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Set Within the Context of Recent Developments in  
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Perceptions of Organisational Culture: A case study set within the context of recent developments in higher education

A study presented to fulfil the award of Master of Philosophy

by

John Richard Stakes

Undertaken at the School of Education

The University of Durham

[2010].

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## **Abstract**

Although the culture of an organisation is often regarded as a key component of its overall character as well as a determinant of its success, it is a difficult, complex and intricate concept that is hard to define. Further, its individualistic and organic nature means it is potentially hard to capture, let alone measure.

This research focused on the effects of planned change on the organisational culture among staff that present HE programmes in a large mixed economy college in the United Kingdom (UK). After a critical review of the current literature on organisational culture was conducted a case study approach was used to collect the primary data. This case study comprised a two-phase research design. While Phase 1 focused on the returns to a published questionnaire by Brown [1998], Phase 2 comprised a series of follow-up open-ended, semi-structured interviews with some of the staff who had completed Phase 1 of the project.

As a result a 'snapshot' of the changes in the culture of that part of the organisation where the research was undertaken to be captured. The findings of the follow-up interviews, based on the negative aspects elicited in phase one of this process, provided an opportunity for staff to consider these issues in greater depth and detail.

Conclusions was drawn from the findings provided evidence that the two phase approach to data collection provided valuable information relating to changes in the organisational culture (and particularly its sub-cultures ) at a time of planned change.

These data supported the view expressed in the literature review that the nature of organisational culture in this setting is also complex, both overt and opaque and similarly dynamic to that found in any other large organisation.

Further, and also in line with the findings of the literature review, as a result of the different perceptions (and thus the reactions of individual staff within the two Schools) the planned changes created unpredictable influences on the sub-cultures within the setting. In one of the Schools this had resulted in a much more hostile attitude to the changes than in the other.

## INTRODUCTION

### Preface

In the first decade of the twenty-first century higher education [HE] is undergoing major changes in its role in society. These changes have been brought about by a range of influences on post-compulsory education as part of its purpose in developing a knowledge-based society to compete successfully in the developing global economy. Governments either side of the new millennium have taken a vigorous interest in the relationship between education policy and economic development in emphasising the importance of a highly skilled workforce to meet the challenges presented by the global economy [E.g. Dearing 1997, Leach 2006, Schuller and Watson 2009].

Recent governments of both political spectrums have developed policies to this end and have set national targets for individual achievement in both compulsory and post-compulsory education. A further current emphasis of government policy is towards increasing the participation of young people in higher education courses. Particular attention has been placed on attracting students who historically have been regarded as 'non-traditional' learners in this sector and the development of more

vocationally orientated courses through the introduction of Foundation Degree programmes [e.g. DfES 2004, HEFCE 2003].

As a result, provision offering HE courses to students has widened beyond Universities and Colleges described as higher education institutes [HEIs] to greater opportunities to study for an undergraduate degree in a college of further education [FEC]. FECs offering HE are sometimes described as 'mixed economy colleges' [MECs] [HEFCE 2004, Parry et al 2006]. The proportion of provision of HE programmes delivered in FECs is currently around ten percent of the total throughout the country [HEFCE *ibid*] and has developed to the extent that a recent article in the Times Higher Education [THE 2009, p.37] led to them being described as "becoming significant players in the higher education sector".

Such developments provide two key reasons for researching the organisational culture of MECs. Firstly, similarly to the circumstances pertaining in all places where HE is delivered, external pressures from governments and their agencies as well as students and increasingly their parents is bringing pressure on MECs to develop a culture for both staff and students to meet the wholesale changes described above. This has resulted in the fundamental redesign of the structure of these settings as well as the reshaping of relationships between people who

work there [e.g. Parry op cit, Scott 1995, Biggs 2003]. Secondly, these pressures not only place all staff [academic, administrative and ancillary] under increasing pressure to up-date, modernise and improve their professional skills but also challenge the established organisational culture of all MEIs and HEIs. Such developments can, potentially at least, lead to a period of personal insecurity, re-evaluation and professional turbulence between colleagues, all of which are features that may also influence the culture of the setting where they work. In such circumstances it is particularly appropriate to explore the experiences and perceptions of staff working in HEIs relating to the organisational culture within their place of work.

### **The research focus of the study**

Organisational culture is of increasing interest to students of organisational research as a performance measure to explain why different organisations have different rates of success, however, it is clear from the contemporary literature that there is neither agreement on any stable and consistent definition of organisational culture (leading to what Brown [1998, p.7] describes as an “embarrassment of definitional riches where no such consensus has emerged”) nor any agreed approach as to how organisational culture can be effectively measured, e.g. Schein[1985] Needle [2000] Furnham [2005]. Nevertheless, there is considerable

reference in the recent literature on organisations as to the importance of organisational culture within business and commercial settings.

As a result this study will focus on three activities. Firstly, after a critical analysis of the relevant literature, primary data will be collected through a two-phase process from one setting; a mixed economy college where a range of HE programmes are offered. These primary data will be collected initially by means of a published questionnaire [Brown op cit] and then by means of an open-ended, semi-structured interview schedule constructed around a range of findings from the analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire. In the second phase of this research, interviews will be conducted with volunteers who already completed the questionnaire. The purpose of this phase of the research is to provide a deeper understanding of the views of staff.

As a result of the collection of primary and secondary data this study will also re-evaluate the extent to which organisational culture can be effectively measured. This part of the research will focus particularly on the hypothesis developed by Schein [op cit] and others that a multiple-methods approach to data collection on organisational culture is essential.

## **The setting**

As indicated above, the setting for the primary research is a MEC combining a further education college, an art college, a local adult education facility and a former institute of higher education to provide a number of important post-compulsory educational and training functions both in its local region and nationally. Within the college's portfolio a range of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes are offered including the education and training needs of locally-based traditional industries such as mining, quarrying, railway and other engineering. In the light of the recent decline of these industries; the resulting growth in unemployment; and current national policy initiatives described above, higher education is seen as a growth area in the college, with an increasing number of courses offered in all five of its Schools. Currently, major developments include new courses of study [particularly around the development of Foundation Degrees, and full undergraduate programmes]; building new facilities including a new post graduate centre; and developing new approaches to teaching and learning. Such innovations have resulted in considerable changes to the working practice in the college [D. Education City Strategic Plan 2003, D. Education City Annual Business Plan 2003/4].

## **Research methods**

Methodologically this research is set out as a 'bounded study' [e.g. Stake, 1995] focusing on gauging the views of academic staff working exclusively on higher education programmes during this period of considerable organisational change. Data will be collected through a range of well-known qualitative and quantitative techniques commonly used in social science and educational research, as well as a critical review of the relevant literature on the concept of organisational culture from a range of industrial and commercial organisations and an in-depth review of evidence collected on organisational culture in other HEIs in the UK. A critical analysis of the literature on recent innovation and change in HE provision will also be conducted, along with an analysis of the planning documentation relating to the developments in the setting.

Because of the nature of the role of the author in the setting and the constraints of time, finance and other considerations it was decided to focus this investigation on the staff currently teaching on HE programmes in two of the Schools. As a result, although some of the teaching staff in the School of Health, Education, Social and Advanced Studies piloted both the questionnaire and the subsequent semi-structured interviews, it was the staff working in two other Schools that were invited to contribute to the main study. To maintain as much

anonymity as possible and to protect both the participants and the author of this report the identity of staff has been disguised, as has the identity of Schools from which these data were collected.

### **The format of the report**

This report is set out in seven chapters. Chapter One focuses on the first stage of the research process outlined above; a critical analysis of relevant literature relating to our current understanding of the concept of organisational culture and the extent to which this can be managed. This chapter also focuses on a critical examination of the relationship between the over-arching culture in an organisation and its relationship with the norms and values of the sub-cultures that develop as a result of the working relationship between employees in the sub-groups within it. Following this, Chapter Two concentrates on a critical analysis of the literature relating to the specific characteristics of organisational culture in MEIs and HEIs. Although there is little primary research relating to either of these types of organisation and none at all to the organisational culture of MEIs, an analysis of data collected in HEIs is undertaken [e.g. Costello 1992, Hannan and Silver 2000].

Chapter Three serves two purposes. Initially, it provides a critical analysis of the literature relating to the changing nature of higher

education within the political, social and economic pressures at the outset of the twenty-first century and the demands being made on academic staff working in higher education at this time relating to both its perceived role in developing the national economy and also as a result of the large increase in students taking HE courses. Secondly, this chapter considers the impact of the changes identified above in the specific context of developments in the setting where the primary research was conducted.

Chapter Four focuses on the methodology to be used to collect the primary data. While some consideration is given in this chapter to a critical evaluation of the value, as well as the drawbacks identified in the literature on undertaking research into organisational culture, this chapter focuses particularly on a critical analysis of research methods already deployed to undertake this task. Particular attention will be given in this analysis to the case-study approach. Consideration is also given in this chapter to the use of theoretical sampling [Glaser and Straus 1967, Luker 2008] towards the development of grounded theory from those data collected.

Chapter Five focuses reports on the primary data received from those staff in the two Schools in the setting who completed the questionnaire and also from those staff who subsequent took part in the semi-

structured interviews. An analysis of the data received from an analysis of the questionnaire is undertaken in twelve sub-sections in line with those set out by Brown [op cit]. The semi-structured, open-ended interviews were based on a framework developed from small number of negative responses received from the questionnaire phase of this process. Similarly to the questionnaire phase, the interview phase was conducted with staff from both of the participating Schools. This phase focused on eliciting a deeper understanding of the staff's perceptions of the changes in organisational culture at a time of planned change in the setting.

Chapter Six draws conclusions from an analysis of data received from the primary research within the context of the wider critical analysis of the literature on organisational culture that has been undertaken. Consideration is also given in this chapter to the effectiveness of the approaches to data collection and analysis developed in this study. From these analyses a number of recommendations are made. This chapter also sets out the reflections of the author as a result of the work that has been undertaken.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

#### Introduction

An understanding of organisational culture has importance because of its influence on the strategic and operational development of organisations and its impact on all who work there [Hodgetts 1991, Peters 1992, Furnham op cit]. Costello [1993] argues an understanding of organisational culture is important for effective management. Indeed such an understanding is sometimes seen as a panacea that will, not only cure a range of organisational ills, but also explain virtually every situation within an organisation. Schein [1999], for example, argues an understanding of organisational culture is the key to organisational excellence, in that it makes a difference to performance within the workplace. He asserts:

"culture matters because decisions made without awareness of operative cultural forces may have unanticipated and undesirable consequences and because elements of culture determine organisational strategy, goals and operational modes."

Schein [1999, p. 3]

The concept of organisational culture is complex; sometimes intangible; to a degree tacit and difficult to elicit. Such characteristics raise a number of questions regarding both our understanding, as well as our

ability to capture it. The purpose of this chapter is to consider this complexity in order to provide an understanding of organisational culture through a critical analysis of relevant literature.

## **Historical origins**

Although much of the literature on the culture of organisations dates from the late twentieth century, there is evidence that some of its origins are located earlier. Brown [op cit] indicates that interest in organisational culture emerged from work on organisation climate conducted in the nineteen-seventies, while others argue its origins date from the work of Mayo [1933, 1945]. However, discussion of organisational culture can be traced back to the nineteenth century and the work of Tylor [1871] who is described as first introducing the concept of culture to the English language. His socially constructed definition relates to a complex of knowledge, belief, morals, law, custom, capabilities and habits acquired by man [sic] as a member of society. This thinking was further developed by Weber [e.g. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1958] and *The Theory of Economic Organisation* [1964] within the theory of social action on bureaucracy and is often seen as the starting point in the sociology of organisations. However, since his death, Weber's theories have been sharpened and expanded, resulting in the development of a number of theoretical positions including dysfunctionism [e.g. Merton 1968], informal structures [Blau 1963, 1974], types of bureaucracies

[Burns and Stalker 1966] and adhocracy [Mintzberg 1979]. Similarly, Mintzberg [op cit] and Clegg [op cit] acknowledge the impact of the lifestyle and the culture of the society, as well as the values of those individuals who work in them.

Such thinking places organisational culture clearly within the contemporary sociological discourse. While Hassard [1993] argues the characteristics of the contemporary organisation remains ill-defined, others [e.g. Smith 1989, Clegg 1990] assert contemporary thinking on organisational culture is characterised by differentiation, with the notion of production based on teamwork and where jobs are broken down into individualised specialist tasks. For Smith [op cit] organisational culture is inextricably linked to the 'flexible specialisation' of the individual.

### **A contemporary understanding of organisational culture**

Before considering the contemporary understanding of the term organisational culture it would be useful to give some consideration to the individual words contained in the phrase, viz organisation and culture. At its most obvious, the phrase organisational culture is an amalgamation of two words for one of which there is far more agreement about its meaning than the other. Although perhaps our superficial understanding of an organisation is perhaps clearer than of culture [e.g. "a social unit deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific

goals" [Talcott Parsons 1960, Etzioni 1964] and "a social arrangement for achieving controlled performance in pursuit of collective goals" [Huczynski and Buchanan, 2007] such definitions do not take into account the full range of organisational types found in society. Schein [op cit], for example, considers there are three different types of organisations: formal, informal and social. It is the first of these types, the formal organisation based around the workplace, with which this research is particularly concerned and will be the focus for the next part of this literature search.

Formal organisations are described as having particular, often individual, characteristics. In analyses of such characteristics [e.g. March and Simon 1958, Etzioni 1961, Adler 1991] four distinct characteristics can be identified, including submission to a form of authority [co-ordination]; a set of common goals; division of labour; and a motivation to work with these features [integration]. With this in mind, although acknowledging difficulties in defining an organisation, Schein [1988] considers an organisation to be:

"the planned coordination of activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit purpose or goal, through division of labour and function and through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility."

[Schein 1988, p 15]

To this point Schein [op cit] adds "the object of the co-ordination is activity not people" [p16].

Despite the rather clumsy nature of this definition, its focus on the planned co-ordination of activities for explicit purposes and its links to hierarchy and responsibility the definition provided by Schein [ibid] will be adopted as working definition of a formal organisation for the purposes of this study. This definition is also particularly appropriate in relation to the university and college sector, where the explicit purpose is to develop advanced forms of knowledge to sustain the military and industrial power of the state [Henkel 2000]. The changing role of the HE sector and its increasing focus on both massification and marketisation will be considered further in the next chapter.

In contrast to organisation our understanding of the concept of culture is less clear cut [e.g. Brown op cit, Bishop et al 2006, Furnham op cit]. Furnham [op cit, p. 556], for example, points out although culture is a core concept in the social sciences, our understanding of the term has "caused much confusion" with a range of definitions that are "vague and overly general". This point is particularly pertinent as the word culture has a range of meanings within the language from the scientific; the artistic; the characteristics of an individual; and the sociological, where it is used conceptually to discuss ways of life, common beliefs and distinct values [e.g. Linton 1945, Kluckhohn 1951, Triandis 1990]. It is this latter, sociological, meaning which is most pertinent to this study.

While some [e.g. Vygotski 1981, Schneider 1987] consider culture in terms of social relationships between humans, Moghaddam et al [1993, taken from Malim and Birch 1998] point out the complexity within this concept, stating human relationships can range from objective and physical to subjective and psychological concerns as well as from more obvious inter-personal manifestations to those that are more obscure and tacit. Furnham [op cit] underlines this complexity in his suggestion that any classification of organisational culture must also take into account geographical, economic, historical, religious, linguistic and political criteria.

The complexity of these inter-relationships can also be seen in the intricacy of some of the models of organisation culture which have been developed. While some have tried to define organisational culture [E.g. Bowers and Seashore 1966, Gonzales 1987] others have attempted to consider it through its dimensions [Hampden Turner 1990, Schein 1990, Eldridge and Crombie 1974]. For example, Eldridge and Crombie [1974] present a three dimensional model of culture with both vertical and lateral co-ordination to take into account changes over time. A second approach has presented a definition of culture through its corporate functions [e.g. Graves 1986, Williams, Dobson and Walters 1989] while a third consideration has been to taxonomise it [Deal and Kennedy 1982].

All of these examples underline the complexity of any understanding of the concept of organisational culture, however, before considering this definition further, it is important to point out the term organisational culture is not the only one used in the literature. This term is sometimes used alongside, or even interchangeably, with other phrases such as organisational climate. The implications of this will be considered in the next section of this literature review.

### **Climate and culture**

While for Brown [op cit] the distinction between organisational culture and organisational climate is simply historical, developed from an earlier interest in organisational climate from the 1970s, an analysis of the wider literature on organisations indicates it is not easy to pin down the meaning of either of these terms [e.g. Furnham op cit, Rousseau 1988]. Similarly, it is difficult to distinguish the relationship between them [Ashkanasy et al [2001]. Some [e.g. Lehal 2000] make no distinction between the two terms. In the analysis by Lehal [ibid] the two terms are used synonymously and employed interchangeably. In other instances [e.g. Campbell et al 1970] researchers have defined the one in terms of how others have defined the former.

In some of the literature the relationship between the two concepts relates to both historical origins and academic influences [e.g. Dennison

1996]. Dennison [ibid] argues organisational culture is rooted in the sociological and anthropological discourse, while the roots of thinking on organisational climate are set in psychology. Further, Dennison [ibid] argues although the literature relating to both of these features on the surface draws clear distinctions, at a deeper level this clarity begins to disappear. Rather, he argues that it is the narrow orthodoxy within each part of the literature that helps to perpetuate this distinction, making it difficult to build on some of the more obvious points of similarity.

Furnham [op cit], whilst acknowledging the difference between organisational climate and organisational culture, argues the former forms part of the latter. He considers the climate of an organisation relates to the daily procedures and processes within it that determine levels of job satisfaction and performance. As a result, Furnham [ibid] argues the climate of an organisation is less stable than its culture. Further, he considers the difference between the two can also be related to the focus of research activity arguing researchers into organisational culture look at the deeper underlying assumptions, values and meanings within an organisation, while researchers into organisational climate look at more observable surface features.

For Dennison [op cit] and Taguiri [1968] organisational climate is concerned with the social context of an organisation and affects the

behaviour of employees and the views of others. Gray [2002] sets this view in terms of the perspective of an “insiders [feeling of] what it is like to work in an organisation”. McKenna [2000], similarly to Gray [op cit], considers organisational climate to be concerned with the current atmosphere in an organisation which affects individual and group morale and performance rather than its values or norms. He considers organisational culture refers to the historical context of events and how they impact on the present. In McKenna’s view organisational climate, because of its lack of subtlety and less durability, is easier to change than organisational culture.

In other literature organisational culture is defined in the same way as others define organisational climate. For example, Forehand and Von Gilmer [1964] describe the characteristics of organisational climate as relating to the differences between organisations, influenced by factors that continue over time and affect employee behaviour. Similarly, Guion [1973] argues organisational climate relates to both the attributes of an organisation, as well as to the perceptions of the individual, and is most often an effective response to the level of job satisfaction.

It is perhaps not surprising that some the complexity of this lack of clarity is unhelpful. Rousseau [op cit, p. 142], despite her analysis that allows for comparison between different conceptions of organisational

climate, considers any definition of the concept to be troublesome and lacking clarity and focus. Similarly, Furnham [op cit, p 581] considers many of the definitions of organisational climate to be "ambiguous, nebulous and controversial". Nevertheless, this does not prevent him adding his own definition, arguing organisational climate is an aspect of organisational culture that is less subtle or enduring; describing it as similar to morale in the way that it impacts on people in their workplace every day.

In other literature organisational climate relates to forms of numerical consensus. Jones and James [1974] argue the notion of an organisational climate can be described in terms of a psychological climate to emphasise it is an aggregated cognitive interpretation of an organisation by its employees, which provides a representation of the meanings inherent in its features, events and processes. With this in mind Pace and Stern [1958] argue a two thirds majority agreement among staff is necessary, while Guion [op cit] argues a ninety percent consensus should be required for any sense of an organisational climate to be invoked.

In contrast to the notion of organisational climate with its emphasis on the perception and interpretation of events, the original meaning of the term organisational culture was used to describe leadership practices.

However, more recent literature indicates [e.g. Brown op cit] organisational culture has adopted a much wider concept relating to shared meanings, assumptions and perceptions, as well as the habits, beliefs, understanding and knowledge that shape organisational behaviour. As such, the notion of organisational culture has developed into that of corporate culture with its focus on organisational values and norms and has left the meaning of the term organisational climate more blurred. Bearing these points in mind in particular the rest of this chapter will focus on a critical analysis of the concept of organisational culture from the literature.

## **Summary**

Taking the features discussed so far in this chapter into account the literature on organisational culture supports the generally accepted view that this concept developed out of the need to consider the nature of the social relationships between individual members of particular organisations and how these relationships are transmitted and accommodated by the participants [e.g. Brown op cit, Handy 1985, Schien 1992, Dawson, 1996]. The literature provides evidence of the complexity of this relationship which lies within a diverse range of intellectual origins, which is built on a mixture of ideas, theories and frameworks that have been drawn together to produce a theoretical

perspective, around which a wider discourse on organisational culture has developed. These origins range from elements of anthropology; the sociology of organisations; social psychology; folklore studies; and the theory of language, as well as thinking on postmodernism as contributing to this discourse Brown [op cit]. Not only does the definition of organisational culture remain unclear but also at times it is used interchangeably with the term organisational climate. However, the evidence indicates a lack of overall consistency of usage as on occasions these terms are used to describe quite different concepts.

Further, bearing in mind the decision to concentrate on the literature on organisational culture, it is important at this point to give some critical attention to the artefacts, characteristics and behaviours which help to frame our working understanding of this term. This will be considered in the next sub-section.

### **A working understanding of organisational culture**

An analysis of the literature set out above indicates there is no shortage of definitions of organisational culture. However, there are a range of interpretations attached to this concept, which can be set around the 'culture has'/'culture is' debate [e.g. Huczynski and Buchanan op cit]. The 'culture has' approach (sometimes described as the

functionalist/managerial perspective) argues every organisation possesses a culture consisting of an objective reality of artefacts, values and meanings which is given to its members when they join the organisation and is measurable. In this model organisational culture is a management perspective with features that are both normative and prescriptive. Needle [2000], for example, describes this model as one which makes assumptions about employers that indicates a set of beliefs are deliberately created as part of a management strategy, which are used to guide both the behaviour of its membership and its organisational processes. For others [e.g. Bernick [2001] managers in organisations are encouraged to act, not within the real culture of an organisation, but towards presenting a preferred culture.

In contrast the 'culture is' approach [sometimes known as social science perspective] regards organisational culture in symbolic, social constructionist terms based on a perspective of shared understandings and social interactions. These are features that are studied holistically and are far more difficult to measure. In this model organisational culture is produced and reproduced continuously through the interaction of its members [Huczynski and Buchanan [op cit]. However, Barker [1999] offering a third perspective, rejects both of these models. Rather, he presents organisational culture not as a view of its characteristics but rather as what it does. For Barker [op cit]

organisational culture focuses the processes of an organisation generating and regenerating systems for generating meaning for employees.

In other literature a more pragmatic view of organisational culture emerges. For Bower and Seahorse [1966] organisational culture is defined in relatively simple terms as 'the best way of doing things', while Deal and Kennedy [1982] use a similarly simple definition; a set of informal rules that inform behaviour. For Geertz [1973] organisational culture is identified in terms of personal actions. He relates these actions to patterns of meaning embodied in symbols to enable humans to transmit their experiences and guide their actions. Similarly, Hofstede [2001 op cit] sees organisational culture in psychological terms as a collective programming of the mind.

For some [e.g. Hofstede 1980] organisational culture is passive, something that we are recipients of; developing as a result of the mental programming of people in an environment. However, for others [e.g. Schein op cit], organisational culture is organic; a powerful, latent and often unconscious set of forces that determine, both through individual and collective behaviour, ways of perceiving thoughts, matters and operational modes of working. In his view, such behaviours are set not only in terms of an organisation's current values but also its history,

traditions and assumptions about how people should act [Kemp and Dwyer 2001]. This view is supported by Robbins [1998] and Bishop et al [op cit] who depict an organisation's culture as representing a common perception held by all its members within a system of shared meanings that are perpetuated over time. In such situations, Robbins [op cit] argues, there will also be evidence of an integration of individuals with different backgrounds across different levels of a company to describe its culture in similar terms.

These shared meanings, although described by Pettigrew [1979] as a publicly accepted reality, are often represented as being unquestioned and taken for granted [see also Madden 1971, Dill 1982]. Tierney [1988] while taking up this point argues we may only have an intuitive grasp of the culture of an organisation and that this may become part of our consciousness only when we have contravened its boundaries and broken the accepted rules. However in the social science perspective, organisational culture is viewed in active terms relating to the interactions between people, as well as taking into account both their conscious experiences and their reflections on these experiences.

