps, and possible solutions.

EFQM has a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria, five of them are 'enablers' and four are 'results':

Enablers

- Leadership
- People Management
- Policy and Strategy
- Resources
- Processes

Results

- People satisfaction
- Customer satisfaction
- Impact on society
- Business results

The enabler criteria cover what an organisation does, the results criteria cover what an organisation achieves. Results are produced by the enablers and feed - back from the results

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helps to improve the enablers. It can be argued that the system provides a 'practical tool', it has processes that can be related to education and used in the observation of teaching and learning and to identify client needs. The key performance results are analysed by staff surveys to help improve the enablers.

'Each process from the enablers can be measured against the results in various forms.'
(Dixon, 1996: 12)

Excellence is dependent upon balancing and satisfying the needs of all relevant stakeholders, employees, students/customers, society and those with financial interest in the organisation, those funding the organisation. The student needs can be evaluated from analysing student feedback sheets, course evaluations, OFSTED reports, exam results and comments and grades from awarding bodies. EFQM provides an opportunity to promote good practice and benchmarking.

In the absence of any published data on the effect of EFQM system in practice I interviewed a Quality Manager to evaluate its practical application; she worked in a large FE college that is using the system. All the internal quality systems introduced have involved the EFQM model. OFSTED and ALI had inspected the college in the term prior to our interview. The Quality manager is very positive about EFQM's implementation. She feels when the college introduced the EFQM system they used a powerful tactic to decrease the resistance to change; this was to increase the participation of employees. Packard (1998:10), 'There are actually two rationales for employee participation. The more common reason is to increase employee commitment to the resultant outcomes, as they will feel a greater stake or sense of ownership'. A second rationale is that 'employees have a great deal of knowledge and skill relevant to the issue at hand' (Ibid: 10)

The Quality Manager explains how the senior management in the college considered any decision area as a possibility for employee participation. The employees, that is, the teaching and support staff, saw that the senior management was not only concerned with the end

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product, as in units, but also in staff needs. EFQM was introduced via staff development sessions. The EFQM model was introduced in several ways:

- As a framework that could be used by the college to develop their visions and goals for the future in a tangible, measurable way

- As a framework which college could use to help identify and understand the systematic nature of educational business, the key linkages and cause and effect relationships

- As the basis for the European Quality Award

- As a diagnostic tool for assessing the current health of the organisation. This process was to help the college to balance its priorities, allocate resources and generate a realistic business plan

Management at all levels within the college realised that 'people development' and the involvement of the staff as a whole was essential to the success of EFQM. 'The full potential of an organisation's people is best released through shared values and a culture of trust and empowerment, which encourages the involvement of everyone'. (EFQM 2002) It was realised that the college would work more effectively when it had a mutually beneficial relationship so an association of trust, sharing of knowledge and integration was established. The Quality Manager believed that her staff felt valued and understood the process. Within the heart of the model there is embedded an evaluation tool for the system; the logic of RADAR:

- Results: what the organisation achieves. Does it have positive trends? Are targets met appropriately? Does performance compare well with others?

- Approach: This covers what an organisation plans to do and the reasons for it. An excellent organisation will have a sound approach with a clear rationale.

- Deployment: How far does the organisation deploy the approach? In an excellent organisation the approach will be implemented in all areas in a systematic way.

- Assessment and Review: This covers how an organisation assesses and reviews both the approach and the deployment. In an excellent organisation the approach and deployment will be subject to regular measurement, learning activities will be undertaken, the output will be used to identify, prioritise, plan and implement improvement.

RADAR helps EFQM by operating as an evaluation tool. The philosophy of EFQM involves all the staff working together to improve quality, echoing Deming's 14th point of everyone in the company working 'to accomplish the transformation', (Deming, 1996:24). EFQM has the potential to be an effective tool, the Quality Manager is fully supportive of it, if the culture of the college encourages its application and support it could have a hugely positive impact.

- **OfSTED/ ALI - The Common Inspection Framework (CIF), post FEFC**

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) has the role of an independent watchdog for training and education issues. Its remit is to improve the quality of education and standards of achievement by public reporting, using informed independent advice and thorough on the job, regular, independent inspection. OfSTED's main task is to implement the management of an independent system of educational inspection that was originally

defined by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. From 1992 inspection of FE Colleges was managed by the Further Education Funding Council, (FEFC), their inspectors scrutinised quality indicators and used statistical process control by measuring results against national norms. The FEFC emphasised the importance of quantitative measurement of performance as an aid to improving quality. Retention and achievement rates for example were collected and published for the first time. League tables were used for comparison. Colleges' overall performance was measured against performance indicators.

The 1992 Act enabled post – 16 training providers to work independently without college franchises. This resulted in a growth of private training providers who were managed, monitored and funded by the newly founded Training Enterprise Councils, (TECs).

Local Learning Skills Councils were established in April 2001 and combined the roles of the FEFC and the TECs, excluding inspections. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and alongside OfSTED brings the inspection of all aspects of adult learning, work – based training and post – 16 education and training within the remit of a single inspectorate, under the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). The new system of post-16 learning aims to be coherent, accessible and responsive to the needs of individuals, businesses and communities.

ALI and OfSTED now use the Common Inspection Framework, for inspections under part 3 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Colleges have 16-18 provision and also adult learners; ALI and OfSTED inspectors work together during inspections under the CIF. Providers are given between six to twelve weeks notice prior to inspection. Inspectors' judgements are based on evidence derived from observations of learning, interviews with learners and providers, documentary evidence relating to training, assessment, verification and awards. The provider is responsible for the continuous improvement of the quality of their provision. Evaluating themselves regularly, through the process of self – assessment, theoretically achieves this outcome. Providers are required to produce a self – assessment report annually,

identifying strengths, weaknesses and any other improvements needed. All judgements should be supported by evidence that will lead to grades in line with the two inspectorates.

The Inspection Framework used by OfSTED and ALI is designed to keep the Secretary of State informed about:

- The quality of education
- The standards achieved by those receiving education and training
- Whether financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money

A significant number of the inspectors who worked for the FEFC and now OfSTED and ALI are part-time employees who work for the rest of their time in FE, or for work-based learning providers so they do have an understanding of the sector although not necessarily the subject area they are inspecting. The standards are designed to be inspected objectively.

In 'Inspection Quality', (OfSTED, 1995:29) the claim made is that the advantage of having an independent inspection ensures greater accountability, and education and training organisations should acknowledge the value of having a comprehensive audit of their strengths and weaknesses. Organisations need to be reassured by the system's objectivity; the intention is that the inspection process is based on clear and open criteria published in the Common Inspection Framework, (CIF). Some organisations have recognised that the external inspection process can be used, 'to support a range of management functions such as self review, development planning, staff development and appraisal'.

Earley et al (1996:15) highlight the positives of the inspection process, that 'the majority of heads found the inspection preparation an effective team – building exercise which provided the opportunity for self – review'.

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Fitzgibbon (1996:33) defines performance indicators as items 'of information collected at regular intervals to track the performance of a system'. At a conceptual level, Lumby (2001:74) defines external inspection as, 'a proper way for colleges to be called to account and for the state to ensure acceptable standards and value for money. In practice, the inspection process is not such a robust system that gives a wholly valid or reliable representation of the organisation's quality. Perry (1999:3) highlights some of the issues;

- Social factors
- Creaming
- Measuring the wrong things
- Data quality
- Fiddling the books
- Proxy padding

Perry refers to the two primary uses of performance indicators, to give a summative account of performance and to provide a formative location of problems, may be at worst illusory and at best an imprecise tool.

An impending OfSTED inspection raises feelings of negativity and often fear among the staff of education and training organisations; 'OfSTED's approach – more akin to 'hit and run' than advice and support – will not in itself bring about improvement' (Earley et al, 1996:77)

It is often felt that quantifying resources is easy, books in the library etc, evaluating the effectiveness of their use (how they contribute to the learning) is less easy but more important. 'We have a good example of regarding as important that which is measurable, rather than attempting to measure that which is important'. (Ibid: 77)

Senge (1990:68) describes 'systems thinking' as a discipline for seeing 'wholes'. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships, for seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots', but the OfSTED inspection can only deal with snapshots, particularly with reference to the teaching and learning process and classroom observations.

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It would be more successful to integrate the inspection process with the quality improvement culture of the institution itself than to see it solely as an external judgement. The introduction of the self assessment process is discussed in the next section, and moves towards this integration. 'Is it solely accountability which is provided by the snapshot judgement of practice within the short time – frame of an inspection visit, and supported by raw statistical data?' (Earley et al, 1996:183). The question of whether OfSTED /ALI inspections improve the quality of post – 16 education and training remains unanswered, 'whether OfSTED's programme contributes to school improvement has to be established, rather than simply asserted' (Matthews and Smith 1995:29)

Earley et al (1996:22) question whether; 'the twin aims of inspection for public accountability and development sit comfortably side by side?' The question of whether the inspection process can or should move from being primarily about 'quality control' towards a greater focus on 'quality assurance' remains.

FEFC (1998) in their Annual Report found that quality assurance continued to be the weakest aspect of cross-college provision. They do not comment on or attempt to explain the paradox of colleges which have been given excellent inspection grades for their Quality Assurance and poor grades for learning and teaching, or vice versa. Lumby (2001:72) states 'such apparently illogical results continue to challenge theory which posits a connection between quality systems and the students' experience'.

Hopkins (1998) concluded there was no correlation between inspection high grades for quality assurance and the delivery of quality. His belief is that the system imposed by the FEFC encouraged colleges to 'see the development of excellent systems for measuring quality as an alternative to improving colleges' (Ibid: 65). Elliott (1996) concludes that the lecturers he had interviewed rejected the view that quality assurance systems lead to improved teaching and learning. Clearly, there is an issue when teaching staff cannot

recognise any benefit to teaching and learning deriving from external inspection, when teaching and learning is the core business of the sector.

- **Commission for Health Improvement (CHI)**

In NHS Trusts in England and Wales, the monitoring of standards takes place principally through the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), which also has the power to investigate failing services and the Audit Commission. The Commission for Health Improvement is a fairly new statutory body providing an independent assessment of local action to improve quality. Its aim is to be the champion of high quality standards. The Commission visits all Trusts in a rolling review programme to ensure that robust clinical governance arrangements are in place locally, and that NICE guidance is consistently implemented throughout the NHS. This highlights the Government's focus on consistently high standards nationally. A performance assessment framework has been established for England, identifying 6 key areas of NHS performance. Each year tables are published comparing Health Authority and Trust performances.

The six areas of performance are

- Health improvement
- Fair access to services
- Effective and appropriate delivery of health care
- Positive outcomes from health care
- Efficient use of resources
- Overall high quality of experience for patients and carers

The NHS plan published in July 2000 introduced a further package of measures designed for the protection of patients, including mechanisms for dealing with poorly performing doctors. A quality service requires quality staff and the NHS recognises this by investing over £2.5 Billion each year on education and training. In 1999 the Government issued a Health Service

Circular entitled 'Continuing Professional Development – Quality in the NHS'. The circular states that continuous professional development is an important element in the delivery of a range of objectives for the NHS. It requires that all health care workers within the NHS must show competence throughout their careers, through CPD and self-regulation. CPD requirements are identified on the basis of the needs of individuals, within the context of the needs of the organisation, which is to provide consistently high quality.

The Government ensures that national quality standards are applied consistently within local practice through clinical governance, and through life-long learning to ensure that NHS staff are equipped to deliver change, and are given the opportunity to maintain and develop their skills and expertise, through modernised professional regulation. Clinical Governance is the process by which each part of the NHS quality, assures its clinical decisions are backed by a statutory duty of quality.

- **Internal Systems – Self Assessment**

If external systems are imposed and are viewed by the staff in the organisation generally as punitive and unsupportive this will not support a climate of honest reflection and self – improvement. If the ownership of the quality system is present within organisations then quality improvement can be more effective, echoing Deming's (1993:24) 14th point. Power (1994) makes the point that society runs the risk of transferring responsibility for performance from the individuals performing a role to those who audit their performance.

Joyce (1991:103) describes different 'doors to improvement' with reference to schools. He describes how schools have surfaced from underneath many externally imposed changes, they have realised that they still have an important agenda of their own that focuses on empowerment rather than control and self – accountability. The doors include:

- Collegiality – development of collaborative, professional relationships, through joint projects, team planning and problem - solving
- Research – study and use of research findings on school and classroom effectiveness and improvement, through reading and discussion, course attendance and feedback to colleagues, or input from invited 'experts'.
- Self – evaluation - collection and analysis of data, action research in classrooms and self – generated appraisal
- Curriculum – introduction of self – chosen curricular changes and projects
- Teaching and Learning – study of teaching strategies through staff development
- Quality approaches – emanating from business and industry TQM and IiP
- Teacher appraisal
- School development planning- involving an audit of needs, decisions about priorities, monitoring and evaluating

Many positive aspects towards school improvement can be achieved through the empowerment of the staff and the ownership of the systems. Joyce argues that adherence to one internal approach alone is inadequate and that major school improvement needs to open all the doors. Joyce (1991) adds the caveat that opening all the doors without attention to the deeper culture and organisational conditions of the school is unlikely to lead to improvement.

Within FE and the wider post – 16 sector, teaching staff have been encouraged to be 'reflective practitioners', (FENTO, 2001). Curriculum development initiatives and management systems have adopted models of self – improvement, e.g. Kolb cycle (Kolb, 1984)

In its development of quality improvement the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) has focused on provider accountability with the use of self assessment. In his LSC remit letter Blunkett (2000) states:

'I expect the council to develop its delivery arrangements in a way which ensures there is clarity about provider accountability for the quality of the provision they deliver'.

This focus on self assessment rather than inspection - led assessment may have been designed to give the organisations greater ownership of the practice but in reality it has increased the workload of the providers by adding to the bureaucracy of everyday teaching and managing.

The increase in the level of bureaucracy in pursuit of 'quality' within post – 16 education and training has arrived as a direct result of the changes to the way education in this sector is delivered and managed. The Government gave the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) the responsibility to Plan, Fund, Monitor and Improve the Quality of post - 16 learning. Since the publication of the LSC Remit Letter, November 2000 and the gradual takeover of responsibility from the FEFC and the TECs to the LSC the emphasis has been on increasing the quality of provision. This increase has travelled along many roads, but the main development areas are:

1. To work closely with OfSTED's common inspection framework and the Adult Learning Inspectorate.
2. Professional development for staff
3. Improve collaboration between providers to reduce unhealthy competition

The focus on the increased quality of provision being demanded from the LSC has resulted in an increase in bureaucracy; whether it is needed or warranted has been challenged by a working party led by David Gibson of the Association of Colleges (AOC) in a bureaucracy – busting exercise. This has become a focus of the Success for All Strategy, (2003).

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Self – assessment, as a quality system has two main features:

- the role and importance of self – assessment by the institution as part of the external quality assessment
- the concept of assurance by peer review

It is useful to consider the impact of the two features on the accountability for performance within the sector and their ability to promote quality improvement.