Tierney [ibid], for example, describes organisational culture in terms of reflections on decisions, actions, communications and shared assumptions by all participants in an organisation. It is these

experiences, he argues, that not only help to make intelligible our view of the world but also help to shape our personal reactions to the range of social environments we encounter with their shared meanings and understanding. These shared meanings and understandings, described by Triandis [1971] as 'cultural syndromes' also contribute to our interpretation of events and our value judgements, norms, behaviours and personal relationships within our awareness of the range of cultures in which we live and work.

In a sophisticated analysis of the literature conducted by Brown [1995] taking account of the above views, a range of definitions of organisational culture is considered. In his analysis Brown [op cit] identifies a fundamental distinction between those who regard organisational culture as a metaphor [e.g. Morgan, 1986] and those who regard it as an objective entity [e.g. Gold, 1982]. The view of organisational culture as a metaphor is widespread. Morgan [op cit] for example, describes organisational culture in terms of the influence of language, social norms, ceremonies and other social practices that communicate the key ideologies, values, beliefs and guiding action in organisations. Historically, the metaphors used to describe organisations are widespread and have included 'machines', the 'theatre' [Mangham and Overington 1983] the 'political arena' [Pfeffer 1981] and the 'psychic prison' [Marcusse 1955]. Smircich [1983] also uses organisational

culture as a metaphor, referring to the experience of collective co-ordination and orderliness.

Importantly for the focus of this research, and taking into account the culture/climate debate outlined above, Pacanowski & O'Donnell-Trujillo [1982] regard all the features of an organisation as the being within its culture. Recent consideration of this perception has led Schein [1992] and Goffee [1997] to describe culture in terms of psychological dispositions that its members possess and which leads them to act in a certain way. This pattern of basic assumptions that a group has invented, discovered and developed to cope with its problems and that have worked well enough to be considered valid are taught to new members of an organisation as the correct way to behave in relation to the problems they may face in that environment.

Analyses by Schein [1992 op cit, 2004], Hofstede et al [1991] and Goffee and Jones [2000] describe a complexity of organisational culture that is not essentially neat and tidy. They argue some artefacts are describable in the culture of any organisation, while other features are set around more nebulous and intangible factors. This intangibility is demonstrated in an analysis by Schein [ibid] who identifies a linear model of organisational culture based on neither overt behaviours nor visible artefacts that can be observed in an organisation. Further, he considers

organisational culture is not necessarily espoused by an organisation's philosophy or its value system as written down in its mission statement or described in a company charter.

Schein [2004 op cit] also considers organisational culture to have elements of invisibility and features that are taken for granted. In his view, such tacit aspects of knowledge and values are formed from both individual and group awareness, which, as a result of various activities can be brought back into focus. Taking this analysis into account Goffee and Jones [op cit] argue although an organisation can be characterised by one culture, most exhibit several simultaneously where staff move from one sub-culture to another in the different parts or locations of an organisation. Importantly in the context of this study Goffee and Jones [op cit] also argue the culture of an organisation is not static, rather it is fluid and changes in the life-cycle of the company as it develops and progresses.

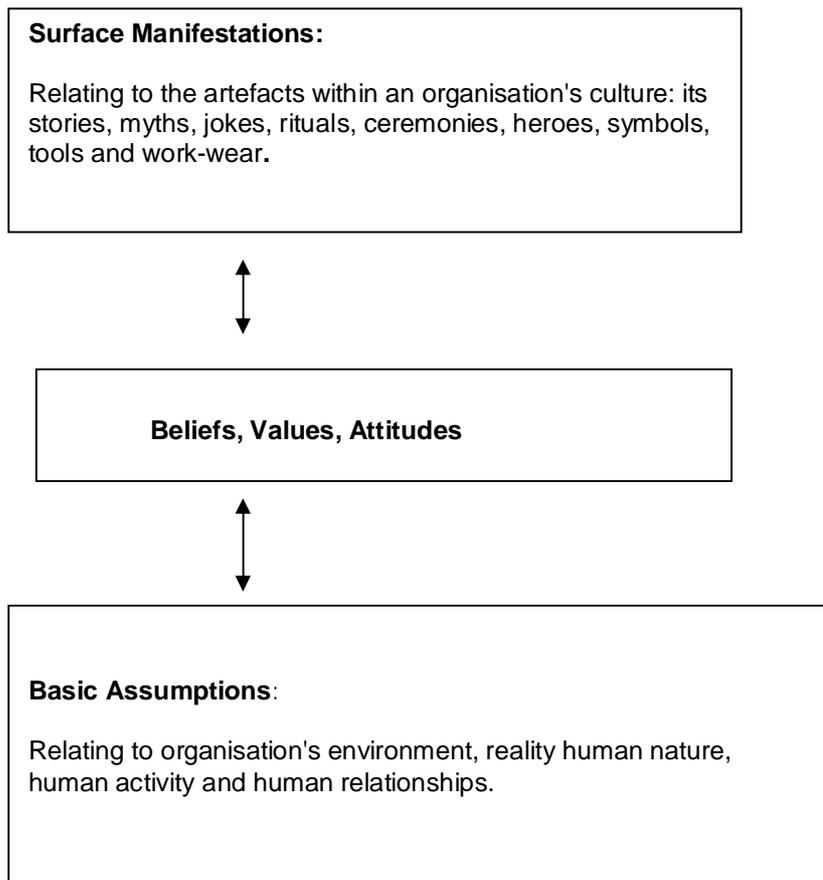
Within this complexity, efforts have been made to produce models that will facilitate a better understanding of the culture of an organisation. Goffee and Jones [op cit, p 21], for example, describe organisational culture as a three-dimensional 'Double S' cube, where levels of solidarity, common tasks, mutual interests and commonly understood shared goals' [from low to high] and sociability, friendliness, [from low to high] are matched with each other. This leads to what Goffee and Jones [op cit]

consider to be four organisational characteristics (cultures) viz: *networked* (characterised by high sociability and low solidarity), *communal* (characterised by high sociability and high solidarity) *fragmented* (low sociability and low solidarity) and *mercenary* (high solidarity and low sociability). A third dimension to this model considers the negative and positive features of each of the characteristics within the culture of an organisation.

Wilson [1992] considers organisational culture can be understood in either structural, where the focus is on understanding the configuration of an organisation, or interpretive terms, where the focus is on understanding its symbols, rituals and myths. However, Schien [1992, op cit] argues an organisation's culture is considerably more complex than this and is best understood through an analysis of the assumptions that lie behind the knowledge and values which help to determine the patterns of behaviour within the organisation; patterns which, he argues, may include its layout, dress code, corporate language, institutional myths and norms, as well as its social mores and rights.

The model developed by Schien [op cit], based somewhat loosely on the characteristics of an iceberg, where much of the mass is not visible to the naked eye, identified three levels of the expression of organisational culture from its more overt surface manifestation through to a level

based on covert tacit and intangible assumptions. Of key importance in this model is the relationship between the surface manifestations and the deeper, basic assumptions and the attitudes, values and beliefs of its members. This model is illustrated in fig.1 below.



**Fig. 1: A model of the three levels of cultural analysis within an organisation [After Schien [1992, 2004]**

At the most superficial level, Schein's model of organisational culture is composed of material artefacts, some of which are instantly recognisable to anyone who is a member of the organisation or visits there. These

artefacts might include the décor, the social climate as well as the ways people dress, are inducted and describe and talk to each other. Some of these artefacts also provide evidence of organisational identity and act as an emotional linkage between the corporate culture and that of the individual employee.

The second, less superficial level of expression, relates to the organisation's values, principles, ethics and visions, beliefs and attitudes. At this level these principles are often set out in a documentary format and are key elements in setting out the way of working advocated by the organisation. These elements can be thought of as behavioural norms that predominate in an organisation which help to determine acceptable standards of behaviour. These norms can also be incorporated into written and/or unwritten codes of ethics and behaviour within a setting. For Robbins [2003] the senior management in any organisation acts as a 'culture carrier' strongly espousing and disseminating its values and aims to others.

At the third and most sophisticated level, culture is expressed by the deep, inferred, taken-for-granted presumptions within an organisation that have developed throughout its history. Schein [op cit] argues such assumptions are the implicit, deeply rooted suppositions that people share and which help to guide their perceptions, feelings and emotions.

His analysis indicates such assumptions have three characteristics. They are often held unconsciously and are very difficult to surface; they are neither confrontable nor debatable and are highly complex aspects of group social psychology, which are particularly difficult to assess.

Brown [1995], while largely supporting the model outlined by Schien [1992 op cit], argues that the levels described in his model can be set on a continuum, ranging from the very visible through to the invisible and the tacit. Similarly, Hofstede [1991 op cit] also describes a model which, in principle, has similarities to that described by Schein [op cit] which operates on different levels from shallow to deep. Hofstede's model is based on concentric circles, which has at its centre organisational values and beliefs. Outside this, and with increasing emphasis, comes its reliance on symbols described as the words, conditions, acts and characteristics that have meaning for its membership. However, Hofstede [op cit] also considers the notion of 'corporate heroes', which he summarises as those who have been highly successful and can be used as role models for others in the company. Hofstede [op cit] links the notion of corporate heroes to the outward manifestation of corporate culture, an organisation's ceremonies, rites and rituals; features he associates with the operation of the organisation, what is regarded as acceptable behaviour and how change is managed there.

Harrison [1972a], in his contribution to this debate, argues the culture within an organisation may be determined by its orientation. His analysis identifies a range of models of cultures in operation in different organisations. He relates these ideologies to different features within the whole understanding of organisational culture. In his view, the orientation of an organisation not only determines how it deals with both its internal and its external environment but also its mechanisms for resolving conflicts is bound within the constraints set by these orientations. Harrison [op cit] argues the ideology of an organisation not only determines the values within the individual workplace but also helps to merge people's ideas of what is, and what ought to be, in their workplace. In these circumstances the orientation of a workplace helps to determine its organisational characteristics and the ways in which the workforce interact with each other. Harrison [op cit] relates these orientations to a model based around participants' views on power, role, task and person orientations within their organisation.

Subsequently, this analysis has been modified by a number of others [e.g. Handy 1978 and 1985, Deal and Kennedy 1982, Quinn and McGrath 1985, Scholz 1987, and Carnall 1995]. These modifications relate to the number of orientations and organisational types that have been identified. Carnall [op cit] for example identified six types of organisational cultures, Handy [1978, 1985 op cit] originally

distinguishes only three types although more recently [1988, 1993 op cit] he has fallen in line with Harrison's model.] Handy [1988 op cit] also argues the culture of an organisation is largely determined by its overall characteristics and management style. His analysis identifies four organisational styles that help to determine this. These he describes as the *club, role, task and person* cultures.

The first of these, the '*club culture*', Handy [1988 op cit] compares with a spiders web, with increasingly sized rings and lines from a central axis. The lines represent lines of responsibility while the circles represent intimates and influences, where the closer to the centre the greater the influence. This model represents a culture where power emanates from the centre, from which rays of influence spread out towards the outside. It is a system rich on personality with shared values and beliefs, based on trust and empathy of individuals in key positions, where effectiveness is dependent on a personal relationship with the leader. Such an organisation has short lines of communication that are based on a form of telepathy, with everyone understanding each other's minds. Handy [1988, 1993 op cit] argues that because of this particular structural form this is usually a form of cultural model that is found in smaller organisations and where decisions need to be made quickly.

Handy [1988 op cit] argues the *role orientation* model is based on a more bureaucratic structure of the importance of regulations, rules, agreements and procedures within an organisation. Handy [1988 op cit] argues organisations set around role orientations are both logical and orderly to discharge their work. In such circumstances individual workers are role occupants with job descriptions that lay down the boundaries of their responsibilities. Communication is formal, set around written systems and procedures to meet every eventuality. In such situations harmony, rules and order are regarded as important and efficiency and fairness as valuable characteristics. It is a model where people are trained to fit a role, where stability and respectability are often valued as much as personal initiative and independence of thought. The role orientation model offers stability to the individual as well as predictability and the opportunity to acquire specialist expertise. However, Handy [1993 op cit] also points out, in times of change, this sense of stability can be threatened, while in times of crisis it can be disastrous as it is built around the needs of the organisation rather than the capacity and ability of the individuals within it.

The *task orientation* model is represented by Handy [1988 op cit] as a net or a box matrix. This model, which is set around the concept of a net, has a flexibility to resolve problems. Handy [op cit] describes this as a non-standardised framework within an organisation that allows each

task to be treated individually. The whole emphasis in this model is pragmatic, based on members sharing skills and responsibilities and bringing together the right people at the correct level in order to get the job done. Such an approach provides a useful problem-solving culture, based on self-confidence that avoids routine and repetition and which is constantly working on new challenges keeping itself motivated and enthusiastic.

The task orientation model, Handy [1988 op cit] argues, emphasises expert power and reward for results and is the most commonly preferred model of most managers. However, these characteristics make this model difficult to control. Although day-to-day control can be exerted, the level of control is largely dependent on the motivation of staff to successfully complete projects they have been allocated. Handy [op cit] indicates this model will be found where flexibility and sensitivity to a market or environment are important, where a product life is short and where speed of reaction is important.

The *person orientation* model described by Handy [1988 op cit] puts the individual first and makes the organisation fit the talents of its members. Handy [ibid] points out there are relatively few organisations with this form of culture. Further, where this model operates there is generally only a small number of people involved. Examples cited by Handy [ibid]

include barristers' chambers, doctors' surgeries, architects' practices and, perhaps most interestingly in relation to this study, university and college faculties. In such organisations tenure is commonly awarded to members and influence is shared and the power-base is usually determined by professional knowledge and expertise. Handy [1988 op cit] also argues, those working in person-orientated organisations often find administration a chore and responsibility for this sometimes shared on a rotating basis by partners. In these circumstances, he argues, the partners have to be 'run on a light rein', i.e. persuaded not commanded and influenced not cajoled or bargained with.

Such thinking [e.g. O'Reilly and Tushman, 1997] it is argued, allow managers to view an organisation's cultural norms as a pervasive form of social control that can either support or hinder them in accomplishing their tasks. Further, it is pointed out, the result of this is a system that can, in certain circumstances, be more powerful and effective than some formal control systems. As O'Reilly and Tushman [op cit] put it the culture within such organisations is a means of "co-ordinating and controlling collective action". Research indicates this orientation has positive effects, Waterman [1994], for example, in his analysis of *Federal Express*, describes this feature as motivating and empowering employees. It is also the case that in such circumstances conformity to the norms

and values of the organisation are generally rewarded, while transgressions are likely to be punished.

## **Summary**

This sub-section has critically evaluated the literature on the notion of organisational culture. It has indicated its complexity through the range of available models that describe its appearance, its characteristics and the range of ways it might operate in an organisation. It is evident that our understanding of the concept of organisational culture operates at both overt and covert levels including; structural [through an analysis of its role orientation]; interpretive [through an understanding of its rituals, myths and symbols] and the activities of its members [through their values, beliefs and assumptions]. This complex relationship is increased further in large organisations, where work is subdivided into departments and employees into teams. In such circumstances the culture of an organisation is increasingly disparate, with a multiple rather than a single, unified agenda. Within larger organisations such as universities and colleges it is important to consider what the literature can tell us of the effect of subcultures on organisational culture. The next section of this chapter will critically examine the literature on this issue.

## **Organisational Sub-cultures**

It is the case even in small organisations that employees can be identified as working in sub-groups. In large organisations such as HEIs this is an important feature of their operation and management. As a result of the close interactions between members of these sub-groups, it is argued sub-cultures within the overarching organisational culture develop in most organisations [e.g. Hampden-Turner op cit, Sackmann 1992]. It has also been noted [e.g. Huczynski and Buchanan op cit] that as a result of the development of these sub-cultures people respond to the overarching culture of the organisation in different ways; e.g. colluding with it, capitulating to it or resisting it. In such circumstances an organisation's dominant culture may be set round a small number of core values understood, but not necessarily shared, by all its members alongside the unique values held by particular groups of workers that may be different, contrasting or even at odds with some of the core values.

Payne [1990] even goes as far as to describe the notion of an organisational culture as invalid. He argues as people in different parts of an organisation have very different perceptions of its climate it is therefore not a shared phenomenon. In his view it is impossible to have an organisational climate but rather there is a small group, e.g. departmental, climate within which people operate. While not going as

far as Payne [op cit], Farnham and Gunter [1993] point out sub-cultures within large organisations assume varying degrees of significance. They argue where there is a common sense of purpose between the sub-cultures this can be beneficial to the organisation as a whole, although problems may arise where different sub-cultures have different priorities and agendas. In such circumstances this literature indicates it is possible these sub-cultures may conflict with each other to the detriment of the dominant culture in the organisation, thus hindering its overall management and performance.

It has been argued, e.g. Homans 1950, every group exists within a social environment that affects and influences it. In turn, every group also seeks to influence the environment within which it exists. As a result the interaction between a group and its environment not only shapes the characteristics of the group but also helps the fragmentation process towards the formation of sub-groups. Homans [ibid] argues there are five elements that help to determine this relationship including:

- The physical context of the environment which helps to determine the activities that take place,
- The cultural-personal context, i.e. the norms and values that make up the shared understanding of the group
- The technological context, i.e. the facilities and resources available to the group
- The organisational context i.e. the companies policies practices and rules relating to the reward and development of staff
- The socio economic context, i.e. the wider economic situation as it affects the company

Further, Homans [op cit] asserts that in work-based organisations the relationship between the external behaviour demanded by the management and the internal behaviour within the sub-groups can, in certain circumstances, be a source of tension between the two. Although management has an understanding of their expectations from their employees, the staff may find some of these irksome, negative and difficult to put into practice. In such circumstances the staff may seek to find ways round some of the practices expected by management and develop their own informal rules to make the experience more palatable, while at the same time, increasing the level of organisational fragmentation.

An analysis by Trice and Beyer [1993] identifies four social conditions that promote the growth of sub-cultures. These they describe as *differential interaction*, i.e. the extent to which employees are able to interact with each other; *shared experience*, i.e. where working patterns encourage employees to engage in close co-operation, identify the same problems and share the same solutions; *similar personal characteristics*, i.e. where people with similar characteristics such as age, education and ethnicity work together; and *cohesion*, i.e. where incipient factors such as perceived performance success, physical isolation from other groups, shared crises or threats lead to group cohesion.

These variations in attitude have also been linked to the different interests and experiences among employees [Martin 1992]. In an analysis of contrasting perspectives of organisational culture her research demonstrates how a range of different interests among employees can be identified within different sub-groups. These interests, she argues, relate to the variety of experiences and opinions between different groups and the power within the organisation. In her view these factors are rarely reconciled. Rather they are a constant source of friction within an organisation where conflict is inevitable. Further, Martin [ibid] indicated these perspectives can be set in up to three cultural perspectives [frames] that might be found within any organisation. She describes these frames as the integrationist, differentiated and fragmented perspectives.

The *integrationist* perspective has an overall view of the culture of an organisation that is mutually reinforcing, where there is a straightforward and unambiguous consistency in the relationship between the sub-groups, a view that there is an organisation wide consensus in terms of company values, beliefs and behaviours and where there is a lack of tolerance to 'non-conformists'. The *differetialist* perspective Martin [ibid] describes as when, having adopted the view, there can be a cultural inconsistency within an organisation, staff hold a view that influential sub-cultures exist and that consensus is only likely to be found within these sub-groups. In the *fragmentist perspective* there

is little consensus about the culture within the organisation and what consensus there is relates to specific issues. Further, these issues will be in a constant state of flux. This group is characterised by the complex relationship between the various sub-cultures, their lack of consistency, their competitiveness and uncertain meaning.

The model described by Martin [op cit] has been applied to recent research on organisational culture by Ogbonna and Harris [1998]. When conducting three case studies in a grocery multiple they reported organisational culture was related to both the individual perceptions of staff and their status within the organisation. Data presented by Ogbonna and Harris [op cit] indicates that the views of the head office staff, the store managers and the workers on the shop floor differed widely. The staff at head office was reported as holding an integrationist perspective, favouring careful selection of staff in order to exclude potential non-conformists. The store managers were reported as holding a differentiated view. In a role which put them in a position to reconcile the conflicting views of head office and shop-floor employees they regarded the company as consisting of sub groups within a divided culture of different spheres of influence and dominance. The shop floor workers held a fragmented view of the company culture, feeling the firm was changing faster than they could deal with, describing the situation as complex and unpredictable. This report also supports the view

presented by Martin [op cit] and Brown [op cit] which indicates an individual's perspective of the culture of an organisation is directly related to their role in it. Ogbonna and Harris [op cit], for example, argue the jobs of shop floor workers provided them with their own narrow perspective of the culture of the organisation [Martin, op cit].

However, this view is not universally shared. Martin and Siehl [1983] from their research at General Motors, identify three distinct subcultures not based on hierarchy but on attitude. These sub groups are described as the *enhancers*, the *orthogonal* and the *counterculture*. The *enhancers* often comprise a group of long-service employees who have developed a loyalty and commitment to the company and produce much stronger bonds than newer, less committed recruits produce. Another group, the *orthogonals*, were those who subscribed to the core values of the company, while at the same time accepting a separate but non-conflicting set of value and beliefs, determined from within their own working group. The third group identified by Martin and Siehl [ibid] is described as forming a *counterculture*. These are workers who present a direct challenge to the dominant culture in an organisation and exist in an uneasy relationship. This group can form at any part of the hierarchy of an organisation depending on particular circumstances and is often initiated when members of a dominant organisation are attempting to determine cultural change over others.

For Brown [op cit], similarly to the overarching organisational culture described earlier, the sub-cultures of an organisation are in a constant state of change and instability, with perceptions of reality being constantly constructed and reconstructed by its membership. It is these factors, in conjunction with the position held by individual members within its organisational hierarchy, that determine the characteristics of these sub-cultures. Further, it is these constantly shifting factors within the sub-cultures of an organisation that help to determine the shifts in the overarching culture within the organisation.

## **Summary**

This section has identified a range of types of sub-cultures within organisations as well as reasons for their initiation and development. The literature indicates that key factors in the development of organisational sub-cultures in organisations include the individual perceptions of the membership as well as the diversity of interests among them. Such developments also encourages the formation of loosely- federated subgroups each with their own identifiable subculture. These sub-groups can be characterised by the quality of their relationship to the overarching culture within an organisation although there is little consensus on how they are formed.

It is also important to bear in mind that the sub-cultures within an organisation are not set within the attitudes, values and mores within the culture and sub-cultures that are static and inflexible. Rather this is organic and ever changing, as are the relationships between the people who work there. The effect of change on organisational culture will be briefly addressed in the next sub-section of this chapter.

## **Change**

The concept of organisational culture cannot be understood without some consideration of the effect of change on an organisation. The effect of change on an organisation is intricate and involved. Any study of organisational culture must take into account the view that organisations must be understood as organic, living environments that are constantly fluctuating and changing. While in some circumstances the pace of change over time in an organisation is slow and almost indiscernible, in other cases this pace is deliberate, rapid and clearly evident. The pace of change in an organisation is affected by the nature of the change. The concept of the nature of change has also got to be considered as this can include both deliberate and planned change to alter the purpose of an organisation as well as setting out to change the culture within the organisation while not seeking to alter its function.

Planned change can take a number of different forms, from small adjustments to deliberate intended change as a result of considerable modification of company policy affecting the whole organisation.

Importantly, it has been argued [e.g. Brown op cit] that the concept of what may be regarded as minor or considerable organisational change is largely subjective and dependent on individual interpretation. Further, a single desired change in an organisation may have a considerably different effect on its culture than could have been envisaged at the outset. Similarly, a series of small-scale changes can lead, over a period of time, to large-scale cultural change that was not initially foreseen.

However, the process of change in whatever form, if it is intended or unintended, is a natural part of the life of any organisation. It has been noted by Burnes [op cit, p 251] that change is "an ever-present feature of organisational life"; adding "most organisations and their employees both continuously and continually experience substantial changes in what they do and how they do it", with the interests of groups and individuals within an organisation being constantly renegotiated. Such circumstances can lead to the development of conflict within an organisation. Indeed, Huczynski and Buchanan [op cit] argue conflict works as a "crossroad" [p. 768] within organisational behaviour on a number of levels. These levels have been identified as including a feeling

of a lack of personal control over events [e.g. Winter 1973]; resistance at an individual level of the locus of control e.g. [Rotter 1966]; the need for personal achievement [e.g. McLelland 1953]; and the need for personal independence [e.g. Winter op cit].

The literature also indicates organisational instability is particularly apparent at times of considerable change [Burnes op cit, Huczynski and Buchanan op cit]. A common feature of this literature also argues cultural change is triggered by such instability. For Lundberg [op cit], for example, change occurs as a result of a build-up of tensions that are released as a result of particular events which help to provoke it. For Dyer [op cit] any such crisis must inevitably lead to the breakdown and reconstruction of the old cultural values. A model presented by Gagliardi [op cit] of incremental change is dependent on the level of tension within an organisation, while that described by Lewin [op cit] is dependent on the individual's need for change as a result of a feeling of organisational and personal failure.