The culture of self – review has always been present within FE colleges to some degree, particularly since incorporation. By the 1994/95 academic year the FEFC required colleges to produce 'an internal quality assessment report' that stated and provided evidence for, 'the college's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses as a basis for discussion with the inspection team' (Earley et al, 1996, pg 178). The FEFC Inspection Unit examined the reports and assessed their rigour and validity against the inspection reports produced by the inspection teams. The analysis indicated that where good practice in quality assurance had been identified, colleges had developed internal systems to monitor the development of new programmes and courses and ensure regular course reviews are carried out. The FEFC found that one of the most positive aspects of the inspection process is its encouragement to teachers in the development of self-assessment skills. Practices indicate that while self – assessment on its own cannot provide a valid measure of accountability, it is an extremely important factor in quality improvement. (Ibid: 184)

With the birth of the LSC and the introduction of the self – assessment process all providers of post-16 education and training are asked to consider their own provision and grade it against statements in the Common Inspection Framework. Providers need to self - assess their overall provision and provide a development plan to the LSC. Initially this was requested annually, more recently the LSC has moved to a three – year cycle. Self assessment is to be judged against the quality statements in the Common Inspection Framework. Providers are left to themselves to decide on what self assessment process to

use but this also will be inspected by the LSC to check that the self - assessment is rigorous. The effectiveness of a provider's self assessment report and development plan are taken into account when providing funding for the next year. A typical overview of the process is displayed in figure 1.

Any good quality system involves a full circuit of action followed by evaluation which can then affect subsequent actions, as illustrated in figure 1 below. Both the LSC and the Common Inspection Framework provide the basis for self assessment, both what is to be assessed and to what standard. From the results of this self assessment process a development plan is produced, within the plan targets will be set that will be continuously monitored and evaluated. The plan is presented to the LSC who agree it or suggest further actions; both the provider and the LSC then monitor the plan to ensure targets are being met. If the provider has had an inspection from OfSTED or ALI that information is used by the LSC alongside the development plan to approve the provider's contract for the forthcoming year, (DfES 2001).
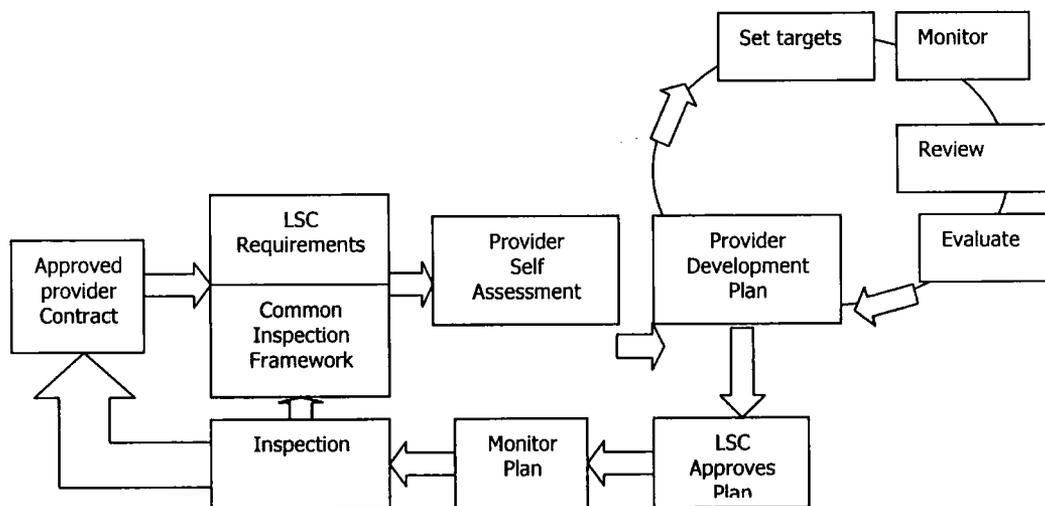
Overview of self assessment process, (DfES 2001)

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5.1 Summary: Assessment of Quality Systems

Having considered the potential effect of a number of systems designed to promote quality the following conclusions can be made:

- Generally, for systems to be effective they need to be accepted by the staff and the culture of the organisation needs to be supportive and motivating
- Staff members need to recognise the potential benefits of working within the systems
- Quality systems need to be customised and developed from the existing culture, Deming's (1993) 3rd point
- Systems should be developed from existing good practice within the organisation and be realistic, workable and affordable
- There should be vehicles for assisting staff to develop their own professional practice not a means of controlling them.

The table below summarises the strengths, weaknesses and potential impact of the quality systems discussed in the section:

System	Strengths	Weaknesses	Potential Impact
ISO – series	Organisations have flexibility to develop their own procedures; the standard can be applied to a wide range of organisations. All college procedures are included.	Focus is on paper systems; generates paper for every activity, adds to the administrative burden. Annual external audit: Auditors do not meet all staff.	A logo for organisations' letterheads – indicates that there are workable procedures in place. Some staff may not be following procedures...
Investors in People	Focus is on staff development; promotes financial support and professional updating – across the college.	3 day audit every three years. Focus on paper systems in relation to staff; personal development reviews and staff qualifications. Auditors meet a selection of staff; they have a limited view of the organisation.	Promoting ethos of Continuous Staff Development and investment in staff.

TQM	Combines paper systems and the focus on Human Resources. Designed to create a quality culture.	Needs commitment from senior management down. Needs to be TQEM with an educational focus to be most effective.	Focus on process makes it more acceptable.
EFQM	A practical tool for measuring where an organisation is on its path to excellence.	Focus is on competition - should this be so for education?	Can involve the whole staff in the improvement cycle; people development is at the heart of the system.
OfSTED / ALI	Focus is on the Common Inspection Framework; college wide, focus is on the student experience, teaching and learning, student support and management and leadership.	Repeated every four years, inspection lasts a week. Can only gain a snapshot of the organisation. Colleges know six months in advance. Expensive.	If organisations gain high grades they can enjoy the kudos, and staff can gain acknowledgement for good practice.
CHI	Independent assessment ensuring that National Standards are being applied consistently.	Staff know of the inspection on advance. As above, inspectors can gain only a snapshot.	As above, high grades gain kudos for the organisation. More funding available for high grades.
Self assessment	The system shadows the inspection process and has a similar focus. The staff can possibly be more honest and open about weaknesses.	Needs to be as robust as external inspection. The staff need to respect the managers, particularly for teaching observation. Needs to be credibility in the system.	Almost acts as a rehearsal to external inspection giving staff the opportunity to discuss improvement more openly.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential Impact of Quality Systems: Table 1

The potential impact of the seven quality systems has been discussed. The actual effect of the systems will be explored in more detail through my empirical research. Brain (1994:51), explains that 'reward is at the heart of quality, but it goes well beyond money. The rewards of the professional relate to the degree of independence, based on trust, he/she feels in

carrying out the required role'. Teachers in the sector, like all teachers, want to do the best for their students and look for support from the systems to help them in their role.

Potentially, quality systems can have a positive impact and can fit well into the general philosophy, although less often into the practice, of education and training organisations. All organisations claim to be student-centred. Quality systems at their best can provide an encompassing framework to assure that promises are delivered to both staff and students. They have a vital role to play in the future health and survival of organisations. A clear identity, well – defined standards and systems should be necessary features of self-confident colleges.

Sallis (1994:136) emphasises, 'Educationalists need to keep in mind that the quality message is in essence extremely simple. Quality is about doing the ordinary things extraordinarily well'. Quality systems, at their best, support this process; the actual impact, on individuals and organisations will be explored in my research. The research methods are discussed in the next section.

6.0 Research Methods

When the question for my thesis research was originally discussed I was working in a general FE college. I was interested in the effect on staff of adhering to quality systems, aware of the pressure on the staff from my own experience and that of my colleagues, to justify the quality of their work internally and externally. There had been a recent OfSTED inspection with positive outcomes generally but I was aware that several individuals and teams had been left feeling demoralised and unsupported. It is recognised that there is a lot of published work describing quality systems and quantitative data exists describing the outcomes from the systems but as previously discussed relatively little research exists that deals directly with the impact of quality systems on individuals and their organisations in the post-16 sector. Originally, my research was going to be based within my college, focusing on the quality systems and using my colleagues to measure the impact and effect of quality systems.

A change of employment in January, 2003 meant I needed to rethink the focus of my case study. My teaching, with a group of BA students studying a module based on analysing quality systems, continued until Easter. Originally, I was planning to share my research within the college with the students during their studies but due to my change of job the students themselves became the focus of my case study; the data to be utilised was to be notes taken during interviews with the students, including verbatim accounts and paraphrasing of discussion during group tutorials and their written accounts. The eight students work in organisations in the post-16 education and training sector. When considering quality issues within their organisations they have all been exposed to the pressures inherent in the sector. They are all fairly, recently – qualified teachers; during the data – gathering for my thesis they discuss the effects of the quality systems in their organisations on themselves and their colleagues. They act as 'key informants' who by referring to their workplaces provide a quantitative profile of 'typical cases'. While studying a few critical cases does not technically permit broad generalisations to all possible cases,

Patton (1987:55) comments that 'logical generalisations can often be made from the weight of evidence produced'.

In recognising that the case studies included in my research would be small – scale, involving the eight students as key informants in their own organisations, it is acknowledged that my study is too small for confident generalisations across the sector. The BA students represent a range of organisations; they were completing a piece of research in their own right as part of their academic study, which meant they were following similar structures when collecting their data. Discussion with the students about their findings helped to evaluate the quality issues relevant to their organisations. Patton (1987:19) refers to case studies becoming 'particularly useful', 'where one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information – rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question'.

Patton (1987:29) stresses the importance of using 'qualitative methods to evaluate quality'.

'Quality is to do with nuance, with detail, with the subtle and unique things that make a difference beyond the points on a standardized scale'. (Ibid: 30).

Answers to quality issues require detailed, in depth and holistic descriptions that represent people in their own terms and get close enough to the situation being studied to understand first-hand the nuances of quality.

The aim of my research was to consider the effect of quality systems on the staff (both themselves and their colleagues) in post-16 education and training organisations. This involved collecting qualitative data based on discussion and interviews. This approach seemed most relevant for this particular study. The quantitative approach with its focus on statistical information and formal assessment has its place in measuring quality; the present political climate is target – driven with targets set nationally and locally for improvement.

Rowntree (1992:32) advocates a strategy of 'applied common sense' when considering research methods, advocating a pragmatic approach to data collection.

As Bell (1998:8) describes, 'Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis'. For this particular research a qualitative approach was more suitable, not because it was felt that social 'facts' do not exist or whether a 'scientific' approach could be used when dealing with human beings; it is recognized that 'there are occasions when qualitative researchers draw on quantitative techniques, and vice versa', (Ibid: 8). Having considered the theoretical literature focusing on quality systems it seemed more effective to focus on 'case study' as the research method to evaluate the quality systems and their effect in practice. It is recognized that a qualitative approach would focus on the views of a few.

An ethnographic approach to research involves the analysis of a group or culture. Fetterman (1989:43) defines ethnography broadly as the study of, 'a small tribal group in some exotic land or a classroom in middle class suburbia'.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:67) say it involves;

1   producing a description of the cultural knowledge of the group
2   describing the activities of the group from its members' point of view
3   describing the key characteristics defining membership of the group
4   describing and analysing patterns of social interaction that the group experiences
5   providing as far as possible 'insider accounts'
6   the development of theory (though some ethnographers limit themselves to description)

Case studies are particularly valuable when the evaluation aims to capture individual differences or unique variations from one setting to another, in this case education and training organisations in the post-16 sector. A qualitative case study seeks to describe the setting in depth, in detail, in context, and holistically; in the following research each student identifies the quality systems present in their organisation and the effect on themselves, their

colleagues and their organisations. The more the case study emphasises individual outcomes the more appropriate are qualitative case methods; the more common outcomes are emphasised, the greater may be the appropriateness of standardised quantitative measures of performance and change.

Factors that need consideration in any research design would be the time available, the choice of sampling, how the data are going to be collected, and how the data will be processed. In this case the data collection had to take place during the three months the students were completing their studies; this enabled me to have greater access to them as key informants in their organisations. My research made it possible to gain an insight into the perspectives of the individuals involved which will highlight their perceptions and views and other variables that may have been overlooked by a quantitative analysis of data.

Limitations of the case study are highlighted by Hammersley (1992:11): 'the choice of case study involves buying greater detail and likely accuracy of information about particular cases at the cost of being less able to make effective generalisations to a larger population of cases'. There could be a 'trade-off' (Ibid: 11) of empirical generalisability on the one hand and the accuracy and detail on the other. The results of the qualitative research would illuminate the processes of the quality systems in existence in the students' organisations and the effect on the workforce. The results could be further developed, once the 'generalisability' (Schofield cited in Hammersley 1993:12) of the qualitative research is assured.

Hammersley (1993:12) explains how doubts have been expressed about whether, 'research can simply document the facts about education policy and practice – whether they do not in some sense construct the 'facts' they present.' When considering the veracity of a piece of research, questions need to be asked re the sampling and matching procedures. It is necessary to consider if there were any sample design errors? Was there any built - in bias? There is a need to consider if the sample subjects were representative of a broader group? Were assumptions made? How were the groups selected?

The group of students I have used in the research are all studying part-time and in full-time employment. I had worked with them during the course of their BA studies and I had known some of them from earlier courses. The way the BA Pathway works is that they enter it having completed their Certificate in Education in Post-Compulsory Education and Training with 120 credits; six out of the eight students I have taught on the Cert Ed course. During my work with them in individual and group interviews the students can be open with me as I have known them all for at least a year as a reliable and responsible tutor, with a reasonably good rapport, a tutor who can listen without passing judgement. I chose to take notes during our interviews; I felt that taping their discussion would have been too intrusive.

It is likely that the students will value staff development and continuous professional development highly for themselves and their colleagues within their organisations. Having been involved in focused study relating to post-16 education and training for the last four years they will also be well - informed as to current issues within the sector. Rather than this leading to a biased approach it is more likely to equip the students, as key informants in their organisations, with a more open approach to their work.

The validity of research is proven by the extent to which the research instruments used to actually collect the data provide an accurate picture of what or who is being studied. The essential validity question is, 'Is this method measuring what the researcher says it is measuring?' By using the students to discuss their own organisations, the information is collected effectively to evaluate quality systems and their impact within those organisations.

Similarly, the reliability of the piece is measured by the extent to which the same results would be found if the research was to be repeated by someone else, perhaps using a different technique. The essential reliability question is whether the design and implementation of the study give us faith in its results, that it is a true reflection of the impact quality systems have on teachers in the post-16 sector.

Hughes (1990:11) describes how the methods chosen by the researcher are largely governed by external pressures. The methods must be fit for the purpose or topic of the research. There are also practical considerations, such as the resources available to the researcher. This has certainly been the case for this piece of research; 'Researching a problem is a matter of using the skills and techniques appropriate to do the job required within the limits set'.

Having worked in the FE sector for the last twelve years I feel I have an understanding of the post-16 teaching and learning environment. By working with my students as they explore their workplaces and begin to gather information I planned to evaluate the effects that various quality systems have had on teachers and trainers in the sector in a variety of organisations.

A wide variety of methods for collecting the primary data, vital for this research, was considered. I considered using questionnaires with the students; the advantage being that it would be a time effective way to gather information and the students could take them away and complete them at their own pace. Having decided at first this might be the optimum way to proceed the construction of the questionnaire then became an issue.

The following quote from Best (1977:157) highlights some of the hazards to avoid when designing questionnaires;

'The limitations of words are particular hazards. The same words mean different things to different people. The questionnaire - maker has their own interpretation – respondents, may have their own interpretations.'

The students had no vested interest in distorting their reports as they might have had if the information had needed to be shared with their institutions. The students' colleagues also could be open in their responses to questioning. Having considered this, and because I had fairly easy access to the group of students, interviewing became the preferred option:

'During an interview or in conversation, we are able to clear up misunderstanding by restating the question, by inflection of the voice, by suggestions, and by the number of other devices. The written question stands by itself, often ambiguous and misunderstood.' (Ibid: 157)

Interviewing proved useful because of my close relationship with the students. It was possible to follow up answers with further discussion to tease out possible issues. Cohen and Manion (1994:273) comment how interview data can be used, 'to follow up unexpected results, for example, or to validate other methods, or to go deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do'.

The semi – structured interviews were guided by questions such as;

1. How would you define quality in the context of your education and training organisation?
2. How do you think quality is best measured?
3. Which quality systems are you aware of in your organisation?
4. Which one do you feel has the most impact?
5. What effect does it have on yourself and the staff in your institution?

Interviewing offered the opportunity to probe for more information than a questionnaire would have necessarily provided and to re-phrase questions where necessary to obtain a fuller response. Cohen and Manion (1994) comment on how the interviewer needs to guard against asking leading questions and dominating the discussion; the structure of the interviews tended to be quite informal with questions asked as prompts; the main drawback to this format of interviewing is that it is very time – intensive.

Hakim (1997:27) describes qualitative research as being involved with 'individual' perceptions, 'attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings, the meanings and interpretations given to events and things'.

The kind of data collected through the interviewing will be concerned with unpicking the generalisations found in quantitative work. The students would not be treated as one – dimensional characters in data-tables; more variables can be considered and recorded in the data. In 'What's wrong with Ethnography?', Hammersley (1992:186) states that, 'We must not see research methodology in terms of competing traditions, but rather as involving a complexity of assumptions and arguments, some of them in conflict, and a range of strategies and techniques that have advantages and disadvantages for particular goals and particular circumstances'. Gheradi and Turner (1987) argue that 'women are different types of researchers, more at home in the soft-data paradigm and its interpersonal methods' (cited in Hammersley, 1993:37). The research that follows is set in the 'soft-data paradigm' – this is where I feel most comfortable along with its interpersonal methods.

Hughes (1990:12), describes the 'researcher's broad approach to the social world' as affecting the approach taken to research and the tools adopted. His view is that researchers can be placed somewhere on a continuum;

Positivist-------------------Interpretivist

My position as researcher on the continuum would be right of the centre as marked below;

Positivist--------------------Interpretivist*

The approach taken by positivists acknowledges social behaviour as regular and patterned, believing that people take on the social roles which they learn in social institutions. Research has shown that individuals do take on social roles to a certain extent; in the context of education and training, teachers having worked their way through the education system tend to value education and professional development and are influenced by the education and training system. Positivists would argue that behaviour is predictable - and therefore patterns of behaviour can be determined.

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The students in my research are not typical 'newly qualified teachers'. In the post-16 sector it is less likely that the staff have been involved in the education system since their school days. It is more likely, and this is the case with the eight students involved in my research, that they have been employed in some vocational role, gained vocational qualifications and have reached part-time study in Higher Education through teaching experience in post – 16 education and training organisations. There will be similarities with other staff within the sector who will have adopted similar social roles within their organisations; to some extent, patterns of behaviour will exist.

The positivist view encompasses a focus on groups within society. Durkheim believed the social sciences needed to deal with groups of various kinds, institutions, cultures, whole systems of interaction and processes which are more than just the sum of individuals within the groups but have a reality in their own right. The thesis research recognises and utilises groups and the importance of organisational culture throughout with the student 'focus group' and each student investigating their own organisation and effects on their colleagues.

At the other end of the continuum the emphasis on free will by interpretivists leads them to see social reality in a situation of flux with people interpreting what is going on in different ways. From this perspective, the interpretivists see peoples' attitudes, beliefs and values shaped by the individuals themselves and not merely shaped by their social world. The research on 'impact' explored in this thesis is made more complex because individuals are unique and people are not autonomous beings; also using a qualitative approach to data collection encourages an interpretivist analysis of the outcomes.

The 'interpretative alternative' (Hughes, 1990:92) has to be embraced; interpretivists believe that 'history and society were human creations and that this constituted the essence of all social forms… knowledge of persons could only be gained through an interpretative procedure grounded in the imaginative recreation of the experiences of others.' (Ibid: 152) Taken to the extreme and acknowledging the complexity of the individuals and their colleagues involved in the research it follows that if only the interpretivist view exists then,

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'The search for absolute and certain knowledge has to be abandoned and in its place substituted a never – ending series of interpretations of the world.' (Hughes, 1990:152)

I believe that a balanced approach is needed, hence the mark on the continuum line just right of the centre; my thesis research would support Hughes' (1990:163) argument that the way forward is, 'Getting rid of the 'one – story' view, the 'one method that will take us forward' view and accept both a pluralism of theories and the patience to see how things work themselves out'.

The research for the thesis will explore the views and opinions of individuals working in groups and working within the cultures of their own organisations. Having considered the view of the social world of the researcher Hughes, 1990:162 goes on to claim that, 'Nor does it matter much whether or not the doctrines are philosophically 'correct' in order to make them interesting as methodological recommendations: what will count is whether, by making them so, they result in fruitful investigations which tell us something new'. The important point of research is that the findings are fruitful.

The focus of the thesis is behavioural research – 'how people perceive their world' (Stangor, 1998:3) using the empirical data collected and analysed through observation and analysis of my students' views. The views expressed by my students are often value-based, using their own experiences. Distinctions need to be drawn between subjective and objective views throughout as an analysis is made of the students' findings. Basic approaches have been used to explore the processes of quality systems to acquire a better understanding as to the impact on teachers. The applied research that follows in discussion with my students and their individual exploration within their own professional practices will be used to investigate the effect of the systems within their organisations. In short, 'applied research and basic research inform each other' (Lewin, 1944:6).

The research design for this thesis includes descriptive research 'providing a snapshot of thoughts, feelings or behaviours at a given place and a given time'. (Stangor, 1998:12) It is necessary to recognise that the scope of the research is limited to studying current concerns; it is not really feasible to tell how the concerns could develop or impact on future developments within the organisations.

Ethical issues are vital to any study. In educational research ethical questions are often raised about considerations of confidentiality and anonymity, the rights of the subjects of the research, how far researchers must be open about what they are doing, how far they can go in investigating their subjects etc. – I have used the views gained through interviews and discussion and the preliminary investigations of my students as the basis of my case study; reference to their work will be fully acknowledged throughout, the anonymity of the students and their workplaces is maintained. During the interviews I took hand-written notes and tried to keep the atmosphere more informal and relaxed, hence the mix of commentary and quotation in the report. In hindsight I feel my increased intervention with the students during this module lifted the quality of their final assignment. They were prompted throughout their module to read theoretical pieces, consult colleagues, and consider research methods. The students were aware of my research; we were all working towards producing an academic piece of work.

Their module was taught over eight weeks with two weeks for tutorial sessions, although during this module I arranged interviews throughout the planned eight weeks of the course so I could talk with the students individually and in small groups about their views of quality systems within their own organisations. The module felt more intensive than others I have taught with the same group of students; the organisation of our meetings was more structured. The meetings had two purposes; for them to sound out ideas for their work and for me to gain information for my research. In hindsight I feel it worked well for the students, my close questioning focused their responses and therefore sharpened their work, they all completed the module, produced their assignments by the deadline and successfully completed their BA qualification in July 2003.

As far as reliability and validity questions in the research; the students were all focused on their BA module and were all collecting and collating their work to submit their assignments for their studies. Tapping into the students' experience gave me an opportunity to explore and compare a variety of post-16 education provision and to examine the issues raised by applying systems aimed at maintaining and improving the quality of provision across the sector.

The use of interviewing with such a small group was positive. I felt I had a close rapport with the students and there was a sense of trust which led the respondents to more open and honest discussion. Similarly, the work within their workplaces was qualitative and interpretivist, involving discussion with their colleagues that they often worked closely alongside. The class became a focus group during the course of their module and they were able to share views and ideas amongst themselves whilst providing case study material for my research.

My students are using observational techniques in their workplaces to consider the effect of quality systems. They are themselves participants in the research as employees of their organisations; they are as much affected by the systems as their colleagues.
This case study involves a group of eight students. Their research involves eight organisations, which broadens the research out. The scope of the research is subject to the usual problem associated with case studies, that the research is based on only a limited number of individuals, because they begin to represent eight organisations and some of their teaching staff this is lessened in this particular study.

Generalisation may be possible in places – some of the students' research will be comparing like with like. In some cases the systems being used to measure the quality of provision are the same, and in some case the organisations are similar. The strength of the research is the variety of post – 16 organisations in which the eight students work; all working with similar quality systems to support and justify their standards of provision.

7.0   The Case Study

My eight students on the BA Education and Training course all work as teachers or trainers
in the post- compulsory sector. One is employed full-time in an FE college, one part-time in
FE, one in a sixth-form college, two work for work-based training companies, one works for
a local National Health Trust, one for a local engineering company, one is a peripatetic music
teacher working with a variety of age groups including compulsory and post-compulsory
students. The students have a wide variety of experience of teaching; all completing a
module on their BA programme entitled Quality Assurance Systems in Education and
Training.

The quality systems chosen by the students as their focus are shown in the table below:

Students	Organisations	System	Application
Andy M	Training Provider	ALI – CIF	External
Julie B	Training Provider	ALI – CIF	External
Jeff S	Music Service	OfSTED – CIF	External
Margaret B	Further Education	OfSTED – CIF	External
Mike B	Further Education	Investors in People	External
Mike S	Engineering Industry	ISO 9001	External
Chris T	Further Education	Self Assessment - CPD / Staff Development	Internal
Julie J	National Health Trust	NICE/National Service Frameworks	External

Students, Organisations and Quality Systems: Table 2

The students were asked to consider various quality systems present in their workplaces, for
example, the IS0 series, Investors in People, EFQM. The students were encouraged to
discuss possible links between appraisal, classroom observation and the audit processes. The
main features of quality control and assurance measures were discussed and analysed with
institutional performance and responses considered. The diversity of the systems is complex
and often confusing. Initially, the students did not differentiate between external and internal

systems or quality assurance and quality control; they recognised in them all an element of 'control'.

Initially, during the first session of their module, quality definitions had been discussed as a group. The optimum way of measuring quality was also discussed to begin to gauge the students' initial views of the constructs of quality:

How do you measure 'quality'?

- Audits
- Surveys
- Compare against targets / benchmark
- Objectives set
- Standards
- Benchmarking
- Fit for purpose
- Targets
- Comparisons
- Outcomes
- ISO / IiP / BSI

The students, as teachers in education and training had all been exposed to one or more of the measures above; quality systems were being applied in their organizations and they had strong views, both positive and negative as to their impact. They focused on one quality system and explored in more detail the effect on themselves, their colleagues and their organisations. The students are introduced in the following section and their initial definitions of quality are highlighted to provide background information to the research.

7.1   Introductions and Areas of Focus:

Andy Mc works for a training agency that has several centres across the Tees Valley. When asked how he defines quality he places the concept in the context of the needs of his students. He feels quality is about satisfying the needs of his students. He refers to the ISO series as a system in place in his organisation. His feelings about the definition of quality are echoed in the philosophy of the ISO series, 'the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied need' (www.iso-standards-international.com).

The BSI describe quality as 'satisfying customer needs', (Ibid). Andy agrees with the definition and yet he questions whether an organisation established in 1901 largely for business can really have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning in his organisation. Andy acknowledges its utility but also recognises its shortcomings, 'Maybe as organisations to raise standards and quality of products on a national and international scale in industry they are effective, but do they work for education?'

Julie B works in the Tees Valley for a large, national company. Julie is based in a local salon, training hairdressing students. When asked for her definition of quality she does not define the concept directly but begins by discussing how, 'education and training have been in a constant process of change'. Julie B has been teaching for only three years and has witnessed wide changes to the curriculum, particularly to the funding mechanisms and to workload, with an increased administrative burden. She questions whether the changes have always been for the better and improved the quality of the teaching and learning in organisations. She feels outside agencies such as 'the government and the funding agencies use their own performance indicators to determine the success of the educational and training systems within institutions', she feels the outside agencies control her organisation. They play a major part in the way that education and training is structured and directed and impact on the teaching and learning within her workplace. When pressed to consider how quality is best measured, Julie recognises 'self - evaluation can be a useful tool for measuring quality'.

Andy is interested in quality issues relating to teaching and learning within his workplace; Julie B has a similar focus. Andy's and Julie's organisations have recently had an Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspection and they have had the opportunity to consider the impact of external inspection on their workplace. The Adult Learning Inspectorate focuses on work – based training; Andy and Julie refer to ALI although the inspectors use the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) jointly with the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), as a single inspectorate.

Jeff S is a peripatetic music teacher working for an LEA – funded, music service within the Tees Valley. Jeff works in a wide variety of schools with a wide range of students from primary through to post – compulsory students. Jeff defines quality as two kinds of system, recognising the difference between assurance and control. He feels the focus should be on 'quality assurance, and monitoring the whole process – every link in the chain'. Jeff feels too often the preoccupation is with the end product. Jeff also recognises that 'a professional organisation will have both external and internal quality systems'. His views on the systems and their impact will be explored later.

Margaret B works part-time in an FE College; she explains how she believes that quality systems have become important ways of directing the content of educational philosophy. She feels that quality systems provide the control to 'measure the profit margin and the achievability of how, why and when tasks are carried out, and how effective the systems are'. Quality systems have primarily been 'the concept of commerce, industry and manufacturing; the frameworks are those used in such workplaces, rather than learning environments'. She recognises that this has created the need for suitable frameworks to be designed that fulfil an educational rather than an industrial role.

Margaret feels strongly that 'education cannot be bought and sold as a piece of merchandise', the business – like focus of the quality systems needs to relate directly to teaching and

learning. 'Education is not a product with a definitive end - excellence in education takes a different route than product perfection'.

'Frameworks for quality systems and assurance need to be developed that follow the manufacturing frameworks but that build systems suitable to ensure quality in learning environments and provide teaching and learning bias that leans towards developing students who wish to learn'.