Cultural change is also presented a result of personal learning within an organisation. Both Lundberg [op cit] and Dyer [op cit] based their models on a learning cycle, while Gagliardi [op cit] asserts people learn as a result of their successes and Isabella [op cit] describes cultural change as part of a wider process of individual understanding. For Beyer and

Trice [op cit] the learning process is an important issue concerning questions that may be asked relating to the destruction, rationalisation and legitimisation of the changes being made.

Such difficulties can only compound the problem of successfully measuring the culture of an organisation. This is a factor that has importance in the context of this research as it was conducted in an institution undergoing considerable change as a result of both external demands and expectations on the provision and direction of higher education as well as internal pressures for development. These are issues which will be considered in detail in the next two chapters of this study.

## **Conclusions**

The literature on organisational culture indicates a relatively contemporary discourse drawn from a range of disciplines including sociology, social anthropology, studies of folklore and language . This literature also provides us with no simple definition of organisational culture, indeed there is a considerable degree of confusion over any definition of the term. For example, the term organisational culture is sometimes used interchangeably with organisational climate, while on other occasions it is used to describe phenomena that are regarded as different.

Any discussion of the concept of organisational culture brings together a complex set of understandings based on factors which have been set around the 'culture is'/ 'culture has' discourse, where the former focuses on the normative, prescriptive perspective and the latter on shared understandings and social interactions. Both of these approaches take into account factors such as the degree of personal and collective satisfaction and the level of performance of individuals within a social environment as well as acceptance of certain common understandings within the language.

The range of models of organisational culture which have been developed, e.g. those by Schein [op cit] Handy [op cit] Harrison [op cit] and Hofstede [op cit] help to demonstrate its complexity. Some of these models, e.g. those developed by Schein [ibid], Handy [ibid] and Harrison [ibid] not only demonstrate this complexity but also reflect different perspectives of organisational culture from where the members are seen as passive recipients (e.g. Hofstede op cit) to where they are regarded as having an active role in its continuous construction and reconstruction, e.g. Harrison op cit] Schein[ ibid] and Brown [op cit]. Those such as Harrison [ibid] Schein [ibid] and Brown [ibid] regard organisational culture as organic and open to constant revisions and change, particularly at times of deliberately enforced change.

Some of these models, e.g. those developed by Harrison [op cit] and Schein [op cit], describe different levels of visibility and accessibility to understanding the culture of an organisation, ranging from its more superficial, surface manifestations and activities, which are to some extent shared by all members, through the artefacts of the organisation's culture to its beliefs, attitudes and values and its more nebulous, intangible and tacit feelings, understandings and assumptions. The implications of such a model on the working practices of organisations are both boundless and unfathomable within the confines of a group of workers, representing the accumulated learning and experience of the membership of an organisation.

Within the culture of an organisation these manifestations and activities are open to interpretation by individual members. As a result all organisations not only have an overarching culture but also have sub cultures that influence the overarching culture. There are variations in influence of the sub-cultures within organisations that are dependent on the needs and characteristics of those sub-groups within the organisation, as well as their behaviours, attitudes and values. The difference between the influence of the organisational culture and the subcultures has been described by Brown [op cit] as that between its espoused culture and its culture in practice.

Much of the work towards developing our understanding of organisational culture has been undertaken in industrial and commercial settings. Although this has made an important contribution to the knowledge of organisational culture, the focus of this study is to consider organisational culture in an educational setting, particularly where HE programmes are delivered. As a result, the next chapter will focus on a critical analysis of the literature on organisational culture within these settings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

#### Introduction

Although the evidence collected from the literature in the previous chapter provides little specific mention of the organisational culture within HEIs, there is evidence of a growing interest in this area. This raises questions as to the extent to which organisational culture in colleges and universities is based on the same theoretical framework as that found in business and industry. It is arguable that universities and colleges, similarly to any other, are organisations with an identifiable individual culture brought about as a result of the collective perceptions of its membership. Further, similarly to other organisations these perceptions are also based on a range of complex thoughts and ideas relating to the surface manifestations of the organisation, e.g. its publicity materials, rituals, ceremonies and symbols, and its more opaque assumptions, beliefs, values and attitudes. As in industrial and commercial organisations these cultures can be expected to be particular to each setting and ever changing and developing over time.

From the evidence presented in the previous chapter, HEIs and FE colleges can also be expected to have identifiable sub-cultures set around day-to-day relationships between staff, which will influence how they interpret events, actions and values and the meaning of corporate activity. Such circumstances, Brown [op cit, p 32] argues can lead to “dramatic differences” between the espoused culture of a university and its culture in practice. The purpose of this chapter is to undertake a critical analysis of the relevant literature on our present knowledge of organisational culture in settings where HE is provided.

### **Organisational culture within HE settings**

Although it is the intention of this sub-section to critically analyse the literature relating to organisational culture in settings where HE is provided, an investigation indicates there is a paucity of recent literature from UK sources. This is particularly the case in HE in FE settings, where there is little literature on specific settings. As a result, this sub-section will focus on an analysis of the literature available from the small amount of research that has been conducted on organisational culture in other HE settings in the UK. However, it should be noted that this research has been conducted in universities, which have a different role as well as considerable organisational differences from those FE settings where HE programmes are presented.

Nevertheless, arguably there are some points of similarity between some of work undertaken in HEIs and those FE colleges where HE programmes are offered, e.g. their undergraduate teaching role, the complexity of their organisational structure and within the setting of the larger colleges the increasingly separate provision for both staff and students on HE programmes [THES 2009] Further, taking into account the literature analysed in the previous chapter, e.g. Burnes [op cit] Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] and Dawson [op cit], it is the case that the organisational culture in any institution presenting HE programmes can be expected to be particular to that organisation and based around the individual perceptions, attitudes and values of those who work there. Although the lack of literature on organisational culture of HE in FE settings provides little specific understanding of this, it is of some value at this point to consider the findings of the research obtained from the university sector.

While the literature on HE in FE considers the importance of developing an environment for HE, e.g. HEFCE 2003, evidence on the resulting organisational culture from the staff as well as the student body is slim. A brief analysis of strategical need by HEFCE [ibid] indicates what had been achieved was "largely symbolic" [p.16]. However, taking the model of organisational culture developed by Schein [op cit] into account, it can be argued such achievements are set largely within the surface

manifestation level of organisational culture. Indeed, HEFCE [ibid] describes what is currently being undertaken in terms of the physical and the observable, such as the introduction of college-based graduation ceremonies and the provision of work areas for students.

Although it is generally accepted that the structure and management of both FECs and HEIs has changed considerably in recent years and that the approaches to management of business and industry has not only been influential but also is transferable to organisations in this sector, there is some dissonance over the influence that this more business-management culture has had in both types of organisation. In the HE sector specifically there are those, e.g. Scott 1996, Frew 1996, Hanan and Silver op cit who argue the loose, decentralised form of the university described by Kerr [op cit] Ashby [op cit] and Bok [1986] no longer pertain. It is the view of Hanan and Silver [op cit] that the changes brought about by the influence of the new commercial realities of the twenty-first century, although resulting in certain superficial changes in structure and outlook, have had limited resonance in the culture of HEIs. Lueddeke [1997] for example, suggests affecting change in universities is difficult as vested interests, inertia, existing satisfaction levels and role ambiguity all play their part in constraining innovation. Similarly, Drummond et al [1997] describe innovators "as struggling to effect meaningful change" [p. 8] and as being marginalised within their

universities. Some examples of this are provided by Slowey [op cit] and Thorley [1995] who, for example, considers organising academics can be equated with 'herding cats'!

Others disagree with this analysis. Thorne and Cuthbert [1996], for example, argue the shift in the locus of control in higher education over the past twenty years from academics employed by the institution toward the wishes of clients and external influences (such as employers) has had an effect on the culture of all HEIs. Their analysis distinguishes four influences of the market: autonomous professional, managerial market, professional market and market bureaucracy influences. The level of this influence, they consider, is dependent on the nature of the institution, with the greatest influence being in HEIs that have adopted managerial market or professional market characteristics.

However, evidence Hannan and Sliver [op cit] indicates recent changes in HE have not been consistent across all of the settings and that all HEIs have been open to considerable change. Their evidence indicates this is related to the profoundly different institutional and cultural priorities that can be identified in the different settings from where their data was collected. Further, reasons for this situation are also identifiable in the wider literature on managing change in education. Fullan [op cit], for example, identifies the complexity of managing change in educational

settings its level of uncertainty; the lack of success of one-sided solutions; the need to connect change to external factors; and the importance of seeing everyone as an agent for change as key factors that must be taken into account.

Research on the culture of professional organisation, e.g. Hannan and Silver op cit, Clark 1981, Meek 1988, indicates HEIs, and universities in particular, continue to have a range of distinctive characteristics from their industrial and commercial counterparts. These are characteristics which in western society, through their history and traditions, symbols, language and titles as well as loyalties to its disciplines, can be traced in universities as far back as medieval times [Dill op cit]. For Clark [op cit] these traditions lead to a complexity in the culture of academia that is not as clearly present as in other organisations. For Meek [op cit] this complexity can be a source of cultural conflict, where rather than the norms and values leading to consensus, they aid discord. He points out:

"Just because group interaction within an organisation is based on norms and symbols it does not necessarily follow that consensus and cohesion, based on shared and internalised value systems are the result."

[Meek 1988, p. 461-2]

Such circumstances have led Peters [1987] to argue HEIs can be said to demonstrate a culture of chaos and to thrive in a culture of anarchy. Such comments do not imply that chaos theory [cf. Stacey 1990] is the main management strategy in HEIs, rather the term chaos, in this

context, can be better equated to actions and planning that are relatively haphazard and unplanned. Hannan and Silver [op cit] while not supporting this view, consider some university policies could be best described as merely a philosophical stance, rather than an implementation strategy.

All of these points add to the view that HEIs cannot be considered to have a corporate culture as might be found in other large employers in business and industry, nor do they necessarily have the charismatic leader of the type commonly described in examples from industry discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, some academic staff working in HEIs, where the predominant sub-culture is based on the social interaction between like-minded colleagues, would find such a concept, at the very least, strange [Henkell op cit].

In an attempt to provide an analytical framework for this notion Brown [op cit] has developed a two dimensional model of organisational culture based on what he describes as their levels of opacity and transparency. This analysis is set around a four quadrant box matrix, where cultural opacity is described as "the extent to which the meaning of things and events is unclear and requires considerable insight and shared experience to appreciate" [p. 58] while cultural transparency is described as:

“where things appear to be what they appear to be and where the meaning of things are clear” [op cit p. 58].

With the above point in mind, it is significant that he considers universities as sitting in the box describing a transparent and complex culture, while examples from business are depicted in terms of their level of opaqueness.

However, Bargh et al [1996] draw some comparisons between HEIs and business and industry, describing universities and colleges as complex institutions composed of different organisational strands that co-exist uneasily together. Becher and Trowler [2001] in concurring with this viewpoint draw on the description of English society by Evelyn Waugh and illustrating the point very forcefully, as:

“a complex of tribes, each with its chief and elders and witch doctors and braves, each with its own dialect and deity, each strongly xenophobic.”

[Taken from Becher and Trowler op cit, p 45]

This complexity is further illustrated in HEIs by the nature of their organisational structure. Although from the analysis undertaken in the preceding chapter HEIs are formal, hierarchical organisations, the literature indicates working relationships within them, and thus their organisational culture is more complex in practice and not necessarily similar to any found in business and industry. As an illustration of this view Hannan and Silver [op cit] describe a level of scepticism among

those who work in HEIs towards committees, policy makers and managers and supporters, describing them as places where national policy initiatives are greeted with widely different reactions and responses. Further, Halsey and Trow [1971] identify HEIs, as pluralistic organisations, where consultation and participation with the staff is the norm rather than the exception. Similarly, Furnham [1999] points out, while universities are hierarchically organised all who work there (the academic staff, students and non academic staff) are represented at all levels of its management. Also supporting this view Bok [1986] describes HEIs as large, decentralised organisations where there is little hierarchical authority over teaching and research.

In research based on Jung's psychological archetypes and the competing value framework, the work of Frew [op cit] also supports the view that HEIs are culturally very different from other types of organisations. Frew [op cit] argues there are four types of culture present in an HEI. These cultures he describes as clannishness (characterised by loyalty and traditional values); adhocracy (relating to levels of entrepreneurialism and innovation); hierarchy (adherence to rules and policies); and marketability (competitive production and goal accomplishment), all of which he considers will be dominant all will be present in an institution.

Taking the analysis by Frew [op cit], into account, and bearing in mind the view of Payne [op cit] it is perhaps not surprising Hannan and Silver [op cit] consider an organisation as diverse as a university or college cannot be regarded as having accumulated characteristics presenting a single culture. Rather, Hannan and Silver [op cit] argue two features to undermine this proposition are evident in HEIs. Firstly, staff display a range of perceptions about the culture of their own organisation and secondly, large institutions present several different sub-cultures, which may be in conflict with each other. However, Meek [1988] argues such conflict is obvious in all professional organisations stating:

“Just because group interactions within an organisation [are] based on norms and symbols it does not necessarily follow that consensus and cohesion based on shared and internalised value systems are the result”

[Meek, p. 461-462].

This comment not only emphasises the complexity of the culture of an organisation but also the importance of gaining some understanding of it.

Analyses by Clark [1963] and Palfreyman and Warner [1996] also depict certain tensions in the working culture between the component parts within HEIs. Clark [op cit] describes the relationship between academics being focused around the work of the department, arguing:

“It is around the disciplines that faculty sub-cultures increasingly form. As the work and points of view grow more specialised, men in different disciplines have fewer things in common in their background and their daily problems. They have less impulse to interact with one another and

less ability to do so... the disciplines exist as separate estates with distinctive sub-cultures."

[Taken from Becher and Trowler [op cit p. 45]

Palfreyman and Warner [1996] also identify tensions between the component groups working in HEIs, and therefore in the sub-cultures, particularly between academics and administrative staff. They argue, while academic staff acknowledge their support role for this work, their focus is on performance and human relationships, teaching and tutoring students, and research activities. Administrators regard their role as intrinsically different in practice from academic colleagues focusing strongly on the day-to-day management issues of a large institution. Such a division of interest, Palfreyman and Warner [op cit] argue, identify different perception of work-roles between staff, as well as different approaches to efficient management.

## **Summary**

Although the evidence indicates there is a more businesslike approach to managing HEIs at the beginning of the twenty first century than was formally the case, this evidence also indicates there remains some doubt as to the impact of this in individual settings. However, even though it is regarded by some, e.g. Luedekke op cit, that the 'loose-decentralised' form of management is on HEIs is difficult to change, others, e.g. Thorne

and Cuthbert *op cit* disagree with this analysis. Further, there is a continuing disagreement as to the relationship between the nature of organisational culture found in HEIs and that found in other large organisations. While some, e.g. Frew *op cit*, Clark *op cit* and Meek *op cit*, regard the organisational culture of HEIs as largely different and distinct from that found in business and industry, others, e.g. Bargh *et al op cit*, argue this relationship is much closer.

However, as is the case in research evidence collected from other large organisations, e.g. Ogbonna and Harris *op cit*, there are identifiable tensions between the different groups of staff working in HEIs, and particularly between the academic staff, with their focus on teaching and research, and the administrative staff, who are concerned with day-to-day management issues.

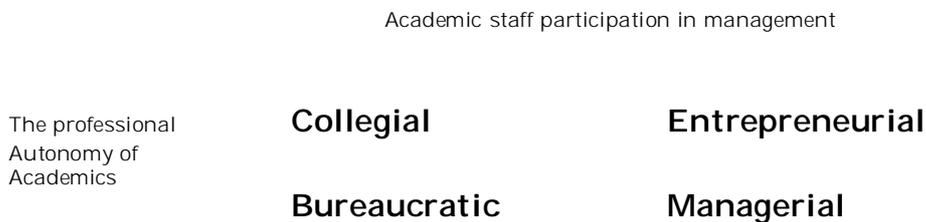
### **A theoretical framework**

From the points raised in the above sub-section a range of potentially different types of organisational cultures can be identified in the literature on HEIs. The literature draws some comparison between HEIs and business and industrial organisations, e.g. Bargh *et al* 1996, Becher and Trowler 2001, Hannan and Silver *op cit*, based on an analysis of management styles. However, these analyses are not entirely based on

the same criteria. While acknowledging the four types of culture in the analysis by Handy [op cit 1985] Hannan and Silver [op cit] also take into account the analysis of McNay [1995] who identifies four types of bureaucracy in HEIs; collegium, bureaucratic, corporate and entrepreneurial. However, McNay [op cit] considers these cultures in relation to forms of control on a twin axis of loose to tight policy definition and operational control. Mc Nay [ibid] regards the collegium style to be placed in the loose/loose control sector while he describes the corporation style to be placed the tight/tight control sector. Similarly to Frew [op cit] McNay [op cit] argues all of these styles co-exist in HEIs but with different balances within them and those found in business settings. What matters, he argues, is the relative strength of each dimension.

Bergquist [1992] also identifies four dominant cultures in HEIs, which he describes similarly to McNay [op cit]: collegial, managerial, negotiating and developmental. For Bergquist [op cit] the prevailing model and its strength in the sub-cultures found within individual HEIs, is determined by a complex chemistry of personal preference and prevailing institutional culture that are framed by external forces and influences. It is Bergquist's view that in HEIs, leaders and managers need to be able to recognise and identify the four cultures within their own institution and to be comfortable moving between each as the circumstances demand.

A different models of management of HEIs has been constructed by Furnham [1999, op cit]. Drawing particularly on the models provided by Handy [1993 op cit] and McNay [op cit] based on four distinct management orientations he produces the model illustrated in fig. 4 below.



**Fig. 4: A model of management in HEIs [based on models developed by McNay, 1995 and Furnham, 1999]**

Importantly, Furnham [1999, op cit, 2005] asserts universities are most likely to exhibit more than one typology, which is dependent upon the role of the employee. In his view, the 'best fit' for academics is the collegial model, combining high levels of professional autonomy with similarly high levels of participation in organisational management. This model, which is regarded as that traditionally practiced in the management of universities and colleges, is considered to have a number

of characteristics [Eustace, 1987]. Eustace [op cit] argues these characteristics include:

- A degree of equality present between members
- A form of democratic decision making
- Self validation
- The absence of non-scholars in the decision-making process
- Autonomy from outside society

In his view, it is the interplay between these characteristics that helps to form the character of each individual HEI.

Analyses by Trowler [1998] and Alvesson [1993] have also identified factors that influence the culture of academic institutions. Trowler [op cit] focussing on internal features, considers epistemological factors and patterns of educational ideologies to be important contributors, while Alvesson [op cit] indicates factors external to the institutions relating to the norms, values, recurrent practices and attitudes in academic society must also be taken into consideration.

While acknowledging the above points, Hannan and Silver [2000] argue the management structure of HEIs is changing and any contemporary discussion of institutional culture in HEIs needs to be treated with some caution. In their view, because of the unique relationship between management, staff and students in HEIs the notion of organisational culture to be found there is distinctive from that in other types of organisations.

However, Becher and Trowler [2001] disagree and make a direct comparison between organisational culture in HEIs and that found in business and industry. They argue that the way academics organise their professional lives in relation to the intellectual tasks and the narratives in which they are engaged as a result of their research focus and their loyalty essentially to their subject and others who work in their field of study are comparable to some aspect of the organisational culture to be found in business and industry. Further, Becher and Trowler [op cit] argue it is this comparability that lends coherence and relative permanence to the social practice, values and attitudes of academics as much as anything concerned with their institution. Clark [1987, p 147] supporting this point, particularly in a period of time when universities increasingly use fixed-term contracts for staff, argues HEIs are little more than 'confederate gatherings'.

Arguably, as a result of recent developments in communication technology these problems have become more complex. In the post-industrial environment of the twenty-first century academic disciplines have become global with the flow of opinion through the use of email as source of communication and the world-wide-web as a resource. In some situations inter-institutional co-operation is being formally developed. Wojtas [2008] describes one such example where universities in Scotland

are collaborating in the area of life sciences and where other developments are planned. In these circumstances academic culture has become increasingly globalised.

## **Summary**

A range of different models of organisational culture have been recognised in HEIs which, similarly to those found in business settings, are based on the style of management used in a particular setting [Hannan and Silver op cit]. Analyses of data on organisational cultures in HEIs [e.g. Frew op cit, McNay op cit, Bergquist op cit, Furnham op cit] indicates organisational culture in HEIs is set around four forms of bureaucracy, which is framed by both external and internal pressures and influences similar to those found in business and industrial settings.

Some, e.g. Furnham op cit, Eustace op cit, argue professional autonomy continues to play a dominant role in determining the organisational culture of HEIs, with an emphasis on democratic decision making and professional and individual autonomy. Others, e.g. Clark op cit, Trowler op cit, Becher and Trowler op cit, Anderson op cit, Tallentin [1995], while noting the increasing lack of tenure among academic staff observe the continuing importance of professional values and subject loyalty among

them. This is a factor which through the use of electronic communication has increasing implications across the academic world.

### **Research Data from HEIs**

The role of mixed economy colleges in presenting HE programmes is well established [Foster 2005, HEFCE 2003, 2009, Parry et al 2006] however this role has recently been given a higher government priority particularly at 'sub honours degree' level in order to meet the targets set in current policy, e.g. DfES 2003 op cit. Despite this there is little published research available on organisational culture within mixed economy colleges in the UK. As a result, this sub-section will focus on an analysis of the relatively small amount of primary research that is available [Costello 1993, Becher 1989, Ott 1989, Hannan and Silver op cit] from work undertaken on organisational culture in university settings throughout the UK. Again, however, there is a paucity of data to draw on and what research is available is both small-scale and open to methodological criticism, e.g. Handy op cit, Brown op cit, through their focus on a single method of collecting data.

A study by Costello [1993] as a member of the academic staff working in his own organisation, undertook a series of interviews with both headquarters staff at Walton Hall and the regional staff of the Open

University to measure its organisational culture. In a wider-ranging study across a number of institutions and over a longer period of time than that undertaken by Costello [op cit] Becher [op cit], in what he describes as a "detective investigation" [p. 229], collected data by means of a literature search and primary data derived from over two-hundred and twenty semi-structured interviews conducted over seven years in the nineteen-eighties. In this largely single-strategy approach to data collection Becher [op cit] questioned academic staff in a range of subject disciplines in both the UK and the USA. He used this approach to gauge both the organisational characteristics of individual departments as well as national idiosyncrasies.

Hannan and Silver [op cit] also considered the implications of organisational culture as part of their wider research on innovation in teaching and learning in HEIs. As with the study by Costello [op cit] Hannan and Silver focussed on staff perceptions of the institutional culture. This research was conducted in five universities in the UK where Hannan and Silver [op cit] selected two subject areas in each institution and staff volunteers were questioned about their perceptions of relevant institutional processes towards aiding change. The semi-structured interview schedule included such questions as 'What is it like to work here?' 'How do you get anything to change in this university?' and 'Does the department try to bring about changed in the way you teach?'

An analysis of these data provides evidence of the influence of the perceptions of course teams and departments on these sub-cultures. Some of the staff, for example, indicated their university had a clearly identifiable, over-arching, institutional culture. Costello [op cit] for example, describes the Open University as having:

“a strong over-arching sub-culture [where] all parts of the University are influenced in substantial ways.”

[Costello 1993, p. 23].

It is the view of Costello [op cit] that this over-arching culture can be related to a number of unique features of the Open University. These include its mission and philosophy and the innovative nature of its teaching style, as well as its role as the major distance-learning provider throughout the UK and parts of western Europe. These are in themselves unique aspects of a working life that academic staff sign-up for on appointment. Although there may be valid reasons why the Open University has its own distinct culture with staff based at Walton Hall, its regional offices and its operations division this split-site operation with a range of distinct cultures on each site is a common feature of many large organisations [Brown op cit, Schein op cit, Goffee and Jones [op cit]. This is also the case in data presented by Hannan and Silver [op cit] drawn from other HEIs.

The study by Hannan and Silver [op cit], similarly to that of Costello [op cit], indicates considerable evidence of universities, including those based on a single site, not only having diverse cultures within their structures but that these are also individually distinctive, thus making reliable generalisations difficult. This finding is also supported by research conducted by Ott [op cit] who also indicates employees found the culture in their particular HEI difficult to discuss either accurately or reliably. A sample of the findings drawn from the research by Hannan and Silver [op cit] might help to illustrate these points. While data received from both Middlesex and Salford University provided little agreement among those asked for a definition of culture, data received often referred to the rapidity of change and restructuring within the organisation. However, responses from staff at Nottingham University indicated the existence of a more over-arching staff culture, relating particularly to research activities. Further, Hannan and Silver [op cit] report staff commenting that the introduction of quality assurance practices and the political and economic dynamic have enforced change and eroded its settled culture.