Jeff and Margaret chose to focus on the OfSTED inspection process to explore with their colleagues. The Music Service had recently gone through an OfSTED inspection, Margaret has one approaching. Margaret can recognise some positives of the inspection process but is also aware of the negative impact on teachers. Jeff describes OfSTED as, 'a name that strikes fear into the hearts of teachers, managers and advisors alike'; he acknowledges that 'few single words would inspire the same emotive response'. Where OfSTED would prefer to be seen as a source of support for those establishments struggling to meet the ever – increasing demand for excellence Jeff refers to it as a 'dark, avenging government angel waiting to swoop and exert terrible retribution on those who are too weak to keep up with the rest of the herd like a sickly wildebeest stalked by a pride of lions'. They both explore whether OfSTED achieves improvements and to what cost to their colleagues.

Mike B works in a local Sixth Form College. He is very positive about quality systems, his definition of quality includes the reflection on the systems that measure it; 'the systems in place within a quality environment are in place to ensure that that we each have a pride in our finished product'. In line with the views of Deming (1986) Mike B claims a good system, 'is only as good as the people operating it, it is a team effort and a team responsibility'.

Mike B focuses on 'Investors in People' as a quality system and considers the process, its adoption and the resulting impact within his organisation. During our interview he explains how the IiP report is designed to highlight the 'strengths of the college and raise issues for consideration on how processes could be developed to achieve better outcomes'. The IiP

audit occurs every three years, during the last term the IiP audit had taken place with an assessor based in his college over a period of three days. The assessor met with a selected group of staff across the strata of the college. Mike B is very positive about the process and the effect on his colleagues within the college. He feels 'staff are kept well – informed about training opportunities, including relevant courses, and they are encouraged to source development opportunities that are relevant to their work'.

Chris T is a relatively new lecturer to the Further Education system and presently finishing a first year within a 'merged' college. The merger involved two general FE colleges, one of them financially stronger than the other; the merger was felt to be more of a take-over by the staff of both colleges. He can recognise that there have been different theoretical approaches to quality within the two separate colleges; 'there were two different approaches and two different cultures'. He feels the approach of the financially stronger college has definitely taken precedence. Conversations with staff from the 'taken – over college' have highlighted that some of their systems were archaic. 'Their college hadn't remained financially viable'.

When asked to define quality Chris refers to it as 'a tool to be used to benefit the sector, to make teaching and learning consistent and reliable as well as measurable in terms of outcome'. It should be monitored throughout and altered progressively; he refers to Sallis:

'Quality is not an instrument with a single point. It is more like a fork with three prongs:

- the effectiveness of a person's, team's or institution's performance
- the reputation which that person, team or institution has gained
- the resources which that person, team or institution can attract.'

(Sallis, 1992:40)

Chris talks about the different methods used to measure quality and some of the issues that affect quality; he feels there is 'a preoccupation with quality in the newly - merged organisation', that is affecting the staff and the organization.

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Chris considers self-assessment as a quality system. He feels strongly that the quality of teaching and learning should be the main focus of any system and that initial training and continuous professional development are a priority for any provider. 'Professional up – dating is vital, the induction process for both students and staff, staff appraisal also is a worthwhile procedure and the management and leadership of the college is important too.'

In his experience in FE his college has promoted staff development, from the initial stages of employment through interview and induction, 'with the view to giving every member of the teaching staff the opportunity to gain more than the minimum qualifications necessary to perform their role as a tutor, teacher or lecturer and to fulfil their role as an educator'.

Julie J works as a Ward Manager for a local National Health Trust. When asked for her definition of quality she explains she personally feels that quality should be 'in the eye of the beholder', and echoes Armstrong's (1999) view that the definitions of quality are a 'cultural product underpinned by cultural values'. In her workplace however, she feels the focus is on 'efficiency and effectiveness'. She feels that the present Government's agenda and that of the Trust are on 'economy and effectiveness'. Julie J explains how quality in the NHS is measured through Governmental Targets, 'which are ultimately for financial savings and gain'. Julie has worked in the NHS for the last ten years and the focus, she feels, has remained the same.

New systems have been introduced to support quality initiatives with the New Labour Government, the focus being on patient care. Julie is interested in staff development issues and the systems in place to promote and monitor the quality of training.

Owen (1999:212) questions whether quality systems focused on education and training expect providers to satisfy, 'all of the learners all of the time, most of the learners most of the time, or some of the learners some of the time'. Julie talks about an unacceptable variation of quality provision of patient care across the country; she suggests that if the systems were supporting teaching and learning within the Trusts then the variation should not exist.

Julie J places particular emphasis on education and training and continuous staff development in the NHS and focuses on the systems in place to promote and monitor quality. The 1998 White Paper 'A First Class Service' sets out how these measures will be introduced. Standards of care will be set through the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) and through National Service Frameworks (NSFs). The National Institute for Clinical Excellence was an initiative formed as part of the NHS changes. Julie explains in our interview how its role is to promote 'clinical and cost effectiveness'. It will 'produce and disseminate high quality evidence based guidance to support front - line staff', including guidelines for the management of diseases and the use of significant new and existing interventions. National Service Frameworks (NSFs) set out what patients can expect to receive from the NHS, and define how services are best provided and to what standards.

At the heart of the Labour Government's NHS reforms is the belief that the NHS should be dependable, 'that it should be able to guarantee fair access and high quality to patients wherever they live'. When the Government came to power in 1997 it said that the NHS was in danger of losing public confidence; it was aloof and paternalistic, slow to respond to medical advances and suffered from huge variations in access to services and treatments – the so called 'postcode lottery' (Butler, 2001). Since then there has been a quality initiative, and the Government has attempted to reform the NHS with, 'a vast inter -linking network of measures aimed at setting, monitoring and enforcing clear national standards of care and quality, making the service more dynamic, patient friendly and safer, cutting waiting times, and giving patients more choice over where and when they are treated'.

These frameworks are a key component of plans to tackle unacceptable variations in quality across the country. Standards are delivered locally through clinical governance; a framework through which NHS organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in clinical care will flourish. Julie explores how the NHS response to quality systems has affected performance and impacted upon teams and individuals within her Trust.

Mike S is a Human Resource Development Officer for a local engineering company. His company has an internally produced quality manual that focuses on financial results, customer loyalty, operational excellence, people/talent development. Mike S's company have the IiP standard and the ISO 9001 standard; both internal and external audits are given a high profile within the company.

Mike S describes several factors that have contributed to an increased awareness of the importance of the adoption and use of quality assurance systems at his company. 'The appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer has brought about significant changes to an already progressive company.' Mike describes his colleagues as, more than ever, 'target – driven and aware of the relentless competition in the world market'. Mike feels all the workforce need to be onboard to move forward in an organisation, and would support the view that quality is 'about passion and pride' (Peters & Austin, 1985). Mike S focuses on the IS0 Series and its impact on his colleagues and on his organisation.

Drawing the students' views together, the focus for the majority became the quality of the teaching and learning process, interestingly it was Mike S, based in an engineering company, that defined quality in terms of products and was most comfortable with quality systems such as IS0 9000; his colleagues being aware of the 'competition in the world market'.

7.2   The Issues:

When I began to analyse the notes I had made during the semi – structured interviews I held with the students, I was able to highlight key points relating to 'perceived impact'. The common strands that began to emerge from the interviews could be grouped together. The students' paraphrased comments could be categorised together under the following headings, although not every student always addressed every area. The common themes will be discussed and analysed in greater depth during this chapter:

- External forces influence quality provision
- How useful is target setting in improving quality?
- External inspection processes can have a positive and/or a negative impact
- Inspection as a motivator?
- Internal systems, internally – led; are they more useful?
- The administrative burden of quality systems – too much paper?
- Leadership and Management – the key to raising standards and maintaining quality?
- 'Systems ensure that there is accountability and ownership for getting things done'?

- **External forces can influence quality provision - outside of the control of the teacher or the organisation**

During his interview Andy discusses the impact of the ALI inspection process. Initially, he explains how he feels quality is a value-laden term and could be quite subjective, the question of 'who decides the standards?' is not asked openly. Andy feels the teaching and learning need to be of high quality, 'with moral and educational aims that fit the curriculum needs for the student according to the course criteria'. Andy argues that it is not sufficient to define the quality of teaching and learning only in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, 'sometimes practitioners can see flaws in the course criteria and content and yet this is often

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out of their control'. Teaching can follow the quality systems and could still be defined as indoctrination, not education. Andy states that 'teaching may also be poorly resourced, poorly conceived and fail to meet student needs and yet still satisfy the elaborate systems set up to monitor it'.

In Julie B's interview she also focuses on the impact of the inspection process. Like Andy her organisation has recently undergone an ALI inspection; Julie makes the same point as Andy; that she feels, 'there are external factors outside the control of the lecturer or the organisation that can affect quality'. When Julie talked about quality with her colleagues she found that they often felt they have too many changes imposed on them without any consultation. Her colleagues feel that 'more teachers in the front line should be consulted'.

During the inspection process the organisation is judged without reference to the wider contextual issues that can affect the quality of the organisation. One example Julie gives during her interview is to criticise the LSC for their time limits to complete Modern Apprenticeships. The imposed time restrictions, 'restricts the length of time spent with the student' and affects the quality of their courses. 'It gives no time for any extra activities to enhance the learning process and help instil motivation into the students'. She feels that unrealistic time restrictions set by the LSC are often unreasonable; courses and students are doomed to failure when they are given only 18 months to complete a foundation MA. Unrealistic targets are set that are impossible to meet; Julie and her colleagues would argue this is why there are such poor results for FMA / AMAs and yet the poor results are reflected in the inspection grades for her company for Teaching and Learning. The table below shows the national completion rates for AMAs and FMAs and gives an indication of the wider contextual issues that are affecting the qualification framework:

2002/03	AMA Completions % of AMA leavers who have completed framework	FMA Completions % of FMA leavers who have completed framework	NVQ achievements % of all leavers who have achieved at least one NVQ
England	33	25	41

*National Completion Rates for FMAa and AMAs (2002/3):*Table 3

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In Andy's interview he explains how during his organisation's inspection a major issue for the inspectors was the way that Key Skills were being integrated into the qualifications – they were keen to see the integration into every working situation throughout the NVQ program. The discussion with the inspectors focused on the method of assessment for Key Skills and the implementation of the exam. This is another example of wider contextual issues impacting on the 'quality' within organisations. The implementation of key skills has been problematic on a national level from their introduction and subsequent modifications; and yet the individual provider gains poor inspection grades when the problems are national ones.

With reference to the national picture regarding the vocational qualifications taught in Julie's and Andy's organisations, Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMA), Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (AMA) and NVQs; ALI's Chief Inspector David Sherlock explains that although there are some examples of excellence, too few people are receiving the quality of training that will prepare them for employment to address the country's skill shortages. 60% of work – based learning provision was found to be inadequate. On average, only 1/3 of young people embarking on an MA achieved their qualification. This is an abysmal achievement rate but Julie and Andy would claim it reflects decisions made nationally, out of the control of the classroom teacher.

Speaking at the launch of the 2002 ALI Annual Report, Sherlock stated;

'For many providers, this was a desperately tough year. They have struggled to cope with changes in the MA framework and in the funding arrangements with the resources at their disposal. There are grounds for optimism, however, not least because the weaknesses are now being confronted. The DfES, LSC, and the ALI are working together to find remedies and provide support' (Sherlock, 2002).

Sherlock's (2002) statement highlights Andy and Julie's point that the content of the curriculum and wider contextual issues that affect quality are often outside of the practitioners' control.

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For Modern Apprentices the biggest impact on student retention and achievement at Andy and Julie's organisation has been the introduction of Key Skills. This has caused the greatest concern to all providers. Learners, and often the staff themselves cannot see the relevance of Key Skills, along with the lack of time a learner has to complete their MA program – these issues need to be addressed nationally if students are going to be successful on vocational pathways and ALI inspection reports are going to reflect the quality of teaching and learning across the post-16 sector.

Julie B comments during her interview that she feels important issues are not addressed in her workplace by the inspection process, discussion about salary increments are swept under the table; parity of salaries across the post – 16 sector is an issue within Julie's organisation, it is another issue that needs addressing nationally. There is a constant shift, nationally, of staff moving from training providers over to FE colleges in search of better pay and conditions; Andy's organisation lost 22 members of staff last year across the region. The quality of an organisation will inevitably be affected by such a high turnover of staff; the inspection process will provide grades for the individual organisation without acknowledging the wider national issues concerning parity of salary and working conditions affecting the sector.

Jeff considers the impact of the OfSTED inspection process on his colleagues and recognises that wider contextual issues can affect inspection grades despite being out of their control. Jeff describes how peripatetic music teachers spend a lot of time alone and often work in sub – standard accommodation; this will affect the quality of provision:

'Many departments still cannot meet the specification from HMI in 'Music 5 – 16' first published in 1985. Our science colleagues would not work without lab assistants and without the proper equipment: neither should music teachers' (Hallam, 2002)

Individual music teachers are pulled in two directions by the demands made on them by action plans and new initiatives. On the one hand they are required to increase pupil numbers for greater access to musical instruments and widen participation, and on the other

they are being asked to weed out poorer pupils to increase the quality of ensemble playing. 'If you are a music teacher and your pupils are achieving good results then surely you are doing a good job?'

Jeff explains the external pressures that can affect provision. That when you also have to increase your pupil recruitment by 25% in the next academic year while still maintaining the previous standards things become more complex. Jeff feels that when the emphasis is on figures and there is increasing pressure on managers to 'move ever forward and upward' two things can happen as a result – either 'a successful organisation can meet the challenge and move on even further or a less successful organisation can make sure the figures happen whether the quality matches up or not'. This then becomes quantity over quality, a 'bums on seats' mentality and a fraudulent flawed system. Jeff points out how, 'If you force someone to move, and never stop to consider a new direction, eventually they come to a brick wall, and the only way to move is backward'.

Education initiatives such as 'widening participation' and 'lifelong learning' have opened the gates for individuals wishing to pursue their ideals of knowledge and skills. External pressures impact on organisations; they need to be supported through change and acknowledgement of the pressures needs to be built into the process. The inspection process is designed to check that training providers and colleges are operating effectively, to ensure the correct use of funding and the proper assessment and evaluation of courses and qualifications is taking place. At present the impact of the inspection process comes with the threat of cessation of funding for courses and organisations that do not gain good grades in inspection with little or no acknowledgement of contextual issues.

The following table illustrates, for ease of comparison, a broad judgement of whether the students' comments relating to external initiatives were positive or negative. Where there are gaps the students did not address this as an issue:

External initiatives outside control	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
Negative / Positive impact?	N	N			N	N	N	N

- **How useful is target setting?**

Harvey et al (1993:9), point out that quality may be viewed as a bench mark, an absolute -
like truth that allows no compromise. Alternatively, it may be discussed in terms of
thresholds of minimum performance that a 'quality' education should exceed. Finally, it
may be seen as relative matter, 'related to the extent that processes result in desired
outcomes'.

Some of the students agree that too often, within education and training organisations,
national benchmarks are used for target – setting. Andy refers to the present government
agenda to raise standards and quality of teaching in post – 16 education and training settings.
Andy suggests the national targets are 'unrealistic because they are set by ministers who have
no real understanding of vocational qualifications'.