At Glasgow University Hannan and Silver [op cit] found the staff identified a culture dominated by the nature of leadership and the role of the principal and the senior staff team. Data collected from staff working at the Open University indicated the over-arching culture described by

Costello [op cit] continues to exist, although the existence of diverse cultures within the institution itself was acknowledged by the senior academic staff. As a result, Hannan and Silver [op cit] conclude:

“Institutional cultures, statuses and priorities are profoundly different, depending on their histories, the ways in which they have responded to pressures and requirements in recent years [and] their place in the market.”

Hannan and Silver [2000 p. 144]

An analysis of the literature also indicates other factors come into play in the organisational culture of HEIs beyond those identified above.

Research by Becher and Trowler [op cit] claims the professional language and literature of a discipline helps to define its culture. Further, they argue the language and literature of an academic discipline plays a key role in establishing and maintaining cultural identity as well as being used to defend it against outsiders. Further, Geertz [1983, op cit] argues for staff to be admitted to membership of a particular area of academia involves the adoption of a cultural framework that defines a great part of one's life. For Becher and Trowler [op cit] this involves staff having not only a sufficient level of technical and intellectual proficiency but also displaying a proper measure of loyalty to one's collegial group and adherence to its norms and values. Gereholm [1985] describes this phenomenon in terms of:

“any person entering a new group with the ambition of becoming a fully fledged, competent member having to learn to comply with its

fundamental cultural rules [whose] .....failure to comply with these implicit rules will undoubtedly affect [their] ...standing within the group"

[Taken from Becher and Trowler [op cit, p. 4]

McDermott and Varienne [1995] describe this phenomenon in active terms, indicating organisational culture is not so much the product of sharing as a product of people hammering each other into shape with well constructed tools already available to them. Becher and Trowler [op cit, p. 50] describe the circumstances similarly stating, "We need to think of this process as hammering a world". This is a perspective also well supported by Potts [1997] who describes his introduction to academic life as finding a value system as a result of being challenged intellectually by a group of intellectually competent peers.

## **Summary**

This sub-section has outlined the findings from a small amount of research evidence collected from HEIs into their organisational culture. Despite the small scale nature of the work undertaken, it is clear that there are certain common factors among the HEIs. Some of these factors are common to the characteristics of organisational culture identifiable in business and industry. Importantly, a primary feature is the dominance of technical and intellectual proficiency within the culture of

the institutions where the data was collected. Although there is evidence of an overarching institutional culture in all of the HEIs, the evidence indicates this is broken down into subcultures largely by areas of academic discipline. Further, these subject and discipline areas cross the physical boundaries between institutions.

The research described above is also characterised by its small-scale nature. The work conducted by Hannan and Silver [op cit] formed only one part of a wider piece of research on innovation and change in universities. Further, it was also conducted on a one-dimensional approach, through the use of interviews, considered by some to be inappropriate for obtaining an accurate picture.

## **Conclusions**

The literature relating to organisational culture in HEIs provides evidence that the complexity found elsewhere in industrial and commercial settings as detailed in the previous chapter of this study is present, if not magnified within these settings, e.g. Bargh et al [op cit] and Hannan and Silver [op cit]. In HEIs there is evidence of the myths, symbols and rituals commonly present in other organisations. HEIs also display evidence of multiple hierarchies set around the different work-roles and management strategies adopted by groups of employees, e.g. lecturers, administrators

and support staff, which have identifiably different, even diverse cultures, e.g. Clark op cit, Palfreman and Warner op cit.

The extent to which the person orientated model described by Handy [1988 op cit] can be identified in HEIs remains questionable. The literature indicates a lack of consistency in the frame of organisational culture in HEIs. While Luedekka [op cit] and Drummond [op-cit] claim the organisational culture in HEIs does not change easily, others, e.g. Thorne and Cuthbert [op cit] consider it to be far more flexible and open to modification. Nevertheless, a range of models of management commonly used in HEIs can be identified in the literature, e.g. Mc Nay [op cit] Frew [op cit] Bergquist [op cit] and Furnham [op cit]. Rather than the composition of these models it is the balance between the factors within them that marks out some organisational cultures in HEIs as different from those present in business and industry, e.g. Furnham [op cit] Eustace [op cit] Trowler [op cit] and Alvesson [op cit]. Nevertheless, similarly to other commercial and business organisations this literature review indicates the organisational culture of an HEI is unique to that institution.

More unusually, compared with commercial and business organisations, the literature provides evidence that academic staff working in a particular institution are able to recognise and work within the cultural

norms of their university, e.g. Bergquist [op cit]. However, there is evidence that this loyalty extends to the culture of their own academic discipline and, more widely, to colleagues working in their field of study in other institutions, e.g. Becher and Trowler [op cit] as well as to their own professional societies and bodies.

However, at the beginning of this century, regardless of the institution where it is being presented, the role and purpose of HE is undergoing profound changes. Bearing in mind the links made between organisational change and adjustments in organisational culture established in the first two chapters of this study, it is important to critically analyse the developments being undertaken within the particular setting where primary data is to be collected. This critical analysis will be the focus of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

#### Introduction

Kogan [2000] describes a unifying factor in higher education is its interlocking culture of communities sustained by intellectual exchange. As the evidence presented in the previous chapter has indicated, at the beginning of the twenty-first century this community is arguably in a state of considerable turbulence with regard to its role in society. The evidence indicates the wide-ranging debate on the role of HE in the UK in a developing global economy is beginning to encourage major changes in both the thinking and the working practice of HEIs; changes which Slowey [1994, p 24] sums up as "dramatic" and "without parallel", which Trow [1994, p 11] describes as "a more profound reorientation than any other system in our industrial society". The effects of this, and its ensuing instability and insecurity, is described by Henkel [1994] as a struggle to hold on to its traditional values and practices.

With these points in mind this chapter will focus on a critical review of the literature relating to pressures from both recent government policy and economic changes, which have resulted in a new sense of purpose

and expectations of higher education. Particular importance will be given to pressures from industry and business and government policy that identified the importance of education within the global economy. Bearing in mind the outcomes of the findings from the earlier chapters in this study and particularly the close linkage between organisational change and changes in organisational culture, this chapter will consider the impact of the national developments in thinking about the purpose of HE, as well as changes which are currently being undertaken within the particular setting where the primary data for this study will be collected.

### **Changes in the role of HE**

The evidence indicates higher education flourishes as never before across the world, desired by a growing and diverse constituency. A UNESCO Report [1998] estimates there is a world-wide population of students of eighty-two million, split equally between the developed and the developing world. This pattern is reflected in student numbers within the UK. The percentage of the population attending higher education in the UK has considerably increased during the last eighty years. In 1945 the number of school leavers entering higher education stood at less than three percent of the age group [Kogan and Hanney 2000] the current figure is approaching forty-three percent of school leavers [HEFCE 2003b]. Forecasts by the present UK government indicate the need for an

increase of some two hundred thousand new places in higher education over the next ten years, within a government target that some fifty-percent of the population aged between eighteen and thirty should be enrolled on HE courses by 2010.

As a result, of these changes in national policy the role of the tertiary, post-compulsory sector, of education wherever courses at this level are taught in the UK [from HEIs to FE colleges] has undertaken rapid change and development over the last half century, e.g. Robbins 1963, Dearing 1997. Indeed, the nature of change in this sector has been described as “more profound than any other system in industrial societies” [Trow 1994, p 11]. These changes have been influenced, not only by the ebbs and flows from within the individual organisation, but also national trends towards changing the role and purpose of HE. During the later years of the twentieth century there has been a shift towards a more neo-liberal view of both higher and further education in the UK, leading to a greater influence of marketisation theory, a focus on developing skills and the increased influence of business management strategies in the management of universities and colleges to reflect the overriding interests of the world of work in an unambiguous way [Slowey 1995, Kogan and Hannay op cit, Henkel 2000, DfES 2003b, Leitch [2006].

Consequent to the increased influence of marketisation and a greater emphasis on financial efficiency, post-compulsory education has been increasingly encouraged to adopt the management characteristics of its industrial and commercial counterparts to include a greater focus on quality control, business efficiency, accountability, entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, effective decision making and strategical planning. This has resulted in a growing emphasis on public policy, quality control mechanisms and public accountability through performance indicators in post-compulsory education. This trend has been accompanied by a greater emphasis on the vocationalisation and practical relevance of courses as well as a wider massification of access. As a result, from the end of the last century a debate within the wider society in the UK about the function of higher education has increased [e.g. Dearing op cit, Labour Party 2001, Scott 1995, Kogan and Hannay 2000, Briggs 2003, DfES 2003]. In these respects HEIs are increasingly under pressure to accommodate change, with all of the consequent impact on the staff who work there and consequently their organisational cultures.

It is argued [e.g. Scott op cit, Scaife op cit] that the nature of the relationship between the post-compulsory education and the state is rapidly changing. Both Scott [op cit] and Henkell [op cit] assert universities in the contemporary world, where the demarcation between public and private interest has become increasingly blurred, express a

plurality of interests rather than the single national interest. Esland [1996] sees this changing relationship as having two different but related objectives. Firstly, he notes an attempt to meet the demands of employers for a more vocationally relevant curriculum to prepare young people for the increasingly flexible workforce. Secondly, he identifies the ambitions of the political 'New Right' to destroy the liberal democratic basis of education in order to arrest its potential for undermining the free-market economy.

The relationship between HEIs and the government, described by Henkel [op cit, p.29] as "a bargain between elites based on mutual trust" has increasingly dwindled. The reasons for this are complex. Scott [1995], in a wide ranging discussion of the issues, argues that among the range of factors that must be taken into account include the role of the university within the post-industrial and post-welfare state, with its increased focus on vocationalism and applied knowledge within the changing economic focus on free market economics within an increasingly global economy [Scott op cit, Kogan and Hanney op cit, Henkell op cit, Archer et al 2003, Kothari et al [2007] Barbossa et al [2007] Su Choo et al [2007]. These factors also contribute to the discussions on giving greater accessibility to HE for more learners particularly among the so called 'non-traditional learners' [e.g. Labour Party op cit].

However as pointed out earlier, there is an increasingly greater emphasis on HE being offered in FECs. Although as it has been pointed out [e.g. Parry op cit, Huddleston and Unwin 1997] FECs have provided a certain amount of 'advanced work', i.e. beyond A level, this has increased in recent years with colleges being encouraged by successive governments to offer both foundation and full honours degree programmes. Indeed Parry [in THE op cit] indicates there are some 180,000 students on programmes presented by FE colleges, of whom some 87,500 are working towards foundation degrees. It is reported [THE ibid] that some ten percent of the undergraduate population in England is receiving their education in FECs.

Some forty-five percent of these undergraduates are located within colleges who form the Mixed Economy Group of colleges [MEGs] [Parry op cit, THE op cit]. The membership of this MEG group is formed by the twenty-five largest mixed economy colleges. Membership of this group is restricted to colleges with a number of common characteristics including over five hundred full-time equivalent HE students [FTEs] enrolled, direct funding by the Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE] or through indirect funding from a single or multiple HE partner[s], provision funded through a HEFCE recognised consortium and FECs with a mixture of direct or indirect funding. The MEG colleges account for about half of the students receiving HE in an FE setting.

An increasing number of MEG colleges are reported as having their own dedicated 'University Centres', where HE programmes are taught and where students undertaking this level of work have work and social space [THE op cit]. These separate developments have led to some describing the student experience as "a different kind of higher education" [THE 2009, p. 38]. If this is the case for students arguably it also must also be the case for the staff working in MEG settings, particularly among staff who teach only on HE programmes. This is an important consideration for the focus of the primary research to be conducted in this project, as not only will the setting where this is to be undertaken have its own individual organisational culture, but also the setting has close links with the delivery and practice of FE. As a result, this contextualises the provision as different from many HEIs in the UK (particularly universities) where provision is separate.

Developments within HEIs, and universities in particular, to meet the changing economic and social needs of the UK was noted as long ago as the mid nineteen-nineties [e.g. Tann 1995] who argued the university decision-making process had been streamlined as a result of increasingly 'top down' resource-driven decisions which were based on perceived demands and evaluated by academic audit. Further, she argued this development has led to increased tensions between the collegial values

traditionally held by staff and the perceived mission of the HEI in which they work.

As a result of these developments, as well as the consequent changing attitudes of staff, changes in the professional relationships between those who work in these settings can also be identified, [e.g. Henkel op cit, Kogan et al 2000, Walker et al 2004]. The concentration of effectiveness and efficiency has meant that the small-scale intimacy of the academic community, and the professor described by Handy [1993] as the professional who would prefer to operate in a minimalist organisational structure, as well as the familial and genial relationships described by staff some years ago [e.g. Larkin 1983] and commonly found in setting the tone for stories based on university life [e.g. C. P. Snow, Ray Bradbury and Kingsley Amis] is increasingly under threat. In this sense it is not only the role and purpose of HE throughout the UK which has changed but also the social culture of all those places where this work is undertaken. The description provided by Handy [op cit, p 191] of someone who:

“does what he has to do, teaches what he must in order to retain his position in that organisation but (essentially) regards the organisation as a base on which he can build his own career, carry out his own interests all of which may indirectly add interest to the organisation”

has largely disappeared.

For Henkell [op cit] change in the culture in academia is related to changes in identity. In her view the changes that are taking place in HEIs have helped shift their identity in three ways. These can be related to subject disciplines and the primacy of knowledge, e.g. Geertz 1983, Clark 1983, Valimaa 1995; the juxtaposition of the relationship between the institution as a whole and its individual departments; and the fragmentation and weak linkage of its professionalism compared with other organisation [e.g. Handy [op cit] Kogan et al 1994, Clark 1993 op cit 1997.]

Henkell [op cit] argues change in these factors must affect the working culture within HEIs. The history of investigating organisational culture in universities and colleges emphasises their traditions, professional trust and collegial structure rather than the business-like approach of commodification, competition and the development of a quasi-market in the sector [Kerr 1964, Ashby op cit, Marginson 1997]. Kerr [op cit] describes the university as a place where historically change is made only as a result of irresistible outside pressure. Ashby [op cit] makes the same point, arguing this is perhaps hardly surprising as one of the university's most important functions is the transmission of cultural inheritance. However, current thinking on the function of HE focuses more on the promotion of flexibility, short term market trends and relevance [Olsen et al 2004].

## Summary

This sub-section has identified and briefly discussed a number of factors that have impacted on the contemporary role of post-compulsory, particularly higher education in the UK. These factors focus largely on the need to raise the level of skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the country to develop a strong economy to compete successfully in the global economy and recent government policies to further enlarge the number of students undertaking qualifications to graduate level as well, as the number of places where undergraduate provision can be offered. It is argued by governments that this strategy will help to recruit student from 'non-traditional' social backgrounds. As a result, the role of FECs in presenting HE programmes has developed, as has their importance for recruiting and teaching undergraduate students within the HE sector. These issues will be considered in detail later in the chapter, particularly in relation to the setting where the primary research is to be conducted. However, the next sub-section of this chapter will focus particularly on a critical review of the recent developments of HE provision in the UK.

## **A new sense of purpose**

Throughout the last half-century the number of universities and colleges offering HE programmes has also continued to expand, as has the range and type of degree that a much enlarged number of students can study. This expansion is currently led by both governments and employers who wish to ensure the population has the maximum opportunity to develop their skills and abilities to contribute to the national economy in an increasingly globalised economy [DfEs 2003, 2004 op cit]. Similarly, recent government policy has increasingly encouraged HEIs and colleges of FE to become more versatile in providing services and consultancy to develop economy in their local region [HEFCE 2003 op cit]. Such developments have led to questions as to what HE may mean in the current century as well as how it should be supported. The Higher Education Academy [HEA] has recently launched an HE in FE project that seeks to support such developments in order to develop the culture of higher education in colleges and to enhance the experiences of students studying there [HEFCE 2009 op cit, Wheatherald and Moseley 2003, Jones 2006].

The White Paper, *'Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'* [1991] as well as the recommendations of the Delors Report [OECD 1996] had a profound influence on the overarching thinking about the purpose of HE

towards providing young people, with not only the appropriate qualifications but also, the knowledge and skills they will need for their future employment to meet the challenge from overseas competitors in world markets. Despite criticism raised by those such as Wolfe [2002] this is a theme that has been increasingly pursued by government education policy in the UK throughout the nineteen-nineties and into the twenty-first century. As a result of these developments, and the development of closer links between HE providers and industry, a greater opportunity for students to undertake HE programmes in a growing range of settings beyond the traditional academic university is beginning to emerge [e.g. HEFCE 2009, Parry op cit]. Such developments have also resulted in rearrangements in the structures and processes within all of these settings to accommodate changes in the student population.

Such developments are set not only within the perceived economic needs of the UK but also social policies relating to social inclusion and equal opportunities. With this in mind, the DfEs [DfEs 2001] outlined the policy towards helping to build a competitive economy and inclusive society as:

- Creating opportunities for everyone to develop their learning
- Releasing potential in people to make the most of themselves
- Achieving excellence in standards of education and levels of skill

Two of their objectives towards attaining these aims were:

- Enabling all people to develop and equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work and
- Encouraging and enabling adults to learn, to improve their skills and enrich their lives.

These objectives were initially set within a five-year strategy detailed by the Labour Government [2001] to fulfil the objectives of a learning society discussed by both The Kennedy Report [1997], The Dearing Report on Higher Education [1997] and endorsed by Foster [op cit].

These objectives are planned to bring tertiary education and employers closer in implementing workforce development, as well as providing a clearer direction within an overall plan for learning and skills development, e.g. Dearing op cit, HEFCE 2000, QAA 2004. Such developments can only strongly encourage organisational change in HEIs to meet these demands.

These developments also raise fundamental issues about institutional identity and the organisational culture of HEIs [Coffield and Williamson 1997, Bathmaker 2006, Bathmaker and Burns 2007]. Coffield and Williamson [op cit], for example, identify changes in organisational culture as a result of HEIs generating new meanings and understanding across a wider audience. For Barnett [2000] this cultural change provides the HEI with a new habitus in society. He regards the contemporary university as a symbol of status and energy, comparing it

with the position of the cathedral in medieval times and the Victorian railway station. Symes [2000] also concludes the culture of HEIs has shifted as a result of the changing view of knowledge in society, juxtaposing the traditional position expressed by those such as Plato and Aristotle of the accumulation of knowledge for its own sake with the contemporary view of knowledge for what it does and its economic potential. In his view, such changes have led knowledge in post compulsory education and training to be seen as more instrumental, with an emphasis on its practical use, value and application.

As indicated earlier, such developments have led to HEIs being seen increasingly in business terms with performance management strategies and economic targets and the need for it to pay its way in the 'market place', E.g. Power 1997, Marginson op cit, Olsen et al op cit. As a result, it is argued, the language of performance targets increasingly influences the culture of HEIs, where activities are now open to verification and accountability as part of the 'age of audit'. Power [op cit] for example views contemporary policy in HE to be more focused on the idea 'the market is always right', ignoring the extent to which dominant players have the power to determine what counts as satisfactory performance. Further, he argues the dominant players are now the national economy and developments in technology.

Developing this point Barnett [2000] argues the traditional functions of the university (research, teaching and constancy) have been overtaken by economic potential (what he describes as its 'performativity' as a company) and the impact its research can make in the wider world.

Although in his view, there is no general definition of performativity and it must be worked out for each field of study, he relates the concept to forms of power: the power of knowledge and the power of the legitimacy of knowledge and impact. The concern for the economic potential of knowledge has led Symes [1999] to argue HEIs have become increasingly 'vocationalised', offering more occupationally specific courses than ever before and where faculties and fields of knowledge are emerging that were formally outside the scope of higher education. Boud [1998] writes similarly of the widening of the reach of the HEI into more occupational areas, describing a situation where 'work is the curriculum' and where students are permitted, even encouraged to, incorporate their working knowledge into a degree programme.

The result of this development, it has been pointed out, e.g. Newman, in Kerr, 1976, is that HEIs have progressively given high marks to knowledge that can be measured rather than for knowledge as its own end. Consequently, it has been argued, the value of knowledge is increasingly judged not on its power to describe the world but through its use and value, e.g. Barnett op cit, Lyotard, 1984. All of the factors

identified above have impacted not only on the role of the HEI but also on its organisational culture, affecting the way they are managed and operate.

This evidence indicates that partially as a result of government policy to widen access to HE its shape is increasingly pluralist, with a dichotomy of different types of institutions offering programmes of study at this level [West 2006]. Further, Scott [1995, p.44-49] identified a myriad of sub-sectors in the system of colleges receiving funding from the Higher Education Funding Council [HEFCE] from Oxford and Cambridge at one end of a continuum, to the seventy-six 'mixed economy colleges' [FE colleges presenting both FE and HE programmes] at the other.

Since the demise of the Council for National Academic Awards [CNAA] in the early nineteen-nineties, non-degree awarding institutions have had to have their courses validated by an awarding body such as a university. All arrangements made between degree awarding bodies and other institutions are currently subject to approval by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education [QAA]. In recent years the HE work undertaken in mixed economy colleges has become increasingly dynamic and diverse to include Higher National Diplomas [HNDs] and Foundation Degrees tailored to meet the needs of students in the current economy [DfES 2003] as well as full undergraduate honours programmes [Parry et al 2006, West op cit].

The range of HE programmes offered in mixed economy colleges has developed over time during the past thirty years. Initially many colleges franchised the first year or preliminary two years of degree programmes, with the final 'honours' level being presented at the partner university. Currently, figures [QAA 2007] indicate nearly ninety-five thousand students on HE courses are studying on some four thousand eight-hundred degree programmes in two hundred and sixty mixed economy colleges. The majority of these students [41%] are undertaking HND/Cs, with nearly thirty percent on the newer Foundation Degree programmes.

Because of their local accessibility, their supportive and flexible delivery and contact with local schools and employers, mixed economy colleges have been increasingly identified by recent governments as playing an important role as providers of HE. Further, this group of colleges has been seen as playing a vital role towards encouraging an increasing number of people, particularly 'non-traditional learners' at this level, to undertake degree work, e.g. HEFCE 2003, Foster 2005, DfEs 2006. This has led to them being regarded as vital in helping to achieve the government target for the participation of students on degree programmes by 2010 outlined above.

## Summary

This sub-section has critically considered recent development of HE provision in the UK. These developments, based on the perceived educational needs to support the national economy within the global economy (cf. Govt White Paper 1991 op cit, Delores Report op cit, HEFCE 2003 op cit) has resulted in major developments in HE provision throughout the UK, including an increasing number of settings where HE is taught [HEFCE 2009 op cit]; an increased number of students within the sector [Dearing op cit, The Labour Party op cit, HEFCE 2003 op cit]; and a larger amount and types of degree courses available [Dearing op cit].

It is arguable that each of these developments has influenced not only the purpose of higher education but also has impacted on its contemporary position of HEIs in society, e.g. Coffield and Williamson op cit, Bathmaker and Burns op cit. These developments have also seen a greater focus on vocational degrees and the increased instrumental role of knowledge [e.g. Barnett op cit, Symes op cit].

The evidence presented in earlier chapters in this study, e.g. Burnes [op cit] Dawson [op cit] Brown [op cit] Parry [op cit] HEFCE [2009 op cit] indicates these developments must also have impacted on the individual

working culture of every HEI in the UK, regardless if it is a university or a college of FE with HE provision. Consequently, the next sub-section of this chapter will focus on the strategical planning to meet these developments in the mixed economy college setting where the primary research will be conducted.

### **Innovation and development in the setting**

As has been detailed above, considerable change has occurred in the provision of HE throughout the UK, which had implications in all of the settings where it is offered. This section will focus on recent innovations in provision in the setting where the primary study was conducted.

Arguably, circumstances relating to change within the setting are compounded not only by the internal 'ebbs and flows' of human relationships but also substantially by the national trends in HE provision through which it is attempting to redefine its role within the local economy. There are two key objectives of the college plan [D. Education City Definitive Strategic Plan, 2003] that have recently impacted on developing provision: supporting the upskilling and development of the human capital locally in order to improve the economic and social conditions in the immediate region and the impact of this on the work undertaken by the various Schools within the setting to expand and progress their HE programmes.

The college has a history stretching back over the past fifty years, although the present establishment was formed relatively recently from a range of separate colleges providing both further and higher education, including an FE college, a college of art and two teacher training colleges. These formerly independent colleges were amalgamated into the D. Metropolitan Institute of Further and Higher Education in 1987. After incorporation in 1993 its name was shortened to D. College. Since 1993 D. College has been the major provider of further and higher education within the metropolitan borough. An increasing number of HE courses at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels are provided by its five Schools: Performing Arts, Art and Design, Engineering and Health, Education Social and Advanced Studies and The Business School.

### **The local environment**

In terms of its geographic size, the college is situated in the largest borough in England. Since the time of the first industrial revolution coal mining, railway construction as well as a range of other engineering industries has shaped its economy and that of its surrounding area. Particularly since the decline of the coal mining industry at the end of the twentieth century the local economy has faced a number of serious difficulties. Since that time unemployment has been consistently above the national and regional averages and is particularly acute in the former

mining areas. Figures<sup>1</sup> for the early months of 2003 indicate that in fourteen of the borough's twenty-one wards unemployment is above the national average with the figure for the central area of the borough standing at nearly eight percent.

Figures from the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicate the borough is one of the most deprived local authorities in England. Data indicates eleven of the twenty-one wards, which cover fifty-three percent of the population, are among the worst ten percent nationally, while seventeen wards [covering almost eighty percent of the population are among the worst thirty percent.] Further, social deprivation is also evident within parts of the borough. Figures from the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicate a high local crime rate, poor overall health inequality as well as a large proportion of local housing stock not meeting national decency standards. Entry to higher education is also generally low in the borough with only some fourteen percent of school leavers moving into tertiary education [University Centre D. University Challenge Bid 2009].

The DEC Strategic Plan [2003] indicates the degree of work that needs to be undertaken in order to boost the educational attainment of the local population. Statistics taken from national SATs, GCSE and A level results consistently indicate, despite many achievements over the past

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<sup>1</sup> Details taken from D. Education City Strategic Plan [2003]

few years, the young people of the borough continue to under-perform in all areas of compulsory education. The average attainment of five A-C grades at GCSE level is about forty percent locally, compared with forty-nine percent nationally. Statistics from post-sixteen education provide a similar picture against all the key indicators for participation and attainment. The level of qualifications on the working population [NVQ level 3 and above] is also well below the national average. Participation in post-school educational activities and attainment in lifelong learning and workforce development is similarly well below the national average. With the current emphasis by government on linking educational success and employment opportunities in mind, these statistics suggest that two important priorities need to be addressed to aid the development of social and economic capital in the borough. Firstly, there is a need to increase the numbers of students entering higher education towards the national benchmark figure. Secondly, as part of developing the first priority, there is a need to raise the level of educational aspiration among the local population.

Since the reduction of employment opportunities in mining and railways this legacy has led to low economic growth, the development of low 'value added' companies, a lack of local entrepreneurialism and an employment profile skewed towards the public sector. Figures indicating local employment trends indicate this last point clearly where three among the

top five employers in the borough are the local authority, the local NHS and four prisons sites. Although figures indicate the borough has increasing employment opportunities the jobs available are often semi-skilled or unskilled and many of them are also part-time, giving little opportunity to decrease the local levels of deprivation. Consequently, along with its local neighbours, the county was defined as one of the poorest regions in the European Union and designated for Objective One funding from 2000.

As a result, various bodies with responsibility for developing education and training in the post compulsory sector were drawn together to consider its future. This group produced a post-sixteen education and training action plan with the aim of producing a unified system of post-compulsory education within the community to meet the needs of the young people of the borough and to raise their levels of achievement. It was from these aims that the D. Education City [DEC] project was born.

DEC focused the thinking on approaches to developing the education and training of local adults and school leavers at all levels in order to up skill the local workforce, regenerate the local economy and to attract new industries and commercial activities. The recent approval of the development of a new intercontinental airport within the borough boundaries, the development of a new rail/bus transport exchange, the

Waterfront redevelopment project, and the expansion of business opportunities along the local motorway corridors are all indicators of the increasing employment opportunities in the area for well qualified and skilled staff.

This DEC initiative, described as “without doubt the most significant educational transformation project in the UK” [DEC Strategic Plan, p. 4] will affect the educational provision for all young people in the borough over the age of fourteen. In line with the government ambitions for education and training throughout the UK the purpose of the DEC project is seen as “a step change in how people perceive learning [to] stimulate their desire and ability to participate and achieve” [op cit, p. 4].

DEC has been developed as a partnership between various agencies and bodies with responsibility for education and training in the area including the D. Learning Partnership [DLP] The D. Chamber, the local council, the Borough Directory, representatives of the LEA and members of D College. These developments, which are set out in the DEC strategic plan [op cit] have impacted on the organisation and provision of education and training in the area as well as those who deliver it.

The DEC Strategic Plan is set within the terms laid out by current government policy on both further and higher education, E.g. DfES 2002,

LSC 2001, Leitch op cit, Foster op cit, HEFCE op cit. *The D. Education City Definitive Strategic Plan [2003]* sets the planned development of education and training in the borough in terms of government policy to improve the economic and social conditions through raising educational standards, set out in the Government White Paper '*The Future of Higher Education*' [2003 op cit].

This policy is set out as a five-fold vision, within the government's intentions of developing the lifelong learning potential, in order to further the contribution of all the population to the future success of the nation [Dearing 1997, op cit]. Such an approach is strongly influenced by the notion of the learning society for economic and social renewal, outlined in the Delors Report [1996] which seeks to encourage learners throughout the European Community [EC] to continue to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their lives.

The ambitions of the DEC project focuses on not only higher, further and adult education provision but also on a network of secondary schools linking training and education to business, commerce and the local community. DEC has also recently agreed to guarantee a university place for all students within the borough who wish to access this.

As indicated above one of the characteristics of the local area is the large number of underachieving school leavers and adult learners disaffected

by more traditional methods of learning. This has resulted in its interest in the generation of different approaches to delivering and transmitting the curriculum through the innovative use of ICT, interactive learning packages as well as distance and blended learning strategies in an attempt to maximise the opportunities for all potential learners in the borough provision for all learners through different modes of participation. These strategies include both full and part-time study as well as work-based and flexible provision. Local businesses are also supported in developing their own courses and programmes bespoke to their individual needs. DEC has agreed with HEFCE to set objectives for the period until 2010 to extend participation on education and training within the national targets set for that period. The targets include raising participation in higher education in line with the current national rates.

## **Summary**

The strategical planning behind the DEC programme [DEC op cit] sets out within the remit of current government policy, e.g. DfE [1991 op cit] OECD [op cit] Dearing [op cit] DfEs [2003, 2004 op cit], to raise the level of achievement and skill in post compulsory education and training in the local area. This, the documentation indicates, will have an impact on provision of courses at the college at all levels. However, the literature relating to the impact of change on organisational culture, e.g. Burnes op

cit, Dawson op cit Brown op cit, Schein op cit, indicates such a development will not only have an impact on the organisation and management of the college but also on the working practices of all the staff employed there, resulting in changes in its organisational culture.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has considered some of the changing socio-economic factors that have impacted on recent developments in higher education including the need to widen the participation of greater number of students from a range of social classes, e.g. Dearing [op cit] and developments in degree programmes, e.g. The Labour Party [op cit] and HEFCE [op cit], to meet the demands of the increasingly global economy as well as providing a greater opportunity for wider social participation at this level of study. The evidence indicates these developments, along with the continuing discourse on the future of HE provision in the UK, has inevitably impacted, not only on the working life and practices in HEIs throughout the UK, but also on the attitudes and expectations of both individual staff and working groups.

In order to meet the changing demands of government policy, e.g. LSC [op cit] Leitch [op cit] Foster [op cit] and HEFCE [op cit], planned developments at D. College have been set out within the five fold vision of lifelong learning potential described by Dearing [op cit] in the DEC

Strategic Plan [op cit]. In order to encourage participation in post compulsory education, raise the aspirations and up-skill the local population and develop the local economy in a location where the level of qualifications among the working population is below the national average D. College plans to increase participation of the local population in HE through a range of new initiatives; the development of new HE programmes; and by the development of new initiatives to present these programmes. By doing this and creating partnerships between various local agencies and bodies with responsibility for education and training in the area, D. College intends to demonstrate the links between educational attainment, employment opportunities and economic regeneration.

Arguably the changes set out at D. College [DEC Strategic Plan op cit] will have an impact not only on the local economy but also, taking into account the evidence presented in this literature review, on the organisational culture of the setting where this research is to be conducted. As a result, the purpose of the next chapter is to provide critical consideration as to how best to measure the impact of the changes set out in the DEC Strategic Plan on staff that present HE programmes within this setting.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The literature review conducted in the previous chapters of this study has noted that the nature of organisational culture is complex, even ambiguous, at times tacit and in some respects deeply embedded in the understanding of the individual. Morgan [1986, p 121] demonstrates this complexity when he describes organisations as 'mini-societies' which "have their individual and distinctive patterns of culture [that] can exert a decisive influence on its overall ability to deal with the challenges that it faces." It is these patterns of culture that make it difficult to collect appropriate and relevant data to inform research.

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider the extent to which the culture of any organisation is measurable as well as the most appropriate approach for doing so. This task will be undertaken in two parts. Firstly, a consideration of the available investigative frameworks for this activity will be undertaken. Bearing in mind the uniqueness of the culture of an organisation, particular attention will be given to the case study approach to data collection. With the issues of reliability and validity as a focus, this chapter will consider both the representativeness

and consistency of the case study approach in measuring organisational culture. Consideration will also be given in this sub section to the wider ethical issues the case study approach raises. Secondly, this chapter will consider which of the published instruments may best serve the purpose of measuring the staff's perceptions of the organisational culture in the setting where primary data are to be collected.

### **A Framework for Investigating Organisational Culture**

The literature search undertaken in Chapter One found no clear-cut definition of organisational culture, rather it found a series of commonly acceptable if highly complex themes relating to both deeply rooted assumptions and practical applications associated on the one hand with organisational values, beliefs, meanings and expectations and on the other to ways of thinking and doing things that all members need to know and understand in order to be accepted, e.g. Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] Dawson [op cit] and Furnham [op cit].

This complexity makes the collection of data on organisational culture challenging. Even a cursory glance at the literature on collecting such data indicates this task is fraught with difficulties and highly problematic. Goffee [1997] for example, considers organisational culture not to be directly accessible, while a cautionary warning is provided by

Uttal [1983, p 69] who considers "anybody who tries to unearth an organisation's culture ...is in for a rough time". Some, e.g. Martin et al [1985] and Siehl and Martin [1990], question the worth of data that is collected. Some also raise doubts over the methods used to collect data, e.g. Alvesson and Berg [1992].

Any analysis of an organisation's culture must be built within an investigative framework set around emerging data. Any such framework must be able to explore closely the characteristics of an organisation as well as the perceptions of those who work there. As identified earlier, every individual place of work has its own unique culture based on the values of its workforce, particularly its senior management team that has both helped and continues to build and direct the organisation, e.g. Schein [1992] Brown [1995]. Consequently, the question as to how best to gauge these complexities has to be addressed.

A number of approaches have been developed to enable organisational culture to be gauged. Robbins [op cit] in arguing organisational culture has a number of different roles through the provision of appropriate standards for what employees should say and do, describes seven areas that might provide a useful framework for any research. These include innovation and risk taking; attention to detail; a focus on outcomes; people and team orientation as well as interpersonal aggressiveness and

organisational stability. He argues such characteristics exist in any organisation on a scale from high to low. In the view of Robbins [op cit] the culture of an organisation can be profiled through an assessment of the degree to which these characteristics can be identified.

Cole [2004] presents a similar model that considers both internal and external factors that can contribute to the culture of an organisation. He includes categories, some of which are as complex as those in the list drawn up by Robbins [op cit], including organisational policy; organisational goals; the external environment; organisations rules and procedures; channels of communication; the decision making process; the use of technology; the skills of employees; the attitudes of employees; and the structure of the organisation by which the assessment of organisational culture can be undertaken.

The work of Waterman and Peters [op cit] focuses on the relationship between organisational culture and performance, through the development of an eight point analytical framework, relating to largely operational and management issues including the predisposition for action in the organisation; its closeness to the customer; the level of autonomy and entrepreneurship; the potential level of productivity; the relationship between its managers and the rest of the operation; its willingness to open operations in unrelated businesses; the simplicity of

the management structure; and the relationship between the tightness of the organisation and a looser management style.

A number of approaches towards considering the personal values and attitudes embedded in an organisation's culture have also been developed in recent years. These approaches reflect the discussion considered earlier in this research on the nature of organisational culture and what is to be measured as well as how this should be undertaken. Furnham [op cit] argues what might be measured is dependent on whether subjective beliefs, attitudes and expectations should be the focus of the assessment or if the focus should centre on more observable phenomena such as the rites, rituals and behavioural norms within an organisation. Those who view organisational culture as idiosyncratic and unique take this first perspective through probing and interview, while the second sets out to compare and contrast the culture of different organisations through the use of survey technique and psychometrics. It is hardly surprising this remains a hotly debated issue.

The analysis by those such as Xenikou and Furnham [op cit] Handy [op cit] and Brown [op cit] reflect the emphasis on personal and inter-personal attributes. The analysis undertaken by Xenikou and Furnham [op cit] is set around a twelve point outline relating to an analysis of perceived levels of helpfulness, affiliativeness, approval, conformity,

dependency, avoidance, power, opposition, competitiveness, competence, achievement and self-actualisation. Brown [op cit] and Handy [1985, op cit] also describe a diagnostic framework based on twelve orientations which is based on an individual reaction to a range of factors including levels of creativity and innovation; power and conflict; loyalty; individuality; co-operation; trust and conflict; the quality of information and communication within the organisation; the interpretation of the company rules; attitudes to personal learning; the level of understanding of future planning; and the attitude of staff to their work. As with the frameworks described by Robbins [op cit] Cole [op cit] and Waterman and Peters [op cit] many of these features are also difficult to assess accurately.

There is a range of available instruments to collect data on organisational culture. These include self-report measures, e.g. Allen and Dyer [1980] Glaser [1983] Cooke and Laffery [1989] Enz [1986] and O'Reilly et al [1988]. Others have been developed for researchers to use, e.g. Harrison [1972] Handy [1985] Donaldson and Neale [op cit] Jenner [op cit] Sinclair [1991] Seymour [1992] Kabonoff [1993] Whitaker [1993] Xenikou and Furnham [1996] Robbins [1997] and Brown [op cit]. A third category of instruments has been developed to draw comparisons between companies for both national studies, e.g. Peters and Waterman [1982] and international studies, e.g. Ouchi [1981] and Hodgetts [1991].

These instruments are generally based on a series of categories regarded as appropriate by the authors. Cooke and Lafferty [op cit] and Brown [op cit], for example, have developed an instrument set around twelve categories, That constructed by O'Reilly et al [op cit] has nine categories, while Allen and Dyer [op cit] measure seven behaviour norms. Other instruments have been developed on the basis of research conducted by their colleagues. Glaser [op cit] for example developed his instrument from the four types of shared values and beliefs described by Deal and Kennedy [1982] while the instrument developed by Frew [1996] is based on the competing values framework and the psychological archetypes based on work by Jung [1923]. Whatever framework is adopted Schein [1999, op cit], argues because organisational culture develops as a result of common experiences and social learning and is the property of a particular group, it is these features that provides meaning and purpose to the working lives of its members. In his view, any analysis of an organisation's operations requires an understanding of the overall dynamics of its activities, its philosophy and its values as well as the values of its members.

The evidence presented so far in this section indicates developing a suitable framework for evaluating organisational culture is not a simple process and that even by doing so there is no guarantee that the culture

within an organisation can be measured accurately. Nevertheless, an analysis of the literature indicates there are a number of instruments available for this purpose within the wider framework of the discourse on what is organisational culture. The decision was taken to use an instrument which was constructed for use in industrial and business settings.

It is the case that there is a considerable degree of choice as to what may be regarded as factors that need to be analysed when considering any analysis of organisational culture, as well as the range of instruments available for collecting data. As a result, it is important at this stage to consider which of them will be most useful for the purposes of this study. This process has also to take into account both the focus and nature of the research, as well as the availability of the instruments.

As this is neither a national nor international comparative study it is safe to discard those measures as inappropriate. Similarly, those instruments developed as self-report measures can also be rejected. A number of problems were also identified with some of the other published instruments which left them unsuitable. The framework for studying the organisational culture of HEIs developed by Tierney [op cit] was one example of this. Although based on an anthropological model and set round six features that need to be considered in any ethnographic study

of the organisational culture (including its environment; its stated mission; the approach used to socialise its membership; its definition, use and dissemination of information; its decision making strategies; and its style of leadership) although clearly 'fit-for-purpose' was eventually rejected. This decision was taken as the researcher wished to use a model developed for commercial use rather than one developed largely for the HE sector. However, taking this decision led to further difficulties as certain instruments used in the business environment were felt to be less useful for collecting data from staff in HEIs and also some of these instruments were not readily available to the researcher.

The more complex of these instruments, based on an analysis of characteristics of organisational management, value frameworks and psychological and psychological considerations, e.g. Robbins [op cit] and Cole [op cit], often described as orientations when developed into research instruments, e.g. Harrison [op cit] Handy [op cit] Cole [op cit] and Brown [op cit] were felt to be among the most useful. The instrument developed by Brown [op cit] with its focus on collecting staff responses to a wide range of internal features in an organisation, was seen as particularly useful. All of these features were felt to be of value in collecting useful data.

However, it is important to emphasise that the literature on organisational culture outlined in the first three chapters of this study indicates the sparseness of previous data from higher education settings. As a result, it is important at this point to consider the methodological design towards measuring the organisational culture in the setting. This will be the focus of the next sub-section in this chapter.

### **Methodological approaches to measuring organisational culture**

Bearing in mind the points made in the previous sub-section, it is not surprising that the most effective approach to the collection of data about organisational culture continues to be debated. As pointed out earlier in this chapter some, e.g. Martin et al [op cit] claim the nature of organisational culture is so complex that many studies that present rosy pictures of it gloss over the detail and leave little that is of much worth, while others, e.g. Siehl and Martin [op cit] and Alvesson and Berg [op cit] argue research has been conducted has been methodologically questionable. Indeed, there continues to be considerable discussion as to the most appropriate research style and design to adopt to collect accurate data on organisational culture. This involves consideration of not only the appropriate research methods used but also the most effective instrument to undertake this task.

A major consideration is if a qualitative or quantitative approach to data analysis should be considered. The quantitative approach to data analysis of organisational culture assumes there is an objective truth to be found, which can be revealed through systematic, statistical measurement, e.g. Hartley [1994]. A number of instruments are available that will allow quantitative analysis of data, indeed some data analysis using quantitative methods has been undertaken in HEIs. Frew [op cit] for example, in his work at Sydney Institute of Technology, used the Institutional Performance Survey [IPS] [Smart 1988, Smart et al 1993, Quinn 1988]. Zammuto et al [1981] also used a similar approach to present significant statistical differences between the mean scores of the organisational cultural types.

Although the quantitative approach to data analysis in social science settings is well known, it has a number of implications for the researcher. These include a view of the world which is "hard, real and external to the individual" [Cohen et al, 2000 p. 6]. This approach, although providing a useful and more detached analysis of data with a specific focus, allows little opportunity for individual views to be explored holistically or in any depth [cf. Lincoln and Guba 1985]. Further, the quantitative approach to data analysis was felt to be inappropriate as the research was based on an analysis of a single case at a particular time in one institution with potentially relatively few participants.

The qualitative approach to research in organisations implies a different perspective on human behaviour from that if the quantitative approach is used, e.g. Giorgi [1970] Speigleberg [1972] Van Maanen [1983] and Cassell and Symon [1994]. Despite its common usage to collect data this is an approach that is not without its critics. Van Maanen [op cit] for example, describes the qualitative (phenomenologist) paradigm as an 'umbrella term', covering an array of interpretive techniques towards describing, decoding and interpreting the precise meanings of phenomena occurring in an individual's life world, while Cassell and Symon [op cit] point out as social life emerges from the shared creativity of individuals this approach can have little clear-cut objectivity.

However, despite these reservations and those on the grounds of oversimplification, e.g. Daft [1980], most studies of organisational culture have been undertaken through the use of the qualitative approach. From a number of points of view this is perhaps not surprising, as research on organisational culture is in essence interpretist; filtering people's subjective judgements, perceptions and understanding of one aspect of their social world. However, an analysis by Siehl and Martin [1988] points out there are three strong reasons for choosing a qualitative approach for this form of research. Firstly, organisations are a socially constructed reality with which qualitative methods are considered

epistemologically congruent, e.g. Berger and Luckmann [1966] and Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Secondly, qualitative methods provide rich and detailed data, which can be used to provide 'thick description', more detailed information and analysis of the issues, e.g. Geertz, [1967]. Lastly, the qualitative analysis of data allows for ambiguities and paradoxes, contradictions and variations in individual behaviour to be exposed and explored.

Because of the problem in interpreting what is meant by the term organisation culture some difficulties have been raised as to the soundness of attempting this, e.g. Schein [op cit 1999] Brown [op cit] Jeffcutt [1993] and Dawson [1996]. Indeed, Jeffcutt [1993] draws a distinction in interpreting organisational culture: describing two distinct interpretations: culture as a corporate and therefore managerial possession and culture as a collective expression within the whole workforce. Within this context, he argues, the role of the researcher becomes that of an interpreter, producing an authoritative and credible account. In his words "reality is apprehended, transposed and reconstituted" [Jeffcutt op cit p. 27].

An analysis of the literature indicates a range of assessment instruments has been developed using both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis. Jeffcutt [op cit], in his analysis, indicates

these can be broadly set into two discrete groups with different approaches to data collection:

- A range of qualitative instruments that have been used widely over the past twenty years. These include the use of questionnaire survey techniques, conducting interviews and the use of observations in the workplace and include those developed by Van Maanen [op cit] Turner [1983] Harrison [1972] and Goffe and Jones [2000]
- A range of interpretative texts developed from human sciences including work completed by Geertz [1973] and Marcus and Fischer [1986]

Increasingly, these instruments are available on the internet, e.g.

Dennison and Neale at [www.copernicus-solutions.com](http://www.copernicus-solutions.com), Jenner at [Monster.co.uk](http://Monster.co.uk) and Nova Connections [www.novaconnections.com](http://www.novaconnections.com)].

Importantly, the literature provides extensive evidence of the dangers of the single instrument approach to collecting data on organisational culture. Others recommend the value of using both the qualitative and the quantitative methods of data analysis, e.g. Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] Hofstede [op cit] Maull et al [2001] and Thompson and Kathnweiler [2002]. Schein [1999 op cit], for example, is particularly concerned that research techniques should evaluate more than the superficial surface issues of organisation culture. He is particularly critical of the concentration on issues relating to the more superficial features of organisational culture, arguing some, including issues such as communication, teamwork, relationships within the organisation's hierarchy, the degree of empowerment felt by employees and the level of

innovation and creativity they are required to display, although important, provide a dangerously narrow view of the organisational culture within a setting and also are far easier to assess than the deeper embedded, more impenetrable layers identified in his model.

Schein [1999 op cit] argues the single questionnaire-based approach to data collection does not provide researchers with any way of knowing which questions they have asked are really important in the particular organisation. In addition he points out there is no way of telling what the person undertaking the questionnaire has read into the questions being asked, nor to what extent the answers received might have been influenced by the guarantees of anonymity. Further, he considers asking an individual about a shared phenomenon is inefficient, even invalid, arguing if culture is a shared phenomenon then to ask a set of individuals about it is false logic. Such an approach, in his view, will not allow any analysis of the total cultural profile within the organisation.

Although taking into account the views expressed by Schein [op cit], Brown [op cit] asserts there is value of the questionnaire approach in that a range of questions can be grouped around particular aspects. In such situations, he suggests, the researcher can concentrate on the responses to individual questions or take the responses together in order to get a general view of an issue. Such an approach, in his view,

facilitates a useful comparison to be made between different departments in the same organisation as well as different organisations.

Similarly to Schein [op cit], Brown [op cit] is sceptical of the effectiveness of a sole instrument to elicit information on organisational culture. He is particularly critical of the interview approach, arguing it is "difficult and unreliable" [op cit, p. 65]. Taking the points about interviews in social science research more widely, he argues the quality of data raised by interviews relies on two important skills of the researcher: the skill of the interviewee to access the thoughts of those they have interviewed and to interpret them realistically to produce a valid picture of the organisation. Brown [op cit] argues these are highly subjective activities, which potentially allow two different researchers to interpret their findings differently and arrive at a different set of conclusions.

The interview approach is also criticised in relation to the reliability of the memory of interviewees, e.g. Robson [1993]. Such criticisms argue this is the case for a number of reasons. These include the fallibility of memory and mistaken recollections, while some may wish to be deliberately misleading or economical with the truth. In such circumstances, it is argued, any interpretation of organisational culture cannot be founded on objective truth.

Having thrown doubt on the single instrument approach to data collection Schein [1999 op cit] and Brown [op cit] consider evaluations can be undertaken best through multi-focussed techniques. In particular they advocate the use of group discussions and focus groups so all present have an opportunity to identify the organisational artefacts and values. Such an approach Schein [op cit] argues, will allow the researcher to get under the surface of an organisation and to delve more deeply into its cultural values.

Also promoting the multi-focussed approach to data collection Brown [op cit] argues the use of interviews and observations allow for a different sort of information to be collected compared with the questionnaire. In his view, a semi-structured interview will allow employees the opportunity to disclose more information and delve deeper into their views, attitudes and experiences than a questionnaire will allow. Further, such an approach, using a range of approaches to capture data will provide concurrent validity.