An example of regional targets are included below, in addition to national, regional and sub-
regional targets the work – based learning organisations themselves will have their own set
of targets:

Indicator	Baseline figure 2002 %	Regional Performance +Target () (2003) %	Regional Performance +Target () (2004) %	Regional Performance +Target () (2005) %	Regional Performance +Target () (2006) %	Regional Performance +Target () (2007) %
Success in WBL: Achievement at NVQ Level 1	33	33	33	34	35	35
Success in WBL: Achievement at NVQ Level 2	51	51	51	53	53	55
Success in WBL: Achievement at NVQ Level 3+	57	57	57	59	59	59
Achievement of AMA framework.	18	23	25	27	28	30
Achievement of FMA framework.	22	27	28	28	30	30

Regional Targets: Table 4

The targets are built around local and national benchmarks and aim to improve each year. The target – setting is aimed to develop the British workforce into market leaders in the 21st Century – to put in place systems and procedures in such a way that it is designed to 'give ownership, value and improve employability of the British workforce', according to the rhetoric of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Julie B points out that 'the government is focusing its attention on raising standards in education and training and into achieving targets; it is the providers who are responsible for delivering the qualifications to the learners'. Education is very target driven – this has a profound effect on both teaching and learning. Julie questions whether in her organisation the response to target – setting is really giving value for money to the student and the funding bodies or is the main priority 'bums on seats'?

An example of the local Tees Valley targets set against the National figures is provided below:

	Baseline 2000 National	Baseline 2000 Tees Valley	Target 2004 National	Target 2004 Tees Valley
% of young people taking part in structured learning and training	75	73	80	84
% of young people to achieve level 2	75	75	85	82
% of young people to achieve level 3	51	41	55	47
% of adult population to achieve level 3	47	42	52	49

Tees Valley Targets: Table 5

Julie B argues that the problem of using national benchmarks to target – set is the uniqueness of the students; often the socio – economic features of the locality of the institution, the level of students on entry to the courses; the learning journey travelled by the student is not always reflected in the final achievement figures.

Julie B recognises that politically - driven objectives may be biased in that the government may want particular desired outcomes that are pre-determined in advance with the results that a true evaluation may not be carried out. If the target is to improve participation by 5% are the young people targeted where it is felt an impact can be made? Are there some young people written off as lost causes? Ministers want to see targets being met and impact being made as a result of investment. There is a danger that those young people in most need are too challenging / risky to take on.

Margaret B explains her frustration with target – setting; she feels that 'people all too often find themselves pursuing unrealistic goals. The goals are set and given to them by unrealistic managers. Some of these managers have forgotten what it is like to be working still at the chalk face, fulfilling targets that are set mainly by others, not themselves'.

She questions whether learning and knowledge can ever equate to commerce, competition, targets and products. Margaret B recognises that 'everyone is unique, rather than merely being part of a manufacturing or educational process and therefore it is not possible or desirable to target accurately'. It is clear that quality assurance and quality control are needed in the learning arena, how to achieve such quality still requires a continuing honest and forthright debate. Margaret's view is clear; education is about dealing with individuals: 'they cannot be poured into a mould, with an exact shape and measurement'. She questions, in educational terms, whether quality really is 'measurable and achievable' or whether 'education and training has become more about profit?'

In Chris's college as part of the self – assessment process there is a staff appraisal system where staff are asked to reflect on their development needs and target - set for the coming year. Members of staff are asked to detail achievement of any set objectives from the previous year and determine next year's teaching and training needs. In discussion with their line managers relevant staff development and potential financial support can be negotiated for the next academic year.

Chris believes that 'appraisal, if used correctly, can promote a feeling of self worth'. A number of achievable targets can be set and monitored to assess the member of staff's capabilities; this takes the form of a personal development plan that highlights dates for particular achievements.

Chris stresses the need for the appraisal system to address the CPD of the staff; communication must be kept open throughout the year not just confined to 30 minute appraisal reviews once a year. It is vital that it is 'taken seriously and not merely lip – service paid to it'; also any issues that arise during the appraisal interview need to be taken forward and followed up. It is de - motivating when issues are forgotten or not developed.

Target – setting is only credible with Chris and his colleagues, the staff, if it is applied consistently and administered sensitively. The appraisal system is assessed by college's quality team which consists of experienced teaching staff and personnel management. It is monitored for effectiveness from the progression of a particular lecturer to reach set targets over the year and the outcome from the observations of the class delivery. It is measured again the following year.

Chris explains his view that appraisal is needed to monitor the organization's biggest resource, the staff. There is an acknowledgement that the members of staff are valued to the point that they are assured that their training needs are being addressed and in theory, all relevant training is made available to all across the college; an effective use of target – setting.

In the NHS Julie J explains how the financial incentives for Trusts in England have been introduced to raise performance standards, whereby the best performing Trusts have access to a National Health Performance Fund worth £500 million a year by 2004. Although in theory it was felt the financial incentives should encourage greater achievements, in practice it puts pressure on the Trust's frontline staff to try to achieve targets which Julie feels 'are

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often unrealistic and unachievable'. Julie sees 'the goal posts moving further away each year'.

One specific example of target – setting within the Trust is the Clinical Negligence Scheme (CNST), which is an insurance provider that offers discounts to Trusts who reach targets. The targets focus on proof of education and training for 90% of all staff including formal appraisals, personal and professional development plans and annual training programmes. If the Trusts can prove and reach their targets they are given a no claims bonus, for example: £1 million discount in the first year, up to a maximum of £3 million in the third year of the scheme.

Julie's Trust receives an extra £3 million a year by achieving the targets; none of this extra funding goes to the front – line staff. Julie stresses that obviously NHS employees want to raise standards and quality, as 'this is a public service and a caring environment', but it is frustrating that they receive the negative feedback if they don't reach the targets and yet don't receive any financial reward when they do.

Julie feels strongly that what really affects quality in the NHS is Government Funding. The 'driving force' behind the framework of Clinical Governance, a system of continuous improvement, 'is financial'. 'It would be reassuring to think that the investment in NHS staff is because we are valued'; Julie and her colleagues recognise the hidden agendas behind the investment and the target – setting across the post – 16 sector - 'Value for Money'.

Ashcroft et al (1996:40) highlight the Government rationale behind target – setting,

'The government want to compare and rate institutions' quality against its set objectives in order to ascertain and compare the value for money provided by different institutions'.

Whereas Julie B, Andy, Margaret and Julie J would question the government's view highlighted by Ashcroft and the validity of comparisons and bench – marking, Mike S feels that his company and his colleagues are target – driven and sees bench – marking as an

acceptable way to set targets. His colleagues are positive about 'target – setting' and recognise the need for targets if his company are to 'compete in a world market'. Chris sees the personal target – setting within the appraisal system of his college as motivating and effective if handled sensitively.

Does target – setting have a positive or negative impact?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
	N	N	P	P	N	N	P	N

- **Do External Inspection Processes have a positive or negative impact?**

The general feeling among the students was that the workforce needs to respect the inspection process to benefit from it. Jeff points out that it is estimated that 70% of an inspector's time is spent on classroom observation – the classroom visits can be a considerable source of stress for teachers, providing another reason to consider their value carefully when comparing other methods of quality analysis. The importance of feedback cannot be overstated; Jeff refers to inspected teachers as feeling like 'chastised victims in some educational witch – hunt'.

Jeff describes the feedback given during the inspection process as crucial. Jeff was observed as part of his organisation's inspection; he underwent three classroom observations. He acknowledges the inspectors were knowledgeable, one had been an HMI and was approachable, and yet none of them suggested any areas of improvement. Jeff suggests that 'perhaps the real achievement of OfSTED is to instil an element of fear into the staff that will make each establishment knock itself into shape or at least work towards this end'.

In Margaret's organisation opinion is divided as to how well inspections are carried out and the viability of the credentials of the inspectors. Margaret's colleagues feel OfSTED has not

gained a good reputation for rewarding good practice. They feel it is a punitive system designed to 'catch individuals out' rather than support them in their development. It is an expensive system that needs to be quality controlled and assessed. A quality system, she feels, 'needs nurturing, a willingness to perform and the financial backing to make it viable'.

OfSTED inspections have always been marred by the credibility of the Inspectors to inspect. Margaret's colleagues question the credibility of those who have left 'teaching and the challenge of examinations, paperwork and increasingly difficult and challenging students'.

Fear was seen by Margaret and her team as the major factor that affected the quality of teaching in OfSTED weeks. There is a pressure to 'perform' at an unreasonable level that could not be sustained throughout the year. OfSTED has a part to play but inspection alone, although checking the results and policies of establishments is viable and reasonable, did not ensure quality. Professional development and training were seen as a more important issue; 'this is the issue that would affect the students and their performance the most'.

Margaret and her colleagues felt that stress during the inspection was the biggest factor affecting them personally. Also professionally, stress alongside unreal expectations and mainly the anticipation of an inspection, for months before the event, caused disruption and unease. Margaret feels the stress could be counter – balanced if OfSTED inspections were more spontaneous and less officious. The long wait cripples a staff's performance and also their personal lives. If the inspectors just turned up, they could see the learning environment as it is. Margaret explains how 'the whole process would become more of a total learning experience, rather than simply a show of seeming perfection'. Any comments made could be seen as helpful rather than 'caustic, demeaning and disheartening'. Professional development could then be at the heart of such inspections rather than the more sinister motive of being 'caught out'. This could be seen as a supportive rather than a punitive system.

OfSTED in its present form does not inspire; only one of the managers Margaret works with felt it 'sharpened practice and got rid of sloppy practice'. The same manager felt that, 'It helped to identify poor teaching and leadership' and also 'it helped to create an air of teamwork between staff and governors'. She also felt that an impending inspection can also spur on the obligation to provide staff development and to complete staff appraisals and review.

The negatives from Margaret's colleagues were resounding; they saw the inspection process as an intrusion into their educational lives with inspectors only ever gaining a 'snapshot'. Their visits were ineffective because the judgements made were generally critical in nature. No attempt was made to find out on – going problems and difficulties and very often sweeping conclusions were formed. These comments were then left in a report, that gave no real way of redress and no chance to argue or explain historical situations, the whole process examined the 'here and now'. Margaret feels the assurance of quality in a learning environment is 'the care, the atmosphere and attitude not merely the results produced by students'.

Margaret felt that the inspectors themselves need to be 'highly qualified, competent professionals adept at their job and practised enough to share their knowledge'. Such information is very rarely freely given; 'the barriers of distrust are raised', where quality training, education and learning could be shared. She feels this brings into question the focus of the inspectorate, 'that OfSTED is not about quality assurance but merely control'.

In general Margaret's colleagues felt that the sustained effort needed and the pressure placed on staff for one week in four years was too unreal a situation. The consensus was that maybe much smaller, regular, less formal and less threatening checks could be used.

Similarly, Andy questions whether the ALI inspection process supports providers in a way that will raise quality in education or inspect in a way that spreads fear amongst those who are being inspected? Andy and his organisation were recently subjected to an ALI

inspection. The inspection was to cover a wide range of learners on various training programs located in different regions.

Andy describes the process during the inspection period; he felt he established a good rapport with the inspector which set him at ease. The inspector shared his background and his experience and Andy felt there was mutual respect established. During the first appointment the inspector observed him doing practical and theory with two learners who were working towards an NVQ level 2 in gym coaching. The inspector considered Andy's teaching, his resources, the learner's portfolios, and he also interviewed the students and the placement manager. On the drive to the next appointment Andy was given some very positive feedback on how he felt the session had gone. At the second appointment the inspector spoke at length with a student who had successfully completed her Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and was now working towards her Advanced Modern Apprenticeship at level 3. This learner was one of the company's success stories as she had achieved her qualification and had gained employment. Again, Andy received positive feedback for his work and the work of his team.

This inspector ended the day in discussion with the manager of the company and then relayed his findings to the lead inspector. The following day the inspector carried out the same procedure with a colleague, meeting learners and looking through portfolios. Again this appeared to be a success and Andy describes the spirits within his team as high: an example of the inspection process acting as a motivator, with good teaching receiving recognition. To counter-balance this, this was not the case within every department as some inspectors had been heavily critical of other occupational areas and several members of staff who had received poor feedback were de - motivated and emotionally upset.

In considering the impact the inspection team had on the staff of his organisation he had experienced both the positive and the negative. The full inspection within the Tees Valley area had lasted a week and in addition to this the ALI had carried out inspections within all of the offices of the organisation across the country. On the final day the inspection team drew up a report that would relate their findings to the staff, managers and company directors

of the organisation. Andy describes the tense atmosphere as the lead inspector read out the conclusion of the overall inspection.

There was some positive feedback as well as areas he felt the company must address in order to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. He said the members of staff were well developed and overall showed sound knowledge of their occupational areas as well as providing good support to all learners. He did feel that the retention rates for students were poor and that overall there was poor implementation throughout the company of the Key Skills.

The main issues with the staff were that the occupation areas inspected were Hospitality, Sport, Leisure and Travel. Grades were to be given for the four areas. The training for Hospitality, Leisure and Travel were given fairly negative feedback yet the feedback for Andy's team although given positive feedback had to take into account the other three occupational areas. Andy's team were told that if Sport had been inspected separately it would have received a 2, however taking into account the problems that exist within the other areas the grade received was a 4. This grading led to the team questioning the whole inspection process. They felt it was not a valid process; not measuring what it set out to measure. Where occupational areas are only part of the inspected curriculum area the grade given does not fairly reflect the quality of the practitioners' work. It also created resentment between the team and the other three areas as they felt they had been let down by their colleagues.

Andy's general concerns with the inspection process are that the inspectors are only in the organisation for a short period of time; who is to say that the training providers don't go back to bad practice and neglect their roles and responsibilities once the inspection is over? The inspection process has a huge impact on staff morale – the pressure can lead to staff feeling undermined and under-valued.

Julie B feels that both the DFES and the LSC use the inspection process to evaluate the systems in order to influence and direct organisations. Inspection grades can affect future funding, inspection reports theoretically identify the range of quality across post – 16 organisations and help potential customers make informed choices about good and bad provision within the area. Pressure is on the staff to perform well during inspection; the reputation of the training company rests on the performance of the staff.

Following her recent ALI inspection Julie B was left feeling unhappy about the process and questioning who inspects the inspectors. She felt that, although the CIF is designed to be measured objectively by the inspectors, in reality the system is managed subjectively and the inspectors could be prone to personal bias and have their own personal pre – set hidden agendas and attitudes. Julie had received some feedback from an inspector which was to do with styling methods that was technically out of date; when inspectors are retired or no longer in teaching they need to continuously update their skills and knowledge of the professional area they are inspecting. Clashes of personalities between inspectors and those inspected could lead to institutions and individuals being down-graded. One - way communication was frustrating with no opportunity for the company to feedback until after the grading when the inspectors will not negotiate an outcome. The inspectors fed back results to the scheme manager at the end of each day; Julie B found this could lead to friction between managers and teaching staff.

The effect on the students during the week was varied. Some students felt nervous about the inspection process, some felt protective towards their tutors and others saw the experience as an opportunity to 'show off'. Generally, the students were more attentive and receptive during the process leading Julie to question whether the inspectors saw a true picture of the learning environment within the organisation.

In a similar scenario to Andy, Julie's subject area, hairdressing, was graded as part of a wider curriculum group that included beauty. Animosity arose across the team, during the inspection week, towards the beauty teacher as they felt she had 'deliberately sabotaged the

company'. The overall grade for the team was brought down due to hair and beauty being graded together with the result that the grade was lower as the beauty systems and practices were far from adequate – this was not a fair grade for hairdressing – when potential students consult the printed report, the result could be a loss of business.

This experience brought together the rest of the staff as they felt they had a 'common cause'. The staff realised they would need to take responsibility to develop new procedures and systems; they also recognised they would need to develop themselves to cover those areas of weakness or to introduce new skills. Julie's colleagues raised concerns that time was needed to implement some of the suggestions made during the inspection and also to monitor them effectively.

The process of inspection did not secure the cooperation or confidence of the staff in Julie's organisation. Inspectors do not negotiate their findings and staff were left feeling frustrated and under – valued. Julie felt this could 'stifle initiative'. Some staff felt the inspection was not necessary and that the students' results indicate the quality of the teaching.

Institutions are allowed to feedback in the form of an evaluative questionnaire six months after the inspection – there is no opportunity to negotiate grades.

How often does an organisation need to be inspected? The company is evaluated and inspected so frequently many of Julie B's colleagues are considering a career change. ALI highlighted changes to implement that will take time and effort to embed them and maintain them; where is the time to come from? 'Inspectors only ever receive a superficial overview of the organisations that they visit…'

In the NHS, Julie J explains it is well - documented that the quality of education and training in the NHS is difficult to measure, and until recently had no outside inspectorate. However since the introduction of the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), education and training is inspected, scored and compared with other Trusts in a league table.

NHS Trusts have many quality initiatives and measures, and boast success to the public through various bodies, e.g. charter mark, Beacon status, and 3 star status. The University Hospital where Julie works has been awarded 3 star status, which is a quality symbol representing the overall performance of the Trust. This quality is measured through clinical governance, as previously mentioned and annual inspections by CHI. Like OfSTED/ALI reports CHI reports are made available to the public, Julie J and her colleagues feel this endorses a name and shame culture.

Members of staff in the hospitals always know at least six months in advance of the CHI inspection. Julie suggests that the Trust is giving the inspectors a rehearsed performance of what they want to see during inspections, rather than allowing them to 'see a snap - shot of the reality within the Trust'. She feels that this has resulted in the Trust losing some credibility and patience from herself and her colleagues. She also recognises that the pressure of inspection and the lack of credibility in the system is one of the contributing factors relating to the shortage of nursing staff locally and also nationally.

Clearly, to be effective, the inspection process and observations need to be recognised by all involved as valid and reliable. In summing up the views of the students in the table below, Jeff, Julie B and Julie J were clearly negative. Margaret's colleagues, except for one manager, recognised negatives outcomes from the inspection process. Andy could see the positives, personally receiving motivating feedback during his organisation's inspection. Generally, all the students who refer to external inspection report negative impact on their colleagues and their organisations.

Do external inspection processes have a	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
Positive or Negative impact	N/P	N			N	N/P		N

Quality Issues in Post-16 Education and Training: Perceptions of the Impact of Quality Systems on Teachers

V. Richardson 2004

- **Inspection as a motivator?**

Julie B explains how the many awarding bodies ensure the quality of the curriculum and examination results. Her colleagues believe student satisfaction and success should be the priority of the teaching staff. As far as the curriculum is concerned Awarding Bodies have quality control systems in place in the form of verification maintaining standardisation and quality assurance. External verifiers appointed by the awarding body will visit twice a year to evaluate the quality of systems and procedures. The awarding body constantly strives to improve their quality processes with the result that the institutions have to continually put in place new procedures and systems. Teaching staff receive feedback from the verifiers, if positive this can be highly motivating.

Julie B's colleagues generally found the observations during the ALI inspection process embarrassing and intimidating although some tutors felt that after receiving valued criticism it was a fair assessment and if practised it would raise the profile and effectiveness of teaching and learning. If teachers are not made to realise how they are performing, be it good or bad, they cannot possibly improve their performance.

Julie's colleagues thought the anonymous grading system was unfair in that those who had worked well did not get the recognition and those who would need to know their skills were inadequate did not have them identified. Colleagues felt they should have received a personal grade after the observation to know how they had faired. Some staff felt under – valued during inspection and that their professionalism was being questioned; in contrast some staff felt they had been given constructive feedback they could apply to their teaching.

Feedback from inspection can leave staff, 'Inspired and enthusiastic' or 'frustrated and undervalued'. (Julie B)

Mike B paints a positive picture of the Investors in People (IiP) process; he saw it motivating his colleagues during a recent audit. The focus is on staff development; the assessor meets a

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'selected group' of staff and discusses the systems and their development. Mike B doesn't question the selection of the staff, and he takes at face value the 'randomness' of the selection. His experience of the system at his college is very positive – he talks about the recognition of good practice and the feeling of pride in his and his colleagues' work . Mike B approves fully of IiP; he recognises it as 'excellence being rewarded'.

Mike B explains that training is always high on his College's agenda and 'this has helped to create a culture of learning and support'. The staff overall feel their contribution to the organisation is recognised; Mike B agrees with the assessors that 'the college has a strong ethos for appreciating the contribution all make in improving the success of the college'. Mike B feels the very positive report from the IiP process is a true reflection of the college and its success. Since joining the college three years ago Mike B says he has always been informed of the internal and external processes of the college. He has always tried to keep himself up to date in skills and training and has been fully supported in this by his line manager. He explains how he has undertaken many internal and external training days and seminars and has been financially backed by the college who have funded him on the BA programme by paying 50% of the fees. He has always been supported in any staff development he has applied for.

As a ward manager in the NHS, Julie describes one of the most challenging parts of her role is retention of staff, and maintaining morale. Being measured on quality and performance can have a positive effect on staff, conversely staff can feel demoralised, with the rapidly changing NHS, even though they are told by the Government it is for the better. The introduction of the Clinical Governance system, has produced a blame culture, a culture where everything, however small, is reported, investigated and documented. The Trust does not appear to report good practice on the wards unless they have achieved National Targets, making staff feel undervalued and de-motivated.

When Chris considers self – assessment and internal quality systems he finds staff development high on his college agenda. Professional Updating is budgeted for in the

college's financial structure but Chris is aware that demand is sometimes greater than the funding available and staff are funded on a 'first come, first served' basis which does not always reflect equality of opportunity. When they do not receive approval or financial support for courses they are left feeling demoralised, particularly if they see their colleagues having their staff development approved and funded.

Chris explains the general feeling of staff is that 'promoting qualifications and giving financial support can be a morale - boosting opportunity', and this opportunity of continuing staff development with funding is designed to encourage the staff member to remain with the college. A retention clause accompanies the funding; the member of staff is required to remain working at the college for the same period of time that the financed staff development lasts or they are asked to refund the staff development costs in full. Chris and his colleagues are not aware that this rule has ever been applied.

Chris questions the system within his college that awards points to staff for attending internal staff development sessions and enable them to benefit financially from the Teacher's Pay Initiative (TPI), remuneration made available to staff in the FE sector for initial qualifications and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in addition to their pay awards. Some of Chris's colleagues find the compulsory attendance at staff development sessions objectionable and feel it demoralises the staff to feel they need to jump through hoops when in other FE colleges the TPI is organised in other ways and given regardless of points but on merit.

The audit system in Chris's college scrutinises all the procedures in place; every step is examined for flaws or mistakes. Chris's colleagues feel that 'at times, it seems to be negative in terms of staff morale as it tends to look and question the negative aspects of the systems and the staff's hard work gets pulled to pieces in a negative way'.

The academic staff members at his college often feel they have to instigate all the quality procedures themselves. They agree the focus of the college should be the teaching and

learning and that there should be a preoccupation with the colleges' results, which reflects on the staff and their teaching methods, which in turn reflects on the student retention levels for further funding. Chris feels it is too often seen as 'the sole responsibility of the teaching staff', 'they focus on delivering the best possible teaching and learning to the students only to be assessed by outside bodies - this is often seen as negative and slightly degrading in the way it is sometimes carried out'.

Chris recognises the impact on the staff differs depending on their position in the college; 'in reality it is the members of the teaching staff who perform, deliver and are required to address most of the quality issues, mostly without remission of their own time and often using their own funds'.

Given Jeff and Margaret's previous comments on the impact of OfSTED inspections on staff both refer to the 'fear' built in to the process and would agree it is generally a demotivating experience. Andy, Julie B, Julie J and Chris recognise both perspectives: if feedback is positive then the inspection process can be motivating, if negative then it can damage morale. Mike B, having had a positive outcome to the Investors in People system is fully supportive of external systems and would suggest they motivate staff.

Do quality systems have a Positive or Negative impact on Motivation?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
	P/N	P/N	P		N	N	P/N	P/N

- **Internal systems, internally - led are more useful**

The systems are not going to be effective if they encourage organisations to hide the problems and issues instead of discussing them openly. A piece of anecdotal evidence from a colleague described how a member of staff recognised as a poor teacher by the self – assessment process, instead of being given support to improve his teaching, was hidden from the inspectors, given 'garden leave', taken off timetable during the OfSTED inspection week.

Developmental evaluation affects the tutor who is professional and wants to self improve. It explores the effects of resources, the managerial support and colleague influences on the teaching and learning process. Lecturers are encouraged to be reflective practitioners and curriculum development requires evaluation and reflection in the development cycle, (Kolb, 1984). Whether bureaucratic, political or developmental, all evaluation requires honesty if it is to lead to improvement.

Julie suggests that OfSTED /ALI inspectors see their role as protecting the standards and the feeling of staff in her organisation during inspection is that the standards are somehow under threat from the teaching staff. If organisations feel threatened by the inspection process and other quality systems then there is a possibility that they will try and conceal their faults to prevent being punished by poor feedback and grades. The system doesn't encourage organisations to be honest and admit their problems so that they can be given support and guidance to improve. In reality, if the grades are poor, funding can be withdrawn.

With internal systems, organisations are more aware of issues and may be more prepared to discuss them 'in house'. Chris focuses on the internal systems within his institution and the affect on the staff. He explores the support given to staff through induction, appraisal and CPD. A comprehensive induction programme enlightens the new staff and settles them in to their new surroundings.

A new member of staff in Chris's organisation felt that the induction session promoted the colleges' own goals in the form of results and achievements and stressed the need to have

fully, relevantly qualified staff to help achieve these aims. The new member of staff was given an induction pack that consists of a staff hand - book that details every quality form in existence in the college. The induction process is carried out by the Head of Faculty or Curriculum Manager. Two key points he made was the need for reflection and the need for time for clarification of any points that are confusing.

In Chris's faculty new members of staff are encouraged to sit in on lessons being taught by existing members of staff. Chris did this when he started and was able to observe some of the students he would be teaching and was therefore given a chance to gauge the ability of the students and the teaching styles of his future colleagues. In a newly - merged college all of the staff have been subject to change and have needed supporting through the changes. All members of staff, new and established have been bombarded with new faces and names.

Chris felt induction is a stressful period when lecturers are faced with new timetables, fitting in with existing systems and general college life. This can be as daunting for new members of staff as it is for new students, but with a good support system in the form of the mentoring system some of the anxiety can be eliminated; although all staff offer advice and support informally to each other.

Chris's colleagues felt that the qualifications held by members of staff have the main effect on the quality of the college. For all staff qualifications and experience will be reflected in the performance of all that they do; for lecturing staff this may be reflected in gaps in their subject knowledge or more generic ways such as inadequate class preparation, class materials, schemes of work, using equipment they are unfamiliar with or the delivery methods of the lessons.

Chris feels the most important systems in place within his college are those that promote staff development and CPD, and his colleagues felt strongly that teaching and learning are the most important aspects of this sector. CPD in his college is encouraged and linked directly to the financial rewards of TPI. By becoming involved in the Personal Development

structure of the college Chris and his colleagues participate in the organised staff development activities and are given financial reward. The system is designed so that members of staff gain points for each staff development session they attend. The sessions are focused on the performance and progression of the staff; they are given a focus from quality questionnaires, which are given to the students at least twice each academic year. Where students raise issues in the completion of the questionnaires or necessary professional updates are brought to the attention of the Quality Staff, a staff development session may be either geared towards all the academic staff or more focused within a particular area of the curriculum or a particular department/faculty. The faculty itself can organise more focused sessions in response to staff needs.

Positive feedback from the staff attending the recent, organised staff development sessions was the raising of awareness of wider educational issues such as the 14 – 19 agenda that will affect everyone in the sector directly or indirectly, the realization that there may be solutions in existence to problems that are universal throughout departments, for example, student absenteeism at certain times of the week, administrative issues such as completing forms in a certain way by certain deadlines. Enormous benefits can be made by faculties sharing their best practice. The financial benefits to the attendees of the sessions are that with the completion of ten sessions, and gaining ten points, the individual staff can claim their financial reward in the form of TPI.

Negative feedback from Chris's colleagues includes criticism that they are being force – fed solutions at times that may not work in their faculty. Also, they have new policies forced on them that have not been fully thought through and often have no bearing on their perception of problems within their faculties.

It is recognised by the college that staff need to be suitably qualified and able to cover the range of courses offered. Government statistics show where there is a national shortfall in particular teaching areas; government initiatives such as the 'golden hellos' for staff in shortage subjects and support during their training are attempting to address these issues, and

individual colleges can channel staff development funding to support specific training where there is a need, for example, ESOL qualifications and Dyslexia training.

In discussion with his colleagues, Chris feels they recognise the importance of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The college encourage the staff to view CPD positively if they want to further their own career and personally develop either by improving their existing qualifications or undergoing other training. Within the organisation generally lecturers are supported if they want to progress and develop through attending internal or external courses that often may lead to a recognized qualification, on condition it is in direct relation to their teaching area or subject area. The staff will usually be financially supported through the staff development funds within the college. Professional updating in Chris's college is linked directly to the appraisal system within the college and the college strategic plan. Members of staff are encouraged to develop skills that fit directly into areas of development within the college.

As part of the college self – assessment process lesson observations are included and are currently being undertaken. The college has a mentoring system for new staff and classroom observations are included as part of the support; all the new staff during their first year of teaching are given three observations from more experienced lecturers who use OfSTED guidelines to assess the quality of the lesson. The grading is also the same with revisits and observations if the grading is below the standards set by the inspection framework.

The introduction of 'mock inspection' to Chris's college is another way of checking or measuring quality; the mock inspections are standardized to the real inspection framework and tested in accordance to the same criteria by trained internal staff who are familiar with the full inspection framework. The 'mock inspectors' are the same staff who perform the role of mentors and classroom observers; Chris comments that the staff feel more support from the 'mock inspectors' who tend to have a developmental role whereas they feel the inspection process focuses on the negative aspects of the observed teaching sessions.

The learning process is measured through questionnaires completed by the students; they are issued with an induction questionnaire, which is presented early in the course to ensure that the students have gained from the induction process and that the student is sure he/she is on the correct course and the correct level. Further quality forms are presented to the students at least twice during the year and take the form of closed questioning to specific criteria with tick boxes; it also gives the student the opportunity to make comment on any aspect of the teaching in the end section of the questionnaire.