However, this mixed methods approach also has its critics. Bishop et al [op cit], for example, point out such an approach is inconsistent with the ethnographic and hermeneutical described above. Similarly, McSweeney [2002] and Smith [2002] criticise such an approach as being based on false premises. Smith [op cit] is particularly critical of the approach

suggested by Hofstede [op cit], who he claims, fails to identify clearly how to distinguish between the causes and consequences of organisational culture in his work.

## **Summary**

An analysis of the literature on researching organisational culture indicates the process of gauging organisational culture is a complex and problematic activity and where a multi-focussed approach to collecting data is vital. This also underscores the view that the culture of an organisation is unique and individual. This characteristic leads to methodological problems of both collecting and analysing data. The quantitative approach, although valuable in the context of this study, would restrict the opportunity to explore in-depth the views of staff individually. In the circumstances, this is an important consideration and cannot be ignored. It is therefore important to consider an approach that allows not only maximum flexibility of collecting and analysing data but also takes into consideration validity and reliability issues as well as providing an opportunity to visit and revisit the same data from different methodological perspectives. With these points in mind the case study as a suitable approach to fulfil this opportunity will be explored in detail in the next sub-section of this chapter.

## **The case study approach**

The literature on organisational culture indicates the importance of understanding its uniqueness in each setting. As a result it is arguable that researching organisational culture not only lends itself more closely to qualitative methods of analysis but also to the single case study approach in particular. With this in mind, it is worth considering the view expressed by Stake [1995] that case study research is appropriate as it will allow for the complexity of a particular situation to be taken into account. However, this assertion begs the question as to what counts as a case study. There is, as Lincoln and Guba [op cit] point out, little agreement in the literature on what counts as case study research. On the one hand Cronbach [1970] takes a broad view arguing all social science research is case study research, however, others argue case study research is more specific. Bassey [1999], for example, describes case studies as studies in singularity and into particular events. Similarly, MacDonald and Walker [1975] describe case study research as "an examination of an instance in action" [p 181]. Parlett and Hamilton [1977], express its purpose in terms of 'illuminative evaluation', while Yin [2003], trying to capture the essence of case study research, considers it to be an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within the context of a real world situation, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident,

while Bryman [2001] describes approach as being most commonly associated with an intensive examination of data drawn from a particular location.

For Kenny and Groteluschen [1980] case study research is appropriate under a number of conditions. They argue these conditions include where there is a focus on humanistic outcomes or cultural difficulties; where information obtained from participants is open to scrutiny on grounds of credibility; where the future of a programme is contingent on an evaluation being performed and there are no reasonable indicators of success that can be formulated in terms of behavioural objectives or individual differences; and where the objective is to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a situation. This latter point is particularly pertinent in this study where a closer understanding of the organisational culture of the setting is required.

Any consideration of the value of case study research has to take some account of the types of case study described in the literature, Some, e.g. Yin [op cit] Merriam [op cit] and Bryman [op cit] consider there are three types: the critical case, where a better understanding of a clearly specified hypothesis can be tested; the unique case, based on data collected in a particular and special case; and the revelatory case, where an investigator has the opportunity to investigate and critically analyse

previously unavailable phenomena. For Stenhouse [1985] there are four broad styles of case study research; ethnographic (a single case studied in depth by participant observation similar to that undertaken by a social anthropologist); action research (contributing to the development of the case under study through feeding back information to guide and refine the actions being taken); evaluative (a study in depth of a case to provide information to enable judgements to be made of its merit or worth); and educational (where researchers using the case study approach are concerned with understanding of educational theory or practice). The analysis by Stake [op cit] distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental case study. He describes the former focussing on research into the particular for its own sake and without consideration of outside concerns. Stake [op cit] asserts instrumental case study is concerned with research into particular situations in order to try to understand outside concerns.

Further, there is also little agreement as to within which research paradigm case study research might be placed. Yin [op cit] clearly places this form of research within the positivist paradigm, while both Parlett and Harrison [op cit] and Stake [1995] describe case study research in terms of the particular complexity of a single case in order to understand activities within certain circumstances; thus placing it firmly within the interpretive paradigm.

As with other approaches to data collection, the case study is an approach that has identifiable strengths and weaknesses. Identified among its weaknesses are the difficulty in completing good case studies [Yin, op cit]; its uncontrolled nature [Walker, 1983]; its anti-academic and anti-intellectual tenor [Atkinson and Delamont, 1985]; difficulties over the open-mindedness of its researchers [Stake, op cit]; its singularity and isolation leading to problems with any generalisation of the results obtained; and its lack of cumulative knowledge to build theory [Atkinson and Delamont op cit]; as well as its lack of objectivity, particularly in relation to the reality that it exposes and the degree of truth of the claims being made [Pring 2000].

Other criticisms that have been raised in the literature on the case study approach; e.g. Riley [1963] Nisbett and Watt [1984] Guba and Lincoln [op cit] Adelman et al [1980] and Hitchcock and Hughes [1985] include some that are largely generalist, while other focus on specific issues. Among the more general weaknesses that have been identified include difficulties in the composition and form of case study research; problems with the circumstances when it is appropriate to use it; difficulties in meeting the standard expectations of validity and reliability in research and what to select from the wealth of data collected, sampling issues as well as the ethical consideration raised by this approach to research.

Riley [1963], for example, points out the case study is limited in a general sense by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator and the possibility of bias while others make more specific criticisms. Guba and Lincoln [op cit] present difficulties in the reliability of case study research, arguing the distinct nature of an organisation makes the results of analysis unique to its particular location and is largely non-transferable. In their view, although the case study can provide 'a snapshot of a slice of life, this excludes potential for generalisability; thus leading to over-simplification and a tendency to exaggerate aspects of the findings and leading readers towards erroneous conclusions.

Further, it is argued the case study approach to research lacks any substantial theoretical perspective. Although this is acknowledged by those such as Yin [op cit] who accepts that although case studies may begin with only a rudimentary theory or a primitive framework, they argue this is countered by an understanding of its value in probing areas of emergent theory. Yin [op cit] regards the case study approach as akin to that of the detective, where the development of theory is accomplished by piecing evidence together systematically. Such an approach, he argues, not only allows understanding of the unique features of the individual case but also can help towards drawing out analysis that is applicable more widely.

For Badnarz [1985], while acknowledging the case study allows only non-experimental research, argues qualitative (and therefore case study) research is not about the development of laws of human behaviour. In his view its purpose is to explain and analyse the world as those in the focus of the research explain it. Others, e. g. Smith [1978] and Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis [1983], consider the value of the uniqueness of a case study, which allows the in-depth examination of specific phenomenon such as a particular programme, an event, an individual, an institution or a social group over a period of time.

Despite these criticisms others consider case study research to have its strengths, particularly in relation to the value of its data. Adelman et al [1980] identify six possible advantages of case study research. Among these they include its strength in reality and in the real world where insights can be put into direct use; its focus on the subtlety and complexity of social truths; the ability to build up an archive of material on a topic that is 'rich' enough for re-evaluated on later occasions; and its accessibility, compared with other research reports, to a wider audience.

An analysis of the literature indicates case study research lends itself to research that focuses on insight, discovery and interpretation with a

focus on description and explanation in order to provide a snapshot, or a series of snapshots over time; features which may be useful in evaluating the developing characteristics of organisational culture. Other characteristics of case study research can be seen to be of particular value in researching organisational culture, e.g. Guba and Lincoln [1981] Merriam [1988] and Yin [2002]. The description by Guba and Lincoln [op cit] of the case study as a holistic, lifelike, grounded exploration that presents evidence through quotes, samples and artefacts is particularly useful in this context.

Similarly, the view presented by Merriam [op cit] who argue case study research displays four essential characteristics is useful in this context. In her view, case studies are: particularistic (in that they focus on a particular situation, programme or phenomenon and are problem centred and small scale): descriptive (providing 'a rich thick' description of the phenomenon under study): heuristic (in that they illuminate readers understanding providing insights and experiences in expanding the reader's knowledge base of real life situations): and inductive (in that they rely on that form of reasoning allowing generalised concepts or hypotheses to emerge from an examination of data that is grounded in the context itself). Further, Merriam [op cit] points out, as a result of their part ethnographic, part historical, part sociological and part psychological composition, case studies in educational research tend to

allow differentiation of their end product. Further, she points out some case studies may also be descriptive and “atheoretical” [cf. Lijphart [1971, p. 691] while others are more interpretive or evaluative.

Although this might be regarded as a severe weakness by those who would consider quantitative research, where a more interpretive or evaluative approach is used, it has been pointed out, data collected through case studies can form the basis for future comparison and theory building [Yin 2003]. Cronbach [op cit], for example, suggests a central strength is that this approach allows for “interpretation in context” [p. 123] with the aims of uncovering the interaction of significant factors that are characteristic of a phenomenon. For Wilson [1979] the case study conceptualises an approach that aims to describe and analyse some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms as it unfolds over a period of time, while Becker [1968] regards the value of case study research as twofold: to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and, secondly, to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process. The process of theory building described by Glazer and Straus [1967] as ‘grounded theory’ allows data to be collected in order for theory to be developed through a process of analytic induction [cf. Cohen et al op cit, Frankfort Nachmias et al 2007].

For Yin [op cit] the interpretive case study can be an ideal too to aid grounded theory through the 'rich, thick description' technique described by Merriam [op cit] among others to develop conceptual categories that will illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering. For Yin [op cit] the case study approach rather than just describing what was observed or what was reported might take all the data and develop a typology, a continuum or categories that conceptualise different approaches to a task, a feature that could be useful in relation to the collection and analysis of data on organisational culture.

## **Summary**

The literature on the case study approach to research although identified as having strengths also is seen as having considerable weaknesses in relation to specific aspects of social science enquiry. These difficulties include both the reliability and validity of data collected as well as meeting the demands of triangulation, difficulties with sampling strategies, as well as objectivity and ethical problems, particularly for research being undertaken by employees in their own place of work [Atkinson and Delamont op cit, Hitchcock and Hughes op cit, Pring op cit].

These criticisms have led to a re-evaluation of some of these concepts within the terms of case study design. However, it is also important to recognise that case study research has its strengths including its flexibility and its value in collecting rich thick data [Yin op cit, Merriam op cit]. Case study research can also be regarded as ethnographic, descriptive and heuristic, all of which are important factors in this enquiry. It is also the case that the use of the case study approach will also be a potential help to the development of or understanding of organisational culture through the grounded theory approach [cf. Glaser and Straus op cit]. Its use within this case study will not only allow questions about the organisational culture in the particular HEI to be checked and evaluated systematically, it will allow any additions to knowledge of organisational theory to be made. This on-going process will be useful in circumstances such as those found in this study, where there is a paucity of previous research data.

## **Validity**

The threat to the research validity and the transferability of knowledge and its application to other situations is a further common criticism of the case study approach, to the extent that it has been argued that the concept of generalisability may need to be reframed to reflect its underlying characteristics, e.g. Cronbach [op cit] Patton [1980] Erickson

[1986] Stake [1978] and Walker [1980]. Cronbach [op cit], argues the case for researchers to reverse their priorities and describe and account for individual cases, proceeding from case to case towards building up generalisations. Similarly, Patton [1980], who argues case research should provide perspectives rather than a singular truth, shares this viewpoint. Merriam [op cit] also points out external validity in case study research is strengthened by providing 'rich, thick' description; providing a strong information base to the project, establishing its typicality so that comparisons with the reader's own situation can be made as well as aiding cross-case analysis. However, because of the evidence regarding the individual nature of the culture in each organisation presented previously in this study, the sampling of multiple cases remains in these circumstances remains questionable.

Some literature indicates the case study approach presents considerable difficulties with the commonly held understanding of internal validity in particular. An analysis by Cook and Campbell [1975] describes up to twelve threats to internal validity in case study research, which were later summarised by LeCompte and Goetz [1982] under four headings: (the individuality of the findings to the group being studied; the specificity of the setting for the research; the uniqueness of the historical experiences; and the uniqueness of the particular constructs). However, others claim the case study approach has a number of strengths in

relating to its high internal validity, e.g. Goetz and LeCompte [1984].

Goetz and LeCompte [op cit] make this claim for a number of reasons, all of which are of value in relation to this study. The reasons cited include the value gained from the researcher living and working among the participants; the collection of data over a long period of time; informant interviews being less abstract than many instruments used in other research designs; the value of participant observation in naturalistic settings reflecting the reality of the life experience of participants and the self monitoring, ethnographic analysis exposing the programme to continual questioning and re-evaluation.

A range of strategies to avoid difficulties over validity in case study research is presented by Merriam [op cit]. These include 'member checks' (asking respondents to confirm the plausibility of the data), the use of long term observation, 'peer examination' (asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge), involving participants in all the stages of the research project and checking researcher bias and clarifying the researcher's assumptions and theoretical orientations at the beginning of the project. In her view, such strategies ensure a balance between the uniqueness of the individual case and any generalisations that may be obtained from the data.

Despite work by Foreman [1948] to establish a procedure with the concept of triangulation in case studies, difficulties continue to be raised as to what extent this is required and how it might be addressed within the paradigm. However, innovative strategies have been proposed. Matheson [1988], for example, suggests shifting the concept of triangulation in case study research from the traditional technological solution for ensuring validity and instead relying on a holistic understanding of the situation in order to construct plausible explanations about the issues being studied.

## **Summary**

Despite the problems described above the case study approach has advantages in facilitating the validity of the data in this study. In the circumstances there are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the case study approach is strong on reality, thus providing confidence in the transferability of data [Cohen et al [op cit]. Secondly, the role of triangulation will be strengthened through the use of multiple sources of data [Denscombe, op cit].

## **Reliability**

The reliability of evidence is regarded as a weakness in the case study paradigm. In the circumstances, with its focus on the replicability of results and the single reality of repeated study, this is not surprising. For Badnarz [op cit], the reliability in case study research within the traditional understanding of the concept in relation to social science research cannot be established. Lincoln and Guba [1985] go as far as to argue reliability (in the traditional sense of the term) is something of an oddity when applied to qualitative research and research might be better served by considering its "dependability" or "consistency" [p 288], where the researcher asks outsiders to their research to examine it to check that both the data collected and their interpretation make sense and that they are consistent and dependable.

Indeed, Guba and Lincoln [op cit] make a case for sidestepping reliability in case study research. However, Merriam [op cit p. 172-173], details several techniques that a case study researcher may facilitate in order to ensure the dependability of their results. These include: considering the role of the investigator in relation to their explanation of the assumptions and theory behind the research; the use of triangulation to give support to the findings; the use of multiple methods of data collection and

analysis; and the use of audit trails to detail and describe how the data was collected and how decisions were made throughout the enquiry.

A further concern over reliability relates to sampling strategies. While the purpose of sampling in survey and experimental research is a useful aid to generalising data, the position of case study research is more obscure. Robson [op cit], for example, while accepting this point with regard to the case study, asserts the case study approach presents difficulties as the sample is often based on the researcher's judgement over typicality and interest. Further, he points out the impossibility of gathering data from everyone in case study research, arguing the value of purposive sampling in these circumstances to satisfy the specific needs of a project.

Although Robson [op cit] does not omit the possibility of initial sampling being used to guide emerging theory, he argues the importance of need for principled decisions regarding four key questions that form the framework for sampling strategy; who is to be the focus of the study; where is the study to be undertaken, when is it to be conducted; and what event, activities or processes are to be included? All of these are important considerations in the study of organisational culture.

The issue of the objectivity of the evidence presented in case study research has been considered by Adelman et al [op cit]. In their view the

issue of objectivity in social science is distinguishable in the difference between case study and experimental research. Taking the notion proposed by Stake [1975] of formalistic and naturalistic generalisations, Adelman et al [op cit] argue case study research, with its emphasis on the tacit knowledge of human circumstances by the reader, falls into the former category; while experimental research, with its emphasis on making generalisations with reference to formal theories, can be placed into the latter category. As such, objectivity is developed in quite different ways, allowing the case study to play an important role in the generalisability of social science data.

## **Summary**

The literature indicates case study research presents some difficulties within the issue of reliability, even to the extent of sidestepping the issue. However Merriam [op cit] has described some appropriate techniques which may be helpful in ensuring dependability in the data obtained. Concerns over sampling have also been raised which need to be taken into account in the thinking about the use of case study research in these circumstances.

## **Ethical difficulties**

Ethical problems within case study research have been raised in the literature, e. g. Yin [op cit] Merriam [op cit] and Walker [op cit]. Walker [op cit] identifies five potential ethical problems that case study research has to consider. These include the involvement of the researcher themselves and their influence of the situation under investigation; problems with data confidentiality; competition from different interest groups for a platform within the research; keeping anonymity of the particular situation for publication; difficulties arising from focusing on reported data as well as difficulties with the researcher's interpretation of the data that has been collected. Cohen et al [op cit] also raise the issue of the appropriateness of what to include from the wealth of data generated is a key issue in case study research. They point out that to produce a fair and accurate account the researcher must make a balance between those data that are representative and those that are unrepresentative yet crucial to the understanding of the case.

Case study research also has to accommodate other factors associated with the methods used to collect data. These include difficulties with reporting complete responses; problems with the power/control relationships encouraged by interviews; issues of consent and control in observations; the filtering and analysis of data and, where appropriate,

the control of sponsors of the dissemination of the results. Further, there is the problematic nature of case study research when conducted by staff already employed by the institution where this is being undertaken. Such circumstances present potential problems of bias of the interpretation of data, cultural interpretation and audience. Merriam [op cit] argues ethical dilemmas are most likely to occur over the researcher-participant relationship in the collection of data and the dissemination of its findings.

All of the hazards described above are drawn together when researching ones own organisation and has been easily identified in the literature over a long period of time. In the broadest sense Mead [1934] is particularly critical of this form of research, describing the ethnographic approach as abandoning the scientific procedures of verification and giving up hope of discovering useful generalisations about behaviour. Similarly to Mead [ op cit] Bernstein [1974] is critical of the ethnographer, noting the perils of subjective reports that are incomplete and can be misleading; a point developed by Rex [1974] who considers the problem of the false consciousness of participant researchers, calling for an obligation for them to seek an objective perspective in these circumstances.

Despite attempts by Husserl [1931] to provide an account of human consciousness that is free from presuppositions, Pring [2000 p.96] points out "we inhabit subjective worlds of meaning through which we interpret our social world... ..indeed that social world is nothing other than our own interpretation" and "one cannot get away from the subjective filtering of one's unique and personal experience, feeling and understanding: [p 98].

It is also the case that any phenomenological study has to focus on events through the subjective consciousness of an individual, where any interpretation of events or actions of others is understood in the light of subjective meanings. Pring [op cit] argues there is no reality in the sense of something existing independently of individual subjective thinking. He argues we live in a world of multiple realities, where the meaning of what we say or do is dependent on the interpretation of others. Similarly, Denscombe [2007], although outlining some valuable uses of ethnographic research, also outlines some of its dangers: dangers, which in his view, are set within the contradictions between the 'realist' aspirations to provide a detailed description of events and the reflexive nature of social knowledge and the influence of research on this.

To some extent all of the problems described above needed to be taken into account in relation to this study. However, three of the issues are of

major importance in this research; the role of the participant researcher; the effect of personal power and control with colleagues in the interview situation; and the maintenance of anonymity of the interviewees.

The role of the participant researcher is particularly pertinent, as the author is an employee of the college where the research was undertaken. This issue needs to be addressed through the continuous conscious awareness of the researcher of the dangers of being too close to the information or to the participants. In these circumstances the researcher must bear in mind the importance of undertaking the necessary tasks, particularly the interview stage of the project as dispassionately as possible, so as to avoid bias and personal prejudice on the data. Similarly, care with the dissemination exercise must also be undertaken in a way that will avoid personal and professional friction as much as possible, while not being circumspect with colleagues.

The effect of personal power and control by the interviewer was a potential factor in some interviews although not in all of them, as some senior staff in the Schools were to be considered for interview. In such circumstances the danger of being interrogated by the interviewee as described by Walford [1994] was noted as was the expectation that powerful people would have expectations of the interviewer being organised, clear and succinct. Further, the view taken by Hitchcock and

Hughes [1995] that interviewees have a tendency to give answers to questions they feel the interviewer might want to hear was also noted. As a result, some of the points made by Kvale [1996, p 148-9] relating to the practicalities of conducting interviews such as gentleness and sensitivity to the interviewee and being an active, empathetic listener, while attempting to be responsive to the key points that are significant to the respondent are important skills.

One further consideration relating specifically to those who participated in the second, interview phase of this project was to ensure their anonymity. Although described as an issue for all social scientists, e.g. Reynolds [1982] and Bulmer [1982], this is of particular concern in this instance for two reasons. Firstly, discussing organisational culture may lend itself to discussing individuals within that organisation; a point which if it should occur must be dealt with anonymously. Secondly, as Wallis [1977 p. 121] states "the sociologist owes his subject an obligation not to cause them any undeserved harm". It is as Whyte [1955 p. 317] puts it the researcher "has to continue living with himself". With these points in mind everything that is possible will be done to ensure the anonymity of those colleagues who participated in the interview phase of the project.

Consideration was also given to issues of good research practice relating to informed consent, the confidentiality of participants and the ethics of care provided in the ESRC Research Ethics Framework [2005]. Approval for this research was also sought from the Durham University Ethics Committee.

## **Summary**

This sub-section has considered the key strengths and weaknesses of the reliability, validity and ethical questions raised by case study research and particularly in the context of undertaking research in one's own workplace. It is important that these considerations are taken into account when formulating an appropriate strategy for accessing data in the next phase of this project. In the light of the conclusions drawn about these issues and other points considered earlier in this chapter a discussion on the practical implications of most effectively collecting the primary research will form the focus of the next section of this chapter.

## **Discussion**

Up to this point this chapter has considered the extent to which research on organisational culture can be successfully undertaken and what approaches have been identified in the literature to undertake this

effectively. This sub-section will be used to draw these points together to make the decisions as to how best to collect the primary data in this study.

Taking the initial point first, the literature on approaches to researching organisational culture indicates because of the complexity of its nature doubts have been raised about the possibility of gaining any accurate understanding of it. Criticisms have been raised over the reliability and validity of the data received as well as both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to its analysis. This, and the particularistic nature of the culture of a particular organisation, heightens the value of the bounded case study approach. Such an approach can allow data collected from the respondents to be regarded as 'an instance in action' within the interpretist tradition of case study research, e.g. Stake [op cit] and Bassey [op cit].

Strategies adopted to research organisational culture must not only take into account the more obvious, superficial artefacts that help to set its framework but also capture the subtly of its everyday practices, the embedded behaviours and tacit knowledge and understandings that cannot be revealed by brief contacts with employees. The evidence suggests that in order to do this successfully a multi-strategical approach, using qualitative methods, set around the use of

questionnaires, observations, interviews and group discussion must be employed. However, from the work undertaken by Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] and others there are strong indications that any instrument or combination of instruments may be unsatisfactory if not used subtly.

With this particular research project as the focus, instruments developed to enable comparative studies of organisational culture to be measured were rejected as this is not seen as a comparative exercise. The method developed for use in HEIs, e.g. Tierney op cit, although of value in setting the overarching criteria for this form of research, was also rejected as it was felt to be not been sufficiently developed to effectively gauge the subtleties and nuances of the circumstances. Even more important in this consideration was the decision to use an instrument which had been developed not merely for HEIs but for business and industry, which HEIs are increasingly described as being.

Even taking into account the weaknesses described in the literature, the case study approach has a number of advantages in the context of this study. Firstly, the case study approach is appropriate as this research is small-scale and being conducted on one unique site. Further, the approach will enable the researcher to grapple with the intricate interpersonal relationships and social situations within the subtleties of a complex organisation such as an HEI. The case study approach also

allows a variety of research methods to be used in order to best capture the nuances of the complexity of this situation, where there is little control over events. This approach, by allowing a range of data collection techniques to be used, also enhances its validity through the use of triangulation.

It has been noted that considerable emphasis has been placed in the recent literature on the value of a 'mixed methods' approach to collecting data on organisational culture, e.g. Brown [op cit] Schien [op cit]. This mixed methods approach using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is regarded as particularly useful in a context which is complex and to some degree tacit and an element within the subconscious understanding of the setting. Consequently the decision was taken to use a similar approach to data analysis in this study. As a result, although there is likely to be a relatively small number of respondents in the questionnaire phase of the study, a simple quantitative, numerical analysis was undertaken; along with a qualitative approach to the analysis of those data collected in the interview phase.