During the course the students are made aware of the different types of teaching methods available. Firstly through induction the students complete their own learning preference questionnaire which is compiled to assess the best range of teaching methods for that group of students. As the course progresses they are presented with a teaching methods questionnaire to assess the quality issues with regard to their own learning preferences and how these are being addressed through the teaching methods of the lecturers.

Quality issues, like qualifications, need to be upgraded to progress in any market place. The staff feel that the focus on achievement and retention levels of students is a good measure of quality, high levels of achievement encourage the students to return for the next academic year for the next level course or to take up another course. The college promotes high levels of achievement as do all academic institutions to help in marketing and advertising profitable and popular courses.

Internal quality systems exist in Julie's organisation; internal evaluation is carried out via a staff appraisal system, self – assessment and internal verification procedures. Lesson evaluation forms are used to indicate student satisfaction; student views are sought for developmental purposes and collected by the lecturers to improve their own approaches. Management and leadership shortfalls can be addressed through evaluation. Tutors who need to demonstrate the need for change may also use the results of evaluation to influence managers for instance a need to buy resources or for extra training for staff.

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Jeff is monitored by his line manager even down to web sites visited and undergoes teaching observations one to three times a year. As with the OfSTED model there are three stages, collecting evidence, drawing conclusions and giving feedback. Before the observed session the teacher and the observer clarify the lesson context, activities and learning objectives. The observation sheets cover eight aspects of the session; planning, subject knowledge, teaching methods, management of the group, assessment, outcomes, time and resources, use of homework to reinforce and extend learning. The observer then grades the session and indicates any 'areas for development'. The observer gives some immediate feedback followed by a written report and a follow up discussion if required by either party. The reports can be used as evidence in pay negotiations such as when applying for threshold assessment. All levels of staff participate in the Performance Management Programme whereby targets are set and reviewed at an agreed date. Confidentiality is an issue and the cause of much insecurity among peripatetic teachers. Staff observation is an important part of the quality system; this originated as a preparation for OfSTED and has been maintained as good practice. In addition to this the staff actively seek feedback and evaluation from every possible source: teachers at whom the CPD is aimed, teacher and parent feedback reports. Curriculum support sessions are booked and paid for, the take up of future workshops is an indicator of whether or not they are meeting specific needs. Wider community work such as concerts, festivals and events are evaluated largely by public response.

Jeff recognises self – assessment is at the forefront of government thinking. He feels strongly that what we should be promoting is the application of basic educational theory, 'which has been like a gospel for individual teachers for some time'. He suggests that the 'continuous evaluation, modification, improvement and measurement that teachers apply to their assessment of teaching and learning should now apply to every aspect of organisational life'. Jeff feels that 'paying lip service to quality and actually producing quality work are becoming too far removed'.

Julie J stresses how internal systems support the quality of an organisation. In her Health Trust 'staff development is at the heart of the quality systems'. Julie discusses how, 'Continuing Professional Development is very important to staff to enable them to keep abreast of the constant changes', it is the internal system set up to organise and monitor the development of staff that is effective in promoting the quality of the Trust. An issue amongst Julie J's colleagues is when staff do not want to attend courses or 'develop any further', are subject to constant pressure to do so, at a local level this can be respected, 'if they are safe and competent to carry out their job'.

Julie sees the introduction of Foundation Trust Status as being an opportunity for each Trust to have greater autonomy and decentralised management. Internal quality systems, internally monitored and evaluated could lead to positive outcomes.

Margaret B's view is that if the inspectors turned up and observed the normal practice of staff they would gain a more realistic view of the quality of the organisation; ideally the best system would be internal monitoring with supportive external observation.

Those students who discuss internal systems generally found them positive. Jeff recognises the positives but also acknowledges the concept of the reflective practitioner as the pivot of improving and maintaining quality.

Internal Systems e.g. Self – Assessment have a Positive / Negative Impact?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
		P			P/N	P	P	P

- **Administrative burden – too much paper**

Andy criticises quality systems as focusing too closely to the paper processes: 'The paperwork can be in place but the quality of teaching doesn't necessarily improve as a result of this.'

Julie B describes the appraisal system in her organisation as a 'paper - chase taking up valuable time that could be used elsewhere'. Julie comments on the 'obsession with paperwork'. The management of her company 'seem preoccupied with getting paperwork right to appease the Learning Skills Council, when on the ground the real student issues are neglected. Staff are left to 'deal with the paper and teach' as management do not see the importance of supporting staff when the LSC demands attention'.

Julie B points out how 'members of staff already prioritise - less bureaucracy would make life easier and would allow more valuable time to be spent with the students'.

Mike S feels a tremendous amount of time and effort is put into collecting the documentation for the audits; he feels this is time – consuming but worth the effort. He points out that, some of the documents are never referred to again, until the next audit! He recognises 'a lot of paperwork', is generated.

Bicheno (1998:110) states that to some smaller companies, ISO 9000 involves too much unnecessary bureaucracy and points out that it has been argued that 'it has sometimes turned out to involve inflexible sets of rules, to the detriment of continuous improvement'.

Mike S acknowledges the strengths of the ISO series but also admits that in his organisation there is also a certain amount of 'going through the motions' and 'filling in the right paperwork' to retain the ISO and the IiP standards. Within the IiP some of the more important procedures, such as the evaluation of learning events, are not made compulsory in the audit, with the focus being more on completed forms. He identifies that this has weakened otherwise useful initiatives.

Chris's colleagues try to adhere to quality issues and guidelines but 'as in most institutions, the staff are inundated with quality updates, questionnaires and new methods that they are asked to test' and 'the inevitable paperwork that accompanies every initiative'. New initiatives take time and planning which is where lecturers often need to prioritise and focus on what is achievable; this often makes them reluctant to address any new ideas; especially at busy times of the academic year.

In Jeff's experience 'curriculum support and enrichment work that is so important for the students' development is the subject of strenuous written evaluations with each visit'. He questions whether paper – driven internal quality systems rigidly designed to help prepare for inspections 'stifle innovation and creativity in education'.

In the NHS, Julie explains how the Trust very much relies on the good will of their employees who do extra paperwork, procedures, duties etc, with little or no reward at all. Since the introduction of the Government Quality Initiative (Clinical Governance) there has been an immense increase in paperwork for staff at shop floor level, as they are constantly measuring standards against variables. This has increased the workload and pressures within an already under - established and under - resourced service.

Six of the eight students refer directly to the administrative burden of quality systems; even where they recognise the strengths of the quality systems the amount of paper required to be collected as evidence has a negative impact.

The administrative burden has a Positive or Negative impact?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
	N	N		P/N	N		N	N

- **Leadership and Management is recognised as being vital to raise and maintain quality**

Leadership and Management are graded as part of the OfSTED/ALI inspection process. In Julie B's organisation the management at all levels recognised that their quality systems and the contribution of the inspection process 'are crucial to the updating of the processes and strategies' that are vital for Julie's company to remain a 'Centre of Excellence'. The management realise 'the importance of leadership, direction and commitment' as this must be demonstrated to the staff to 'set norms, values and attitudes'. A criticism against the management from Julie was that they used the inspection period to 'highlight issues they had previously overlooked'; using the threat of external inspection to implement and revive 'systems they had let slip'. Julie and her colleagues felt the management needed to rethink their approach with their swings from 'too relaxed' to 'too confrontational'.

Andy recognises that there is a need to improve the leadership and management within his organisation. He feels 'the lead needs to come from the top' and that 'the company directors and senior management need to lead the way'. He believes that the view of his colleagues generally is that 'there is too much focus given to improving the quantity of learning programmes and drawing more funding in'. Funding issues drive Andy's organisation rather than a focus on the quality of existing programmes.

Margaret B recognises that systems, people and quality need to be well - managed. Margaret believes it is 'the practical application of the management that creates excellence in an organisation'.

When considering the Investors in People Standard, Mike B acknowledges that management and leadership plays an important role. At Mike B's institution his experience is that line managers are fully involved in the process of developing staff and supporting each other to develop their own and their colleagues' skills and knowledge.

In Julie's organisation members of staff feel they are put on courses that are not relevant to their job role to satisfy local LSC demands. The LSC perspective would be the courses are relevant and if staff aren't recognising the relevance there is a communication problem. The staff value training in their occupational area for their CPD.

The table below shows that the six students who referred to leadership and management issues all acknowledged the importance of management skills in supporting quality systems. Interestingly, when considering the impact of leadership and management on their organisations Andy and Julie B felt the impact was negative, this would have direct implications for the quality of their organisations.

Leadership & Management are key to raising quality in your organisation? P/N impact?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
	Y/N	Y/N	Y/P	Y/P		Y/P	Y/P	

- **'Systems ensure that there is accountability and ownership for getting things done'**

The above statement was made by Mike S during his interview. He feels the positives to be gained from quality systems outweigh the negatives. He describes how there is an increased awareness of the importance of setting exacting standards and ensuring these standards are met. It ensures there is accountability and ownership for 'getting things done'. He explains that 'Many useful initiatives and well – documented procedures, which otherwise would not have been done, are put in place, and even more importantly, adhered to'. He says that this is, 'backed, where appropriate, by well – researched and planned training'. Employees are continuously striving to meet the standards; this 'encourages the use of well – executed and

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respected audits'. Quality assurance systems, Mike S feels, 'help create a learning environment where a culture of continuous improvement exists'.

Andy recognises that the introduction of the common inspection framework has begun to address the issues of quality within education as it makes providers monitor their practice more critically and look for ways to improve the teaching and learning process.

Julie B and her staff can recognise the benefits of the inspection process; evaluation and reflective practice is an essential part of the continual quest for perfection, which will encourage professional development and growth. Open –mindedness is an essential quality to growth; evaluation is essential. Staff felt that there are some excellent systems and procedures in place within the organisation but the problem is the time to implement and maintain them.

Julie J highlights the positive effects of quality systems:

- Improve standards, which should be standardised nationally to eradicate the inequalities and variations between NHS Trusts.
- Promotes and encourages a learning environment through the life-long learning agenda.

Through the lifelong learning framework it is hoped that Trusts continue to provide ongoing education and training to improve the service provided. Julie recognises that although Trusts do have 'hidden agendas behind their drive to promote CPD', each individual employee 'should absorb as much knowledge as they can to develop themselves personally for their future'.

The NHS has a complex quality framework however it is well recognised by Government that to provide a quality service requires quality staff which requires quality education and training.

In support of this view Mike S states, 'More and more is expected from every employee'. He feels continuous training and education play a vital role in keeping his company a world – class organisation.

Four students discuss how systems can provide accountability and make positive reference to their impact:

Quality Systems provide accountability	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
Impact on the staff?	P	P		P				P

8.0   Conclusions

The table below draws together the students' views and gives an indication of the impact of quality systems on themselves and their colleagues. In summarising the findings from the interviews with the eight students it broadly illustrates the negatives (N) and positives (P):

Negative / Positive impact?	Andy ALI	Julie B ALI	Mike B IiP	Mike S ISO Series	Jeff OfSTED	Margaret OfSTED	Chris Self – Ass	Julie J NICE
External initiatives outside control	N	N			N	N	N	N
Target – setting	N	N	P	P	N	N	P	N
Inspection as a motivator	P/N	P/N	P		N	N	P/N	P/N
External inspection processes	N/P	N			N	N/P		N
Internal Systems e.g. Self Assessment		P			P/N	P	P	P
Administrative burden	N	N		P/N	N		N	N
Leadership & Management	Y/N	Y/N	Y/P	Y/P		Y/P	Y/P	
Quality Systems provide accountability	P	P		P				P

Summary Table of Students' Perceptions: Table 6

To summarise, the students agree that external initiatives can have a negative effect on staff when they affect the quality and are outside of the control of the staff themselves. The impact of the external inspection process is felt to be negative by those who refer to it directly, although Andy and Julie B acknowledge some of the positives. The administrative burden of quality systems is recognised by all of the students as having a negative impact.

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The question of target – setting is more ambiguous; three of the students can recognise the positives although they all have an opinion on this and the majority opinion agrees the impact is largely negative. Similarly, Andy, Julie B, Chris and Julie J recognise that inspection can motivate although they have reservations, Mike is wholly supportive whereas Jeff and Margaret believe that inspection clearly does not motivate staff.

Internal quality systems such as self – assessment are regarded in a much more positive light. All of the students agreed that Leadership and Management of the organisation have an impact on the quality of their organisation; their personal experiences illustrate both positive and negative impact. The four students that refer to accountability see it as having a positive impact.

The positive comments that can be drawn from the research are that well – managed quality systems can lead to improved standards, an increased awareness of college systems, they can promote a learning environment, they encourage audit activity, (which can be very positive), they demand clear written evidence on activity, they can clearly focus issues, increase activity, increase staff morale and job satisfaction with pride in work, and a recognition for good work.

Negative comments are clearly counter - arguments to the above; staff have no confidence in badly managed, complex, paper – driven systems administered in a bureaucratic manner. The application of such systems can lead to de - motivated and demoralised staff, poor learning environments and a drop in quality and standards. Also, the snap – shot view of external inspection is not always the reality.

The diversity of the quality systems made the research more complex. Subtle differences in the way systems are applied across institutions and the culture of the various organisations produce subtle differences in the impact on the staff. The students found that each of the various forms of quality systems had its own internal coherence and some validity, but the

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cumulative impact on the staff experience in education and training and the extent to which they relate to the teachers' interests and needs is not the focus of any of the systems. The goodwill of the teaching staff, often with little or no reward can lead to the students' success. In post – 16 education and training institutions the focus should be on the student experience, the aim of the sector is for student success. If quality systems have a negative effect on the teaching staff and lead to the staff feeling unsupported and de - motivated the students will not gain the best experience. The main problem seems to be that the quality systems largely originated in the industrial and commercial arena and do not have teaching and learning at their heart, having been adapted to education from business. Simplistic, mechanistic approaches are not as effective as systems with teaching and learning at their core.

The 'staff experience' has been explored in this thesis; the results of the research indicate that the individuals used in my research have no common, consistent opinion as to the impact of quality systems on them and their organisations. Where they do agree is in the general view that well – managed quality systems can have a positive impact on individuals within organisations but there is a downside; generally increased bureaucracy and a preoccupation with paperwork that draws attention away from the real issues of teaching and learning.

Wider issues in the highly competitive post-16 sector distract practitioners from the core business of the quality of teaching and learning. Evans (1994:55) considers, 'questions of quality affect every part of an institution's work, admissions, student support, course structure and content, teaching and learning methods, assessment and examination procedures, institutional management and, above all, leadership.' All of the areas have been referred to by the students involved in the research.

In considering the data gathering for the thesis on reflection I feel my small-scale case study could be criticised as being limited, however I feel the data provided by the students provided unique insights from those with direct experience of the impact of quality systems. I feel I could have given the case study a clearer focus if I had guided the students to consider only one quality system. If I had steered the group to focus on the effect, for

example, of the OfSTED / ALI Common Inspection Framework, the impact on the students could have been more usefully compared and contrasted. By including a student working for an NHS Trust and one working for an engineering company I felt I was not always comparing like with like. I made the decision to include the two students because they are part of the post-16 education and training sector in its broadest sense.

The focus might have improved if my interviews had included more closely - structured questioning around one quality system and perhaps questionnaires had been used to gain more standardised responses.

The research was based more in qualitative analysis. More variables could be considered and recorded in the data although I think this would have led to a lack of focus in the resulting data. The use of qualitative research involved the individual students' perceptions, attitudes and views. It allowed an interpretive approach to the issues and the setting in the 'soft-data paradigm' I found comfortable and gained a first – hand insight into the issues.

It would have been useful to develop the research by contacting more individuals within the organisations through questionnaires using the initial research as a sample frame. Factors to consider in the research design would be time, level of staffing, support services needed, sampling, interviewing and data processing. Access to key informants, organisations and funding of the research would be vital questions to address. It would be useful to consider the reaction of a wider range of individuals and organisations to the initial research and to their perceptions of the results.

Hammersley's (1992) point that 'the choice of case study involves buying greater detail and likely accuracy of information about particular cases at the cost of being less able to make effective generalisations to a larger population of cases' holds true with my thesis. There is a 'trade – off' of generalisability and accuracy and detail.

Despite the acknowledged shortcomings of the study there were some interesting outcomes.

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Each of the students found their colleagues were affected, both positively and negatively, by the quality systems in their workplace. Issues wider than the quality systems themselves were highlighted, issues that had a direct impact on the quality of their organisations. In summary, each section of the thesis will be considered in relation to the impact of the systems on individuals and their organisations:

- Contextual issues
- Staff Development and Motivation
- Quality Models
- Quality Systems

Finally, the way forward will be discussed with recommendations regarding the quality of the sector.

- **Wider Contextual issues**

The main question running throughout this research is whether quality assurance and control systems are affecting the quality of the education and training institutions. Are the systems affecting staff morale? Are they affecting the student experience? Is the sector doing enough to prove its worth?

Challenges have faced the sector since 1993 and incorporation, as a result of Government policy. External pressures detract from the real issues of teaching and learning. The wide diversity within the sector has encouraged it to try to be everything to all people, with limited resources. Reduced funding to post – 16 institutions has made it difficult to reconcile the maintenance and improvement of quality. The sector has been subject to many changes over the last ten years; innovations have not always focused on directly or indirectly improving the learning in the sector.

Incorporation in 1993 encouraged a competitive spirit that did not always benefit the learners:

'Colleges are in competition with private training providers and with companies' 'in – house' training programmes... In the new climate of competition colleges are competing not only with companies and private training providers but also with each other', (Huddleson et al, 1995:50)

Against the competitive backdrop there are other unresolved issues that affect the quality of provision, for example, the lack of parity in pay and conditions between the school sector and FE. Added to this lack of parity are trainers in the private sector who generally earn even less than in the Cinderella sector FE has become. The preoccupation in post -16 with continuously having to justify and herald the quality of the provision has added to the pressure on teaching staff.

- **Staff Development and Motivation**

When considering the quality of an education and training organisation the teaching staff needs to be at the focus of the discussion, as Martinez (2000:73) points out:

'The overwhelming message from school effectiveness and school improvement research is that teachers are central to all efforts to improve achievement... It is not surprising, therefore, that motivating staff is an integral part of strategies designed to raise achievement'.

Scase (2001:33) referred to the situation in the public sector as 'being acute', the visible evidence being low morale, high job turnover and staff shortages. Remuneration is only one of the factors;

'the imposition of managerial methodologies has encouraged large numbers of public – sector workers to renegotiate their psychological contracts with their employers, with a resulting shift from a professional commitment to an employer compliance model. The public sector is now characterised by a low trust syndrome'.

The situation described above closely resembles the climate and culture prevalent in a large number of post – 16 institutions. Martinez (2000:74) describes the 'problem of morale and motivation among teachers in the years since incorporation'.

Staff across the sector need to be motivated to move forward; the post -16 sector has been host to many changes during the past decade; the quality of an organisation is affected by staff motivation in relation to wider cultural and contextual factors in addition to the expectations of employers and the culture/climate of the organisation. Quality systems can have an adverse effect on the morale of staff.

'Government sees good quality and well-motivated teachers as being crucial to the realisation of its vision for FE, which is why it has invested an unprecedented amount of funding in the FE sector', (Margaret Hodge, August 2001). Nationally there have been moves to lift the profile of the sector with increased total funding; an extra £527 million was invested in FE in 2002.

As well as motivating the staff a vital part of the 'quality assurance' of an education and training institution has to be the arrangements for staff development. Before incorporation in the early 1990s, colleges were being asked to 'plan for quality' and for the development of their 'human resources' (FEFC 1992). The staffing needs were derived from an analysis of the college's objectives and staff development activities were be determined 'less by perceived individual need than by the college's academic and strategic plans', (Robson, 1996:3).

The focus should be on developing staff to move education and training organisations forward, to improve their quality by providing 'structures and proactive training programmes:

'that reinforce the requirement for cultural change and develop the skills necessary to perform effectively in the new environment.' (Stone, 1997:5)

The many innovations the sector has been subjected to need to be treated as 'changes' needing both leadership and good management. A culture of self - improvement or organisational learning is needed where there is 'cooperation and commitment to solve

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problems together', also there needs to be an emphasis on 'strong leadership', (Earley et al, 1996:189). There also needs to be a concentration on the teaching and learning process.

- **Quality Models**

Management and leadership within education and training organisations must encourage the culture of the workplace to be open and honest; encourage honest reflection and the opportunity and support to improve. Teaching staff generally want to do well and see their students succeed; the responsibility for self improvement offered by the self – assessment process should be used effectively, organisations should not rely on external responsibility through inspection, solely. Also motivated members of staff are needed in the sector to move things forward.

The quality models discussed earlier refer to a strong culture being paramount in an effective organisation. (Deming, 1982) 'It is not uncommon to hear discussions about 'culture changes' in colleges, particularly since incorporation. In some cases, Principals and senior managers make explicit their aim to change the normally accepted values shared by the employees of the college. Culture is an abstract concept: it is about the way things are done and the way in which people behave. It is a unique combination of values, beliefs and behavioural patterns which characterise the way in which groups and individuals within a college work together.' (Harper, 1997:44)

John Gardner, (2002:1) 'Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them. They achieve it. They do not achieve it unwittingly by 'doing what comes naturally' and they don't stumble into it in the course of amusing themselves. All excellence involves discipline and a sense of purpose'. Supporting this statement Walkin (1992:55) refers to the importance of the overall culture of the organisation: 'No system is perfect. Everything can be improved. When you think you have got it right probe it from different viewpoints. Aim for continuous improvement. The guideline should be to review

continuously training provision and trainee progress; to assess, monitor and apply remedial action to assure quality of achievement'.

The quality models are all based in industry and have competition at their heart; Harper's (1997:47) definition of quality as 'a customer delight rather than customer satisfaction' encourages the competitive edge of satisfying the customer more fully than other organisations can. The general feeling is that the FE sector needs to encompass quality issues if it is going to survive and succeed. Deming (1993) has suggested that 'survival is not compulsory'. There has been a growing recognition that quality is the guide to competitive advantage; hence the kudos of displaying the logos of IiP and the ISO series, the institutional position in league tables, and the publication of OfSTED reports.

In a competitive environment the company or organisation that has something extra to offer can quite often gain an advantage over its competitor. Julie B explains how she recognises 'quality' as being used as a selling point 'to gain that vital competition within both existing and new markets'. Whilst it is problematic to accept quality models designed for business and industry that encourage competition, if we recognise that taken as a whole they are flawed, selective components from the models can be applied to education and training to encourage refection on practice.

- **Quality Systems**

Maintaining and improving quality is ongoing; the many external bodies, for example, OFSTED, ALI, internal audits and systems lead to confusion within the sector. The students in my research, as practitioners, did not recognise the use or need of some of the systems imposed on them and their colleagues. Having one 'quality' system that encompassed all aspects of the sector would create a greater coherence, however this could not be a realistic alternative; systems such as ISO 9001 and Investors in People are commercial, profit – making enterprises that organisations buy into to gain the kudos and display the logo.

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Unifying the complexity of systems within the sector would be difficult due to the diversity within the sector. One way to improve the present systems would be to allow the teaching staff to focus on maintaining and improving the quality of their own curriculum and their own professional development. If teaching staff were allowed to concentrate on the areas of professional experience they have knowledge of and can control more effectively, they may not become so frustrated by the many demands on them. The constant requests for data and completed paperwork from practitioners becomes a management information issue that should be fully supported by IT systems. The problem being that IT systems in the post – 16 sector are often ill – equipped to capture the necessary data, particularly in smaller training organisations.

The students involved in the research agree that there should be set standards to maintain and improve quality although they felt the systems should allow for greater regional variations; and recognise more fully the diversity of the post – 16 student cohort.

Some of the students highlighted the strengths of self - assessment and how internal quality systems can encourage reflection. Embedded into the philosophy of teaching is the constant reflection on practice with a view to improvement. Lecturers reflect on the student experience with the aim of improving the standard for the next session or in the long term for the next cohort of students. To reflect and change becomes a basic continuous cycle for improvement and should be the focus of any quality initiative in the education and training setting. Jeff refers to the potential for improvement and the positive impact of the 'reflective practitioner', (Schon, 1987) working within the self assessment process of an organisation.

In contrast the students agreed that the OfSTED / ALI inspections often had a negative impact on staff. The perception of OfSTED and its apparent omnipotence led to considerable hostility in the mid – 1990s. During 1998 and 1999 the fourth report of the Select Committee on Education and Employment featured a report from the Education Sub – Committee entitled, 'The Work of OfSTED'. The sub – committee consulted widely with a wide range of interested parties, including head teachers, teacher trainers, governors and

inspectors. This report examined the methods, policies and procedures in response to highly critical feedback on the inspection process from a large number of head teachers and teachers in the compulsory sector. The sub – committee recognised that the inspection system was failing badly to communicate. 'Phrases such as 'heart of darkness' and 'reign of terror' do not contribute to what should be measured, professional debate on the strengths and weaknesses of school inspection in England' (Ibid)

The feedback from OfSTED / ALI inspections exists at two levels; establishment level and classroom level. Creemers (1994) suggests that addressing the classroom issues can bring about the greater improvements – what teachers think and do can greatly improve teaching and learning, (Fullan 1993). The guidelines for inspectors in 1996 clearly states:

'You should offer feedback to every teacher observed. The objective is to improve the teacher's effectiveness. You should try, whenever possible, to give first – hand feedback on the lessons you observe. The purpose is to let teachers know your perception of the quality of the lessons and the responses of the pupils: what went well; what was successful; and what could be done more effectively.' (OfSTED, 1999:127)

For any improvement to be instigated by an observation three things need to happen; inspectors must have the ability to identify areas for improvement, they must be able to communicate these to the individual teacher in an appropriate and constructive way and the teacher must have the will to carry out the suggested improvements.

OfSTED / ALI inspections currently cost over £100 million a year. The inspectorates have, 'a major role to play in tracking down abuses, in promoting efficiency of delivery, in spreading good practice and necessary consistency, and in offering praise and reward.' (Smith et al, 1999:73) It has been argued that the preparation for OfSTED / ALI can provide the opportunity for good team - building exercises. Ultimately,

'It remains to be seen whether schools improve after inspection...' (Cuckle and Broadhead, 1999:186)

Organisations in the sector have developed internal procedures, often very effective and efficient, for checking the quality of the services they provide. They are also under scrutiny from a wide range of external bodies, for example, City and Guilds, Industry Lead Bodies, OFSTED, ALI, LSC.

The main issues are that judgements about the quality and standard of teaching are problematic; they can be subjective and insensitive. Judgements on the quality of teaching and learning should be based on wide - ranging evidence such as students' work, exam results, prepared teaching materials, research, willingness to experiment and innovate, willingness to accept feedback from students, willingness to cooperate with colleagues. 'This suggests a developmental view of a lecturer and usefully emphasises professional development', (Elton 1987:31). Research in schools, colleges and training providers (Rutter 1980, Richardson 1967) indicates that successful institutions are those in which staff support each other, involve themselves in planning, are willing to expose and discuss problems and have high expectations of themselves and their students.

Staff working in the sector want to work 'excellently' – quality assurance systems with their definitions of 'value for money' in the 'business – like' world of FE need to be supportive and systems must not be applied punitively, which in reality may only encourage a 'conspiracy of dishonestly'.

9.0   The Way Forward for the Sector – Recommendations

During Margaret's interview she states clearly that 'if quality is excellence then it continues to evolve; it can't afford to remain the same, it needs to be continually improving'.

There needs to be a way forward for the post – 16 sector as it welcomes the introduction of the new Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council. Also, with many new initiatives such as the 14 – 19 agenda (2002) and Success for All, (2002), the sector faces exciting times. For the sector to be successful the staff can't afford to keep looking backwards to the golden age pre – incorporation with entrenched views, they need to be forward - thinking. This could be difficult against a backdrop of inequality of pay and conditions, as discussed in the contextual issues section in Chapter 8. A strong post – 16 sector needs to promote a new perspective. The sector's strengths need to be supported by quality systems that reflect its potential. The preoccupation with justifying the quality of the sector is almost justifying why we need the sector; the message has to be clear, that the sector is producing high quality provision for its learners.

Margaret's view that, 'Students are not products, they deserve excellence in their education, surroundings and teachers' is a valid one. In '14 – 19 Opportunity and Excellence' Charles Clarke (2002:3) supports this view:

'Quality remains paramount. Where standards of some qualifications have been criticised, they must improve. And where they already deliver a high standard, such standards must be maintained and built upon'.

Internal local monitoring can be effective, this research has highlighted this. Self – assessment is a way forward with education and training organisations responsible for measuring their students' retention, completion and achievement rates with consideration of value - added and local base – lines. With clear negotiated targets designed to measure the quality of the provision of the organisation, support could be made available to the organisations similar to the LEA advisory service, with experts available in a supportive role.

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OfSTED area - wide inspections are moving from a 16 – 19 agenda to a 14 – 19 focus resulting in action plans that aim to improve the quality of education and training for all young people in their transitional years from compulsory to post – compulsory education and training. The aim is for high quality education for all the students in an area with organisations working together in partnership. This is clearly the way forward; collaboration rather than competition.

Some other routes towards success for the sector would include; joined up thinking across the 14 – 19 age range, the introduction of the Lifelong Learning SSC, promoting education and training from birth to grave, staff development with greater mobility of teaching staff across the sectors could benefit schools experiencing staff shortages, the increased awareness of high quality relevant qualifications for young people in both academic and vocational subjects with routes through to higher education and employment.

It is paramount that this perpetual striving for quality and raising of standards has at its heart the professionalism of the staff, the benefit of the students and the enhancement of their experience in post – 16 education and training. Teaching and learning need to be recognised as the core business of the sector; if quality is to be maintained and improved then teaching and learning needs to be fully funded and supported.

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