It was also decided the initial data collection phase would be conducted through a published questionnaire, which had two major characteristics. Firstly, the instrument tested aspects of all the levels of the culture of an

organisation described, for example, by Handy [op cit] and Brown [op cit] and secondly it had been developed for use in all organisations. Bearing these two considerations in mind, the decision was taken to adopt the questionnaire developed by Brown [op cit p. 61-64] as the most appropriate instrument to collect data in the first stage of the research. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

This questionnaire, developed as a result of an analysis by Brown [op cit] of the characteristics of an organisation based on earlier work by Harrison [op cit] and Handy [op cit] as well as taking into account the analysis of the characteristics of organisational culture developed by O'Reilly et al [1991] and Chatman and John [1994] is based on twelve different sections or orientations that he argues allows a researcher to effectively diagnose the culture of an organisation. These orientations relate to the following perceptions of staff about their workplace:

- The level of creativity and innovation within the organisation
- Power and conflict relating to the domination of competition
- The quality of information and communication within the organisation
- The rules set within the organisation
- The quality of learning which takes place
- The focus on the individuality of members of the organisation and the level of desire to meet the needs of its employees
- The level of cooperation within the organisation
- The level of trust to be found
- The level of conflict between employees
- The level of planning for the future
- The level of organisational stability and commitment to long term employees
- The work ethic

Each of these perceptions is measured by responses to a number of statements set out in the form of a Likert Scale. In order to prevent respondents settling for a mid-point answer to the statements the scale has been developed as a four response model comprising: definitely true, mostly true, mostly false and definitely false. Each of the responses has an individual weighting set on an ordinal scale for each statement.

Although the author provides no indication of his precise intentions in relation to these ordinal scales the general implication, cf. Cohen et al [op cit] or Goulding [1984] is the higher number chosen the greater the strength of agreement. In the case of Brown's questionnaire these are set between 0 and 3 across the four possible choices which can be made by respondents. This format allows for an analysis of both the responses to individual statements and to those collectively grouped in the twelve orientations. Further, it is also possible to conduct a profile analysis of individual responses by taking the responses as a source of comparison.

Despite the length of the questionnaire (respondents are asked to respond to up to seventy-two statements in twelve separate sections) there are a number of good reasons for adopting this instrument. These include the wide range of relevant issues around which it is set and its focus on business rather than educational settings. There also is a strong link between the statements set out in this questionnaire and the

themes identified in the relevant literature, an important point noted by Kvale [op cit]. Further, the questionnaire is clearly set out, with an accessible style and generally uncomplicated language. The four point Likert Scale is also useful, providing a tight framework for respondents to work with and which will not allow 'central tendency bias' by respondents, cf. Cohen et al [op cit] or Brown [op cit]. The approach in the questionnaire of grouping a series of six questions was also seen as useful as it allows a topic to be considered by the respondent from a number of different angles providing 'rich, thick descriptions' within the analysis [Merriam op cit, Yin op cit]. Within the context of the discussion earlier in this chapter it was also felt this questionnaire met the wider methodological issues relating to reliability, validity and ethical considerations [Kvale op cit]. Finally, it was felt this questionnaire would provide suitable data to develop the interview schedule for the second phase of this project.

To aid the analysis of the data an initial page was added to the original questionnaire in order to gain access to some personal information about the respondents. They were asked to complete four pieces of information about themselves. This included indicating their gender [question A]; their age group [question B]; their current role within their School [question C]; and their length of service at the college [question D]. It was felt the responses to questions C and D could help obtain a deeper

analysis of the returns. It was felt the information gained about the current position of the respondents may help to distinguish if organisational role made any difference to the answers provided. Similarly, the question of the length of service was used to analyse if the length of time spent working in the institution made any marked difference to the responses made.

To supplement the data received from the questionnaire, a number of follow-up semi-structured, open-ended interviews were also to be undertaken in an attempt to penetrate the views of staff more deeply and provide better in-depth information than the questionnaire would allow. These interviews will be conducted around the advice presented by Kvale [1996] on conducting 'rolling interviews'. The use of the 'rolling interview' technique would allow information to be built on accumulatively in order to provide a developing flexibility within the original framework of questions, which could be used to elicit further pertinent information. This technique described by Glaser and Straus [op cit] as 'theoretical sampling' will also allow any grounded theory to emerge from those data that have been captured at this stage of the study.

Because the research is to be conducted in more than one School the issue of potential problems with time-slippage and the potential interaction between the staff in the two Schools was considered. As a

result, it was decided to undertake the data collection simultaneously rather than sequentially. However, the extent to which these data can be used to form wider generalisations about the culture of HEIs remains questionable.

### **Analysing the interviews**

The purpose of the interview stage of this process was twofold, firstly to investigate further the small number of negative responses returned in the questionnaire stage and secondly to probe more deeply some of the issues this raises in order to present what Silverman [2005, p. 154] describes as "a true picture of reality". As a result the question of how this might be best undertaken had to be addressed.

On the basis of the nature of the enquiry a form of narrative analysis discussed in the literature on case study research, e.g. Bassegy [op cit] Yin [op cit] and Merriam [op cit], was appropriate. Narrative analysis is an approach which allows the complex socio-psychological reactions to emerge through an analysis of personal experiences. Such an approach also has a number of flexible analytical possibilities; a feature described by Coffey and Atkinson [1996] as one of its strengths.

A particularly useful approach to narrative analysis for the purpose here has been described by Merriam [op cit] as the comparative approach, where the analysis of data collected from one interview is fully interrogated before the next is undertaken, thus allowing a refining process to take place. Such an approach is described by Merriam [op cit p. 162] as "both parsimonious and illuminating", preventing data collected to become "unfocussed, repetitious and overwhelming." Such an approach would also allow a number of increasingly focussed interviews to be undertaken, where arguably a more realistic understanding can emerge.

However, questions have been raised in the literature about the nature as well as the accuracy of the truth such an approach might deliver and the level of trust which can be gained from what is reported, e.g. Cohen et al [op cit] and Robson [op cit]. Further, bearing in mind the perceived tendency for memory not always to reflect accuracy of events and the tendency towards personal bias from the storyteller, perhaps the best that can be expected is a plausible account of personal experiences set in an emotional framework [Gubrium and Holstein 1997].

Of course the points made above demonstrate, potentially at least, some weaknesses in this analytical strategy. Nevertheless, bearing these points in mind a narrative analysis of the level of consistency of both the

ideas and the language used to tell the stories of colleagues who agreed to be interviewed at this stage was felt to be a suitable strategy to analyse the data collected.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter, taking into account the literature on researching organisational culture, has considered the most appropriate strategy for collecting data from staff working on HE courses in the particular social setting. Despite the misgivings expressed by some about the value and effectiveness of such an exercise, e.g. Goffee [op cit] Uttal [op cit] and Alvesson and Berg [op cit], and the difficulties associated with the both commonly used social science methods and techniques [cf. Adelman et al op cit, Riley op cit, Guba and Lincoln op cit, Hitchcock and Hughes op cit] it was decided to go ahead with the primary research stage of the project.

As a result of the analysis of the literature set out in this chapter the data collection process to undertake this exercise is seen as a single case-study approach, using both a questionnaire and interviews with participants to help with the verification of the data, based on the phenomenological paradigm. Such an approach will allow the best approach to the collection and interpretation of a range of largely

subjective data from a single source. Those data collected will be analysed through the use of a mixed methods strategy, with a quantitative analysis of those data captured as a result of the questionnaires and a qualitative approach to those data collected at the interview stage. This approach will not only take into account the views of those such as Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] of the importance of the multiple-strategy approach to data collection in the field of organisational culture but also allow any emergent theory to be developed.

As the data collection is being conducted in the researcher's place of work this also presents a range of particular ethnographic, ethical and phenomenological difficulties which have also to be taken into consideration in the primary data collection phase of this project. The results obtained from adopting these strategies are set out in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on analysing those data collected from the survey of staff delivering HE courses in the School of Performing Arts and The Business School at the setting where the primary research was undertaken. The chapter is sub-divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the pilot study. The second section focuses on analysing data collected as a result of the returns from each specific statement set out in the questionnaire. The third section focuses on a more general analysis of data relating to each of the twelve domains identified in the questionnaire. Section four focuses on an analysis and the follow-up open-ended, semi-structured interviews that were conducted with a small number of staff drawn from those who had participated in the questionnaire stage.

#### **THE PILOT STUDY**

Although the instrument used to collect data in the first phase of the study was not new, it was piloted in the setting to clarify the extent to

which the selected questionnaire would be 'fit for purpose' and user-friendly within the setting. Consequently, two members of staff in another School were asked to look at the questionnaire and discuss it with the researcher. One member of staff was asked to complete the questionnaire while the other, an experienced researcher, was asked to read the questionnaire through and comment on its suitability and 'fitness for purpose'.

Although neither of these staff worked in either of the Schools where the primary data collection was undertaken, it was felt they would be representative of staff in the Schools for a number of reasons. Firstly, they worked entirely on HE courses in the college and it was felt they had a good working knowledge of the changes taking place in the college. Both staff involved in this stage of the project were not only willing to complete the questionnaire but also take part in the subsequent discussions. These discussions were undertaken individually in order to gain independent responses from them.

### **The Resulting Discussions**

The responses received at the pilot stage were generally positive from both respondents. Both staff indicated they had found the questionnaire relatively easy to complete, if a little long, and felt its focus was generally

'fit for purpose'. Their responses to the inclusion of the additional first section asking for additional information [Questions A-D, see Appendix 1] were positive. Neither respondent indicated these questions were either ethically problematic or intrusive. As a result these questions were included in the main study.

However, a number of problematic issues were raised by the participants. Both participants indicated some difficulty with focussing their responses, as they felt unclear if these should be made from a School or a whole college point of view. Both respondents felt one or two of the statements were irrelevant within the college situation. In particular they pointed to Statement 2b relating to how important people might be addressed. The experienced researcher also commented on the vagueness of some of the statements in the questionnaire and the potential difficulties this might cause for respondents, as well as the subsequent difficulties this may produce at the analysis stage. Some consideration was given to deleting these statements in the subsequent questionnaire. Concern was expressed by both respondents about the impact of the numerical weightings attributed to the statements, particularly throughout Sections Two and Nine, which they felt were inappropriate. Their view was that others completing the questionnaire also might also find this to be the case.

## **Decisions as a result of the pilot study**

As a result of these discussions the following decisions were taken. It was decided to include all of the statements in the questionnaire for a number of reasons. It would allow the respondents the opportunity to decide if to answer them all. Secondly, to include all would also keep the balance of six statements in each orientation. Thirdly, the decision had been taken to use a questionnaire that been used in wider business and industry and to change this would arguably be counter to the objective of the exercise.

The decision was also taken to include the rating scales provided by Brown [op cit] in the questionnaire. This decision was taken for two reasons. Firstly, doing so would confirm if any of the issues raised by those taking part in the pilot would be realised. Secondly, as long as care was taken to interrogate carefully the answers received from those questions where the pilot study indicated the rating scale may produce problematic numerical analysis, the use of the rating scale analysis would provide further useable data from the majority of questions.

An initial analysis of the instrument indicated it would be possible to analyse these data in a range of ways. This included an analysis of the numerical responses to each of the four choices received from the

seventy-two statements on the questionnaire. Secondly, an analysis was conducted using the rating scale provided by Brown [op cit]. Thirdly, incorporating the additional information, set out in Questions A to D, into the questionnaire allowed these data to be reported taking the age, experience, seniority and length of service of staff into account. Although this third type of analysis was undertaken for all the questions, mention would be made when reporting these results only in conjunction with those statements where this was felt to be important. With this in mind, in the tables of information set out in Appendix 3, both the individual numerical returns and the rating scale responses are presented. The rating scale totals are set out in brackets and are shown as an overall ratio between the totals received for the true and false responses. Both the numerical totals and the weighted totals are referred to throughout the commentary in this chapter. Further, in order to aid the analysis and discussion of the numerical data it was seen as appropriate to aggregate the scores from the definitely and mostly true categories and also to aggregate scores from the definitely and mostly false categories.

Lastly, it was felt that some of the data collected from the statements could be grouped together more successfully than that set out in the original design by Brown [op cit]. As a result the analysis of the responses received will be treated this way.

## **THE RESULTS FROM THE MAIN SURVEY**

A total of thirty-three teaching staff, from part-time lecturers on HE courses to the Heads of School in the School of Arts and The Business School were invited to attend an introductory meeting to explain the purpose of the research. Of these thirty staff [90%] attended the meeting and took away questionnaires. From this eighteen responses [60%] were returned, all but one of which was fully completed. As only the first page of the incomplete questionnaire had been completed this was discarded. The results from these returns are analysed below.

The intention in the first phase of the study was to collect data which would firstly provide an overview of the staff's views of the organisational culture in the setting and secondly to develop a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire for use in phase two of this process. The number of staff involved in both of the phases was dependent on the number of staff who volunteered to participate from the two Schools selected for this purpose. These schools were chosen for a variety of reasons including having the largest staff numbers within the setting, timetables based entirely on teaching on HE programmes and little or no direct personal or professional connection with the author.

Although a more sophisticated statistical analysis of data received in phase one of the study could have been undertaken there were a number of reasons why this opportunity was not taken. The key function of the questionnaire was to provide an overview of the views of staff and to develop the interview schedule for use in phase two of the study.

Further, both the small sample size and the randomness of the returns received were too small to make this activity valuable, e.g. Connolly [2007] or Coolican [1999]. Resources such as the time available and word limits set for this piece of work also presented difficulties.

### **Results from the additional information section**

This section is set based on the returns from staff who completed the questionnaire. In the minority of cases this data is displayed in tables providing descriptive statistics, while in others a written summary of the information received from the statements initially set out by Brown [op cit] has been undertaken. As part of these summaries ratio levels have been included in order to show the balance of opinion on the individual statements.

The results of the responses to Question A, relating to the gender of staff who responded to the questionnaire, are shown in fig 2 below.

<b>Male</b>	9
<b>Female</b>	7
<b>Information not provided</b>	1

N=17

**Fig. 2: The gender of the respondents**

Those who responded to the request for data were almost equally split between male and female staff, nine males [53% of the respondents] and seven females [41%] identified themselves. One respondent, who presumably wished to remain anonymous, did not complete this section of information.

The results of the responses to Question B, relating to the age of the respondents are shown in fig 3 below.

<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-55</b>	<b>55+</b>
2	6	7	2

N=17

**Fig. 3: The age range of the respondents**

Question B asked the respondents to identify their age. The results indicated a spread across the age range of the staff employed in the college. Two respondents were aged between twenty-one and thirty, six between thirty-one and forty-five, seven between forty-six and fifty-five

and two were over the age of fifty five. Some three quarters of those who responded were aged between thirty-one and fifty-five, in the middle years of their working lives.

The responses to Question C, relating to their current role in the School in which they worked, are shown in fig. 4 below.

<b>Head of school</b>	1
<b>Deputy Head of School</b>	3
<b>Senior Lecturer</b>	3
<b>Lecturer [full time]</b>	4
<b>Lecturer [part time]</b>	5
<b>Other</b>	1

N=17

**Fig. 4: The current role of the respondents in their School?'**

Question C asked respondents to indicate their role within the School where they worked. As with the returns from the previous question, the respondents represented a spread across the possible positions within the Schools, including a head of school, three deputy heads of school, three senior lecturers, four full time lecturers, five members of staff who lectured on part time contracts and a member of staff whose hours were divided between their work as a sound technician and a support tutor.

The responses received to question D relating to years of service are shown in fig. 5 below.

Years of service	no. of respondents
0-5	7
6-10	7
11-15	1
16-20	1
20+	1

N=17

**Fig. 5: The years of service of respondents**

The final question in this part of the survey asked about the length of service of the respondent in the college. The returns showed that the vast majority [82%] who had returned the questionnaire had spent no more than ten years working in the college. Staff turn-over through promotion to positions in other institutions may account for the small number of staff who had worked for more than ten years in the college.

### **Results from the twelve orientations**

The results from the data received from the individual statements in the twelve orientations in the questionnaire will be considered at this point. This will be undertaken by an analysis of the responses received to each of the twelve orientations in the questionnaire. Tables displaying the data collected for each of these statements are set out in Appendix 3.

## **Results from Section 1: creativity and innovation**

Section One of the questionnaire considers attitudes to what Brown [op cit] describes as the 'innovativeness and creativity orientation', set around one of the seven primary characteristics of organisational culture described by O'Reilly et al [op cit]. Issues raised in this section include the organisation's response to the culture of risk-taking through a range of propositions relating to the level of imagination shown by staff [statement 1a]; the value placed on imaginative thinking [1c]; the introduction of new ideas [1b, 1g]; the amount of time given to thinking through new ideas [1e]; the level of tolerance towards less creative staff [1d]; as well as the willingness of staff within the organisation to share their ideas [1f].

Overall responses to this orientation were largely inconclusive with opinions widely spread across all of the possible responses. The only proposition where opinion was more commonly shared among staff was proposition 1c. Responses to this orientation indicate the staff felt their working environment was one where they can be professionally imaginative and where their ideas are welcomed. The vast majority of responses to Statement 1a indicated staff were felt to be professionally imaginative in their work and this was an acceptable characteristic to be embedded in the culture of the college. The rating scale analysis also emphasised this point [28:4]. Of the seventeen replies received, two

indicated this was definitely the case, while a further eleven stated this characteristic was mostly true within the college. This figure, which amounts to over seventy-five percent of the respondents, included all the part-time staff who returned their questionnaires. Even though there were a small number of negative replies, no staff returned a definitely false response to this question.

The proposition that there is a culture of intolerance towards staff that were professionally less creative [proposition1d] was largely dismissed. The vast majority of respondents indicated this was either definitely false [3/17, 18%] or mostly false [10/17, 59%]. However, returns from all of the part-time staff indicated this proposition was mostly true, although the reason for this was not clear from this analysis.

Although the feelings of staff indicated the culture of the college was one where professional imagination was encouraged, the responses to the proposition that novel ideas were welcome in the college [Statement 1b] was relatively less conclusive, with an equal number of responses in the mostly true and mostly false categories. All of the responses were spread across three of the four categories.

The majority (ten out of seventeen, 59%) provided a generally positive response to this statement (three who responded definitely true, and

seven in the less conclusive mostly true category), while the seven other staff provided a negative response. An analysis by work- role indicates part-time staff were the most positive respondents to this question, all of this group providing 'definitely true' responses.

Responses indicate that while some staff felt there is a culture of creativity and innovation in the college, a sizeable proportion was more sceptical. Responses indicated that while staff were tolerant of colleagues who were less professionally creative [proposition 1d], many felt their creativity and innovation was neither valued nor appropriately rewarded and that their ideas were not quickly adopted. The evidence also indicates many staff felt there is not enough time available for them to think through new ideas. Similarly, opinion was divided over the proposition that the culture was one where staff shared their professional ideas.

The extent to which good ideas are quickly adopted in the college, explored in statement 1g, can be closely linked to the degree of welcome which these ideas receive [proposition 1b] and also the level of innovation in the college [1c]. Responses received to proposition 1g, similarly to that for proposition 1b, were widely spread across all four possible replies, although a small majority of respondents [58%] indicated this statement was mostly or definitely false. However, the analysis by rating scale

indicates a much greater support for the true compared with the false returns on this issue [18:7].

The relationship between personal reward and the level of innovation among the staff [statement 1c] was shown to be largely negative.

Although only one respondent indicated this statement was definitely false, ten others [59%] indicated it was largely the case. An analysis of the data by staff sub-group indicates all the managers who responded to the proposition placed themselves in the mostly false category.

The analysis of proposition [1c] must also take into account the fact that it asks for responses to two distinct and separate issues, the concept of 'value' and 'reward'. Potentially at least, these can mean different things to respondents answering the question with a resulting confusion or inaccuracy in the responses provided. Further, the concept of 'reward' included in the proposition is not clearly defined and was open to interpretation by the respondents. For instance, reward could be interpreted to mean personal reward, financial reward and professional reward through being better thought of by other staff. In these circumstances again it is possible there is little or no consistency between the responses received.

The returns to the proposition that most staff have the time to think through new ideas [1e] were largely negative, indicating the majority of staff felt there was little time available for professional reflection and that new ideas were not usually introduced on that basis. Only five of the seventeen respondents [29%] felt there was any truth in this statement.

Responses to the view that staff shared their professional ideas because they are listened to and encouraged [1f] were dispersed across three of the four possible answers. Although the greater percentage of the responses indicated the statement to be some degree true (three staff feeling this was definitely true and a further seven feeling it was mostly the case), a substantial group [7/17, 41%] stated this was mostly false. An analysis of the rating scale also emphasised this point [23:6]. Returns indicate part-time staff were very positive about this statement.

## **Results from the section 2: Power and conflict orientation**

Section Two of the questionnaire concentrates on what Brown [op cit] calls 'power and conflict orientation'. This section of questions seeks to discover levels of jealousy and competition in a setting. This is a feature, which is identified by Harrison [1972a op cit] as a key characteristic of the culture of an organisation,. This section of the questionnaire includes statements about the level of professional trust in an organisation [2a]; the way staff are addressed while at work [2b]; the level of internal

politicking and criticisms of organisational practice [2c, 2f]; the prevalence of staff cliques and personal advantage [2d, 2e]; as well as the culture of favouritism and preferential treatment [2g].

Again, with the exception of propositions 2a and 2b, the returns for this orientation indicated a wide dispersal of staff views across the statements. Significantly in relation to the cultural tone in the college, the majority of staff [82%] responded negatively to Statement 2a indicating there was a lack of professional trust within the college. A breakdown of staff response by role indicated this was a general feeling among staff across work-role, gender and level of seniority. The negativity of this response was seen as noteworthy and in need of further depth of investigation, which will be undertaken in the interview phase of the research.

The returns also indicated there was considerable criticism of institutional policy and practice. Seven respondents [41%] indicated this statement [2b] was definitely true, while a further five staff [29%] indicated it was mostly true. This response is also emphasised by the rating scale analysis [31:5]. Although this return can be linked to the negativity of statement 2a, two points must be raised. Firstly, bearing the point made by Eraut [1994] who argues the traditional purposes of higher education include independence of thought, freedom from

interference, the encouragement of criticism and the interchange of ideas, this response is perhaps not surprising. Further, the extent to which respondents were referring to positive or negative criticism cannot be ascertained from this data. An analysis by work-role, age or length of service in the college was inconclusive. However, this again is an issue that will be followed-up at the interview stage of this research.

Questions were raised in this orientation relating to managing situations for personal gain and the culture of cliques [Statements 2d, 2e, 2f, and 2g]. Responses to the proposition that staff in the college tended to manage situations for their own personal advantage [Statement 2d] was inconclusive. There was an almost equal division of opinion among staff who returned the questionnaire. Nine staff [53%] indicated the statement was either definitely or mostly true while eight others [47%] felt it was either mostly or definitely false. However, the rating-scale analysis, [21:6] strongly supports the positive returns. Analyses by work-role, age and length of service in the college were inconclusive, with no clear grouping of staff by any of these categories.

As with the responses to statement 2d, responses to the proposition that there was a culture of cliques in the college [Statement 2e] were distributed equally across the true/false continuum. A majority of staff [59%] indicated evidence of this within college. Of this number over a

quarter [29%] indicate this was definitely true, while seven other staff [41%] feel this was not so. The raw data are supported in the rating scale analysis [25:4]. However, an analysis of this statement by work-role within the college on this proposition was inconclusive.

Results obtained from the returns to the proposition that there is a culture of college politicking [Statement 2f] indicated that although there is a spread of opinion on this issue, the majority felt it was mostly, rather than definitely the case. An analysis of the rating scale in the statements also supports this conclusion [22:5]. It is hard to interpret whether or not respondents understood this statement and any speculation is bound to be inconclusive. However, it is the case that staff may be relating their experiences beyond their own working environment in the School to the wider college environment.

As with the data received on the proposition relating to managing situations for personal gain, the returns to the proposition that advancement in the college is more dependent on who rather than what you know [statement 2g] provided a wide range of opinions among the staff, with similar numbers in each of the four possible sections of answers. Overall, the majority of returns [59%] provided evidence of thinking that personal contact within the college is more important than knowledge or experience. The analysis by rating scale [24:4] also emphasises this view. However, the percentage of raw scores indicating

this is far from overwhelming. Analyses of the data by the work-role of the staff, their age range and length of service were inconclusive.

The proposition that there are expectations of formality when addressing senior staff was negative. Sixteen of the responses [94%] responded this was definitely or mostly false. This level of response is not surprising, as in educational establishments there is little tradition of the use of forms of formal address to managers and senior staff.

### **Results from Section 3: Information and communication orientation**

This purpose of Section Three of the questionnaire is described by Brown [op cit] to investigate the information and communication orientation within a workplace. Specifically, its purpose is to investigate the quality and effectiveness of inter-staff and inter-departmental communication [3a, 3b]. In relation to this aspect particular attention was paid to the following questions: the culture of staff keeping information to themselves [3c]; the quality of the dialogue between staff and managers [3e, 3f]; and the level of disruptive and speculative gossip within the college [3g]. The quality of the ICT system in the college [3d] is also considered in this orientation.

Again, the data collected in this orientation indicates a wide range of responses, with some issues similarly polarised as in the two previous

orientations. The data collected shows the majority of staff responded positively to proposition 3a, the quality and effectiveness of inter-staff communication. Although only one respondent indicated this proposition was definitely true, nine others [53%] stated the quality of communication with staff in the college was effective. The analysis by rating scale largely supports this point [21:4]. An analysis of the responses by work-role was inconclusive, with the responses scattered evenly across all four possible categories.

The response to proposition 3b was largely negative, with over seventy percent of returns indicating the statement 'different departments generally transfer accurate work information on a timely basis' was false. Eight respondents [47%] felt this proposition was mainly false, while four others [24%] considered it definitely false. An analysis by rating scale was less conclusive [13: 8]. Evidence from other studies, e.g. Hannan and Silver op cit, indicates this result is not surprising in HEIs. Although it is not easy to account for the reasons for this it is arguably the case the department in an educational setting does not serve the same purpose as that in industry. As a result, college staff may not regard the transfer of information between departments either as valuable or as necessary.

In contrast to the results outlined above, data collected from Statement 3c provided a more positive picture about the sharing of information by

colleagues. Some two thirds of the staff gave a positive response to this statement [11/17, 65%]. This is supported by the rating scale analysis [24:5]. An analysis by work-role in the college was inconclusive, as no single group of staff could be identified as responding strongly within a single category. Although it is difficult to account for the differences received between statements 3b and 3c it is possible that respondents defined the term 'colleague' in statement 3c more closely with those working within their School, compared with the inter-departmental nature contact implied in statement 3b.

Responses to Statement 3e, relating to the culture of good dialogue between managers and subordinates, were also largely positive. As with statement 3c above, some sixty-five percent of staff responded positively to this proposition, indicating there was a culture of managers promoting a two-way dialogue with staff. The result using the rating scale was similarly positive [24:3]. An analysis by work-role was inconclusive, as were ones by the age of the staff and their length of service at the college.

Returns to the proposition that staff who felt that important information usually finds its way to those who need it [Statement 3f] were almost equally divided between those who felt this was the case and those who did not. Nine staff [53%] indicated the statement was definitely or mostly true, while eight other staff [47%] felt the statement was false. However, the rating scale does not support the raw data totals, emphasising the

true responses compared with the false ones [20: 7]. An analysis by work-role indicated that most managers who responded to the questionnaire returned positive answers: all of them opting for the mostly true category.

The majority of responses to the proposition Statement 3g [that there is a culture of disruptive gossip in the college] indicated this proposition was regarded as mostly false [9/17, 53%] with a further two staff indicating the statement was definitely so [11/17 65%]. The rating scale analysis supports the responses from individual staff [24:4]. Although a much smaller number of staff responded negatively, this percentage [35%] represents a large number of full-time lecturing staff employed by the college. However, analyses by work-role, age range and length of service were inconclusive, providing no further usable data.

Responses relating to investment in the ICT system in the college [Statement 3d] varied widely with responses distributed across the four available. A small majority felt the statement was accurate with six responses [35%] the most commonly recorded. The rating scale analysis also supported this statement [21:4].

## **Results from Section 4: Rules Orientation**

Section Four of the questionnaire focuses on what Brown [op cit] describes as the 'rules orientation' within the workplace. Statements in this section relate to the organisational and management style used within the workplace. The statements ask staff to consider aspects of the more overt culture of an organisation including the level of conformity and regulated conduct expected in the workplace.

In particular this orientation considers the interpretation placed on workplace rules and regulations, perhaps better here described as professional expectations and conventions, [4a, 4c, 4f, 4g] and the system of control that is in place to enforce these [4b, 4d, 4e]. Results obtained from staff who participated in this survey are set out in this section.

One of these propositions (Proposition 4c) focused on the view that most people understood and obeyed the rules in the setting. The response to this proposition was largely positive. Twelve staff [70%] indicated this proposition was mostly true category and another stating it was definitely true. This resulted in a very strong positive response [76%] which was underlined in the rating scale analysis [27: 4].

A similarly positive level of response was recorded to proposition 4a, which provides evidence that the majority of staff 9 (over seventy-five percent of the returns either definitely or mostly true) indicating violation of rules in the setting would be reported. The rating scale analysis [30:3] also supports this finding. An analysis by work-role in the college indicated all the managers who responded felt this would be the case, as did all of the part-time staff in the survey.

The responses received to the proposition that there is an argumentative culture surrounding the interpretation of rules in the college [Statement 4f] were less conclusive than the two reported above. Answers received were largely polarised around the mostly true and mostly false categories. Altogether seven staff indicated there are disputes about the interpretation of college rules a majority [10/17, 59%] felt this was not the case, with seven staff indicating the statement was mostly false and three more that it was definitely so. This provided a ratio of 23:6 when the rating scale analysis was conducted. However, an analysis of the data by work-role was inconclusive. The extent that these results [4a, c, f] taken collectively indicate a general consensus by staff towards the rules and social expectations in the setting or a high level of social compliance by those who agreed to participate in the survey remains unclear.

While taking into account the view that within an educational institution the level of importance that staff attach to formal rules is perhaps less than compared with the emphasis in other organisations and companies, e.g. Hannan and Silver op cit and Bargh et al op cit, the replies received to Statement 4g 'systems of control over people's work in the college were generally effective' were largely inconclusive. The responses were set around two possible responses: mostly true and mostly false. Although the category with the most responses indicated the statement was mostly true [8/17, 47%] the majority of respondents [9/17] felt the systems of control in the college over the work people did was to some extent false. The rating scale analysis emphasised this point [with a ratio of 16:6 towards the truth of the statement]. An analysis by work-role was also inconclusive, with the data providing no useable information.

Responses to the proposition that work in the college is well organised and progresses systematically over time [Statement 4b] provided a largely positive response. Twelve respondents [over 70%] of staff placed their answer in the mostly true category. The rating scale analysis also provides strong support for this conclusion [24:2]. Despite the overwhelming response to this statement, analyses of responses by work-role and length of service were inconclusive.

Data relating to the proposition that the college is a highly flexible organisation [Statement 4d] were much more evenly distributed with responses spread across all of the four available categories. Responses were also equally split into those staff who felt the statement to be to some extent true [53%] and those who did not agree with this statement [47%]. An analysis by work-role was inconclusive. Despite the narrowness between the individual responses to this statement, the rating scale analysis provided a considerable emphasis on the false categories [19: 6].

It is important to point out statement 4d is open to a range of subjective interpretations. The concept of 'flexibility' is subjective, highly personal and distinctive, so any commonality of meaning among the respondents may be lost. Further, respondents may also use the concept of flexibility as a comparative, comparing their current understanding and perceptions with previous professional experiences.

The responses to proposition 4e, relating to the slow pace of change within the college, were largely polarised around two possible responses. While eight staff [47%] indicated the statement was mostly true, and one other indicated it was definitely so, eight respondents indicated it was mostly false. This presents only a very small majority of staff who felt this to be the case. However, the rating scale analysis provides little support for the narrow majority in the raw scores. In this analysis surprisingly

the true responses outweighed those that were false by a considerable margin [19: 8].

In the circumstances of the DEC project and the new facilities being built in the town, as well as the publicity that has been given to this and the development of HE provision within the college and in the local community this is perhaps a surprising result. It is the case that some of the developments in provision for FE were, at that point, more advanced than those for HE, which may have impacted on the thinking of those staff who worked mainly on HE courses who were the ones who participated in this survey. Further, it might be expected that the managers within the Schools could be expected to know more about the development being undertaken through the DEC initiative, however, an analysis of the data returns with this feature as a focus was inconclusive. However, as with statement 4d above, this statement is also subject to personal feelings, as the meaning of 'slowly' is subjective to individual interpretation.

### **Results from Section 5: Learning Orientation**

Section Five of the questionnaire focuses on what Brown [op cit] describes as the 'learning orientation' within an organisation. Statements in this section concentrate on investigating the culture of learning and the concept of a learning organisation and the strategies employed to

develop this, regarded by Stinson et al [2006] as vital to the health of any organisation. Questions in this sub-section consider the extent to which staff feel they can learn from their mistakes [5a, 5b]; the level of encouragement within the organisation for professional learning to take place [5c, 5e, 5f]; the level of communication between departments [5d]; and the relationship between doing and learning among the workplace [5g].

Overall, the returns for this orientation indicate a wide range of opinion was held by staff across the issues set out in this orientation, with some presenting a greater commonality of view than others. The responses to the proposition 5a indicate a majority of respondents felt staff learn by their mistakes. Overwhelmingly the returns [13/17, 76%] indicated this statement was either mostly or definitely true. This conclusion is also supported by the rating scale analysis [29: 2]. An analysis by work-role in the college showed that those who felt the statement was false were full-time lecturers.

Responses to the proposition that when errors occur the issues are discussed and learning takes place [Statement 5b] ranged across all four categories in the questionnaire, indicating a wide range of feelings about this issue. Although the majority of staff [11/17, 65%] indicated the statement was mostly or definitely true almost a third felt this was mostly or definitely not the case. It was not clear from the wording of the

statement if staff felt learning did not occur as a result of discussions when errors had occurred or if there was little or no discussion of the issues in the first place. However, the rating scale analysis supports the overall tone of the statement [25:5]. An analysis of the data by the work-role of the respondents showed, perhaps not surprisingly, the management were generally more positive about this issue compared with the rest of the sub-groups in the survey.

The data received from the responses to Statement 5c, 'the systems within the organisation generally encourage learning from experience', was largely polarised into two distinct but opposing categories. A small majority of staff responded positively to this statement [9/17, 53%]. The analysis by rating scale also supports this viewpoint [19:7]. An analysis by work-role in the college was inconclusive, as was that by length of service.

In an educational establishment, where learning from experience is encouraged in the student population, this might be seen as somewhat contradictory. However, when taken in conjunction with the range of responses to proposition 5b, also about the culture of learning, perhaps this is not so surprising. The response to both propositions raises the question, if learning by experience is not supported in an education

establishment that promotes this as part of its professional development and training then what are the consequences of this?

Statement 5e is a proposition relating to the ability of the organisation to learn from its errors. Responses to this proposition provide a range of views across all four possible categories. However, the most common response was that this statement was mostly false [7/17, 41%]. Four other staff indicated the statement was definitely false, providing a majority [65% indicating this was not the case in this setting]. The rating scale analysis overwhelmingly supported this viewpoint [26: 3]. However, an analysis by work-role was inconclusive and provided no greater depth of evidence on this matter.

Proposition 5f, which can be linked to proposition 5b analysed earlier in this section, asks staff to consider if they are too busy to learn in the organisation in which they work. The responses to this proposition produced data across three of the categories. A large majority [14/17] indicated this proposition was true [six respondents indicated this statement was definitely true and a further eight that the statement was mostly true]. Although only three staff indicated the proposition was definitely false, the rating scale analysis provided a different balance compared with that obtained from the raw scores, with a ratio of 9 to 8 in favour of the false responses. An analysis by work role was inconclusive, as was that by gender. As with some of the propositions in Orientation 4

above, responses to proposition 5f will be subjective, entirely determined by the interpretation of the concept of 'learning' by each individual.

Statement 5d, which also acts to reinforce statements 3a and 3b in this questionnaire, asks staff to consider the quality of communication of information within their organisation. Responses to the proposition support the returns from these two earlier propositions, indicating when a department learns something of value to other colleagues this is not generally quickly passed on to other departments. With thirteen respondents [76%] indicated this statement was mostly false and another respondent indicating this statement was definitely false the majority was overwhelming [82%]. The rating scale analysis also supports this view [13:6].

The last statement in this orientation asks staff to consider if their organisation has a 'doing' or 'learning' culture. Data collected from the staff to this Statement 5g were distributed largely in two categories. Seven staff [41%] indicated their managers valued a 'doing' rather than a 'learning' orientation among college staff, while six others [35%] indicated the reverse. Three other respondents indicated it was definitely the case their managers valued a 'doing' rather than a learning environment. However, the rating scale analysis provided contrasting evidence: indicating staff regarded their managers as valuing 'a learning' rather

than 'a doing' culture [15:7]. However, the questionnaire did not account for the reasons for this. Further, the wording of the statement is again problematic: what a 'learning' and a 'doing' culture means to each respondent again may be a subjective judgement. This is a factor that must be taken into consideration when considering the responses. An analysis of the returns from the managers from the two schools did not support this view, as their responses were divided across all four of the available categories.

### **Results of Section 6: Individuality Orientation**

Section 6 of the questionnaire is described by Brown [op cit] as focusing on the 'individual orientation', in an organisation. This section, again set closely to one of the characteristics of organisation culture described by O'Reilly [op cit], relates to the development and encouragement of a culture of individuality in an organisation, where people are encouraged to express their characteristics and individual qualities in the workplace. The purpose of this Section is to consider the extent to which people are allowed to express their personality traits and sense of individuality at work [6a, 6b, 6c, 6e, 6f]; the relationship between image and substance within the organisation [6g]; and evidence of the culture of the typically company employee [6d].

Returns in this orientation provided a wide range of views among staff who responded, where there was little commonality of thinking among them. Statement 6a focuses broadly on the extent to which respondents felt they were able to express their own personality in the workplace. Data collected indicated a range of views across the four possible responses. The majority of staff [59%] maintained they were encouraged to express their personality in their workplace. Seven staff indicated this was mostly true, while three others stated it was definitely so. However, a large minority [41%] felt this is not the case, with two of these [12%] stating this is definitely false. The rating scale analysis also supports this proposition [23:5]. An analysis by work-role shows that the majority of managers and part-time staff felt this statement to be true, whereas full-time lecturing staff were less convinced of this.

Statement 6b asked about the tolerance of 'mavericks' in the college. Data collected indicated a wide spread of opinion among staff about this proposition. Whereas two staff felt there is a definite toleration for mavericks in the organisation, five others indicated this is definitely false. The majority of staff, albeit a small one [53%] indicated there was little toleration of mavericks on the college staff. These figures translated into an 18:4 ratio in favour of the truth of this statement. However, as with other propositions in the survey, the language of this proposition is a little imprecise. As with some of the propositions in the previous

orientations this statement again raises the issue subjectivity. The definition of 'a maverick' in the questionnaire is not clear and the range of interpretations by different members of staff is potentially wide. As such this data must be treated with some care.

Statement 6c asks respondents to comment about the potential for staff to retain their personality in the workplace. Data received indicated the majority of staff felt they are able to retain a sense of their own individuality in the workplace. To some extent, the positive answers received to this proposition can be taken in conjunction with the similarly positive responses received to proposition 6a discussed earlier. The largest percentage of responses indicated this statement was mostly true [9/17, 53%]. However, a further five staff indicated this statement was definitely true, producing a clear majority of staff who felt this to be the case [82%]. This includes all the part-time staff that completed the questionnaire, while the three staff who reported negatively were all full-time lecturing staff from the same School. The rating scale analysis provides a similar indication [23:2 towards the accuracy of this statement].

A further statement [6e] asks for a response to the potential for people to develop and mature within an organisation. Responses to this statement were positioned across the four sections of the responses. However, the pattern of these responses is patchy. The most popular response [6/17]

reported that the college encouraged people to develop and mature professionally was mostly false, while two others indicated the proposition was definitely false. More positively, five staff indicated that it was mostly true and four staff were even stronger in their response, stating the proposition was definitely true. The rating scale analysis strongly supports this point [22: 6]. An analysis by work-role was inconclusive. However, this is an issue that will be explored further in the interview phase of the project.

Statement 6f considers the culture of criticism of the personal style of staff in the setting. Data received indicated the majority of responses were placed in the mostly true category, with just over half of those who responded placed here. If this total is placed alongside those staff who regarded the statement to be definitely true, this accounted for nearly two thirds of the responses. An analysis by work-role indicated widely different views among staff at the different levels of responsibility and, as such, was inconclusive. The rating scale analysis was also similarly positive [25:3]. The data collected about this proposition also reflects the positive responses to proposition 6a, relating to the culture of personality in the college.

Statement 6d considers the stereotypical behaviour of 'company men and women'. However, the responses received to this proposition indicated overwhelmingly that the college employed relatively few stereotypical

company men and women. Thirteen staff [over 75% of the returns] responded in this way. A further member of staff also indicated this was definitely the case. . The rating scale analysis supports this point very strongly [29:1].

Of those who disagreed with this proposition, two were part-time lecturers and another was a full-time lecturer. The response received to this question can, perhaps in part at least, be related to the organisation where the data was collected and differences between the perceptions of a stereotypical company man in business and commerce compared with someone who works in higher education. This also begs the question of what is, or if there is a stereotypical 'company man or woman' in HEIs.

The last statement in this section asks respondents to consider the role of image and substance in an organisation and if the latter is more important than the former. Data received to this proposition indicated most staff felt substance was more important than image in the college. This was also supported overwhelmingly by the rating scale analysis [32:2]. Six returns stated this proposition was definitely true and seven others indicated this was mostly true. Full-time lecturers were particularly well represented in these categories. The rest of the responses were split between the mostly false and definitely false categories. The analysis by work-role indicated management staff was

evenly split between those who stated the statement was mostly true and those who stated it was mostly false.

### **Results from Section 7: Co-operation Orientation**

Section Seven of the questionnaire focuses on what Brown [op cit] describes as 'co-operation orientation'. This section, based on factors relating to team orientation described by O'Reilly [op cit], focuses on perceptions of the culture of co-operation in the workplace. It concentrates particularly on working in teams, an aspect that can be regarded as an important prerequisite to effective and efficient working practice in any organisation [Torrington et al, op cit]. In particular this orientation focuses on issues relating to the level of co-operation and teamwork in an organisation [7a, 7b, 7c, 7e, 7f, and 7g] and the rewards given to team players [7d].

Returns from this orientation provided largely positive responses from staff who completed the survey, with particularly positive responses relating to levels of cooperation and team work. The first proposition in this orientation asks respondents to gauge the extent of helpfulness and consideration found in their workplace. Returns indicated people were generally helpful and considerate in the college. Responses were placed most commonly in the mostly true category. Ten of the seventeen respondents answered this question this way. With a further five staff

indicating the statement was definitely true this was among the most emphatic of all the responses received. Only two staff fundamentally disagreed with this proposition. With such overwhelming support [88%] little further analysis was needed with this question. The rating scale analysis also strongly underlined the raw scores [35:1].

A further proposition in this orientation considers the role of formal rules and processes in encouraging co-operation [statement 7b]. The views received were mixed. Although the rating analysis confirmed the truth of the statement [19:2] individual responses were almost equally divided between those who felt there was some truth in the proposition and those who did not. Interestingly most of the management staff dismissed this idea, indicating this was mostly false statement. The more negative views were responses from part-time staff.

A follow-up statement considers that the notion of formal rules and procedures in the college encourages professional co-operation [Statement 7c]. Responses received indicated most staff felt colleagues are good 'team players'. In total twelve [70% of staff] responded positively to this statement with the rating scale analysis also strongly emphasised this proposition [27:3]. An analysis of these data by work role was inconclusive.

A further statement that can be linked to the above proposition [7e] associates good teamwork with rewards. However, as with earlier propositions, what type of reward is the focus here is left to the subjective judgment of the respondents. The data received from both individual responses and the rating scale analysis indicates staff largely supported the assertion that teamwork is rewarded in the college. Eleven staff [65%] responded positively to this statement [three definitely true, eight mostly true]. Those staff who disagreed with this statement were drawn across a number of work roles and the result of this analysis was inconclusive.

A further statement [7f] focuses on a proposition that a good description of the organisation is that people 'lend a hand' and 'muck in' with what is required. The responses provided a mixed picture. Although over half [9/17] of the staff felt the proposition was extensively true, over one third indicated this was not the case. The rating scale analysis provides a ratio of 21: 7 towards the truth of this statement. The phrase 'lend a helping hand' may have a different perspective in HEIs than industry, which may account for some of the responses. It is also possible that some respondents with difficulties with the idioms of the English language did not fully grasp the term 'lend a hand'.

The last statement in this section also relates to staff feelings of being part of a team. The results from an analysis of returns from this statement [7g] provided a mixed view of opinion across the four possible answer categories. Although nine staff indicated there was some truth in the statement, eight others indicated this was not their view. However, the rating scale analysis provides support for the view that the respondents felt they were part of a team [a ratio of 22: 7].

As has been discussed earlier, it is the case that staff in HEIs do not always feel a deep sense of loyalty to others within their own institution. In some contrast to more traditionally commercial businesses, this feeling of being in a team may emerge across institution in the discipline, or part of the discipline, in which staff work. Although the evidence collected here cannot support this point, it may account, in part at least, for the spread of opinion received. An analysis by work-role was inconclusive.

Proposition 7d considers the potential for loners to be promoted within an organisation. Results obtained from this proposition indicated a large majority of staff felt this statement to be definitely or mostly true [14/17, 82%]. This finding is also confirmed by the rating scale analysis. However, an analysis by work-role is inconclusive, as all three staff who

regarded the statement as mostly false had a different role from each other in the Schools in which they worked.

### **Results from Section 8: Trust Orientation**

Section Eight of the questionnaire investigates levels of professional trust. In a section described by Brown [op cit] as 'trust orientation', it considers attitudes towards others in the workplace, as well as the quality of interpersonal support. The statements in this section focus particularly on interpersonal trust and respect [8a 8b, 8d, 8e]; perceived levels of mutuality and support [8c]; and levels of jealousy and envy in the workplace [8f, 8g].

Returns for this orientation indicated an identifiable division of views across many of the propositions. The first proposition asks respondents to comment on the level of trust within their organisation. In contrast to data received from question 2a there was no clear outcome in the individual responses to this proposition. Most of the responses were placed in the two central categories [mostly true or mostly false].

Although there was a larger percentage of staff [59%] who indicated the statement was to some extent true a significant minority of respondents clearly thought the opposite. However, the rating scale analysis provides a somewhat different picture from the analysis of the individual responses, with the ratio 23:5 towards the statement being definitely or

mostly true. An analysis of the data by work-role was inconclusive, with no single group being totally represented within a single category or even within the broader distinguishing levels.

A second statement in this orientation [8b] asks about the level of exploitation of staff by others in the workplace. The returns indicate a clear division of opinion, where the majority [9/17] indicated they felt the proposition that staff did not attempt to exploit each other was true (seven mostly true, two definitely true), however, this was only a small majority. Six other responses indicated the proposition was mostly false, while another felt it was definitely false. An analysis by work-role in the college was inconclusive, the various groups of staff being represented in all four of the possible responses.

Statement 8d asks staff to consider the long-term survival of staff in an organisation that displays a culture of low trust in their workforce. Data received indicates the majority of staff felt this proposition was mostly false in the college and that those who fitted this characteristic could survive there. As with other propositions in this orientation, this majority was small [53% against 47%]. However, the rating scale analysis emphasizes the definitely and mostly true categories [a ratio of 15:9]. Again, potentially at least, it may be the case that responses to this proposition could be different in different parts of the college and that in one school a loner may have more (or even less) chance of survival than

in another. However, an analysis of this from the returns made from the two Schools taking part in this survey does not support this claim. An analysis by work-role in the college was also inconclusive.

A further statement [8e] asks staff to respond to the proposition that staff respect each other. Again in contrast to data received for statement 2a on the level of trust, the majority of the returns indicated there was a level of mutual professional respect. Almost a quarter of the responses were very positive, indicating the level of respect shown by staff to each other was definitely the case, while a further six [35%] indicated this was mostly the case in the college. This positiveness was counterbalanced by five staff indicating they felt the statement was mostly false and another two that it was definitely so. The rating scale analysis supports the view that most staff respect each other professionally [24:5]. An analysis of the data relating to the School staff worked in provided no further insights. The analysis by work role was similarly inconclusive. However, there is a lack of clarity, as the wording of the proposition does not make it clear if responses should focus on professional or personal respect, or even both of them.

Statement 8c asks staff to consider the level of mutuality and support within their workplace and the amount of encouragement there is for this. There is a clearly identifiable division of opinion among the staff on

this issue. A relatively small majority of staff [59%] responded that they felt the proposition that the college rules encouraged mutuality was mostly or definitely true. The rating scale analysis also indicates a ratio towards the statement [15:9]. An analysis of the data by the Schools in which the respondents worked was inconclusive. Further analysis by work role was also inconclusive.

Statement 8f considers the level of professional honesty and the claims by staff that work others had done was in fact their own. The data analysis from this proposition showed an uneven distribution across the four possible responses. It also showed a majority of staff (65%, when the definitely true and mostly true responses are added together) felt this claim was unjustified. This point was complemented by the rating scale analysis [25: 5]. An analysis of the data by School showed the staff in one school to be particularly confident about this proposition (5/7 mostly true responses), whereas returns from the other school did not provide a similar commonality of views. An analysis by work-role was inconclusive, with the replies scattered across all four possible responses to the statement.

The last statement in this section asks staff to respond to the proposition that jealousy and envy dominate the work atmosphere. The responses from this proposition were the most polarised in this orientation. Only

two staff in total felt the proposition had any truth in it. The vast majority [15/17 responses, 88%] indicated the statement was false, with six of these stating this strongly. The rating scale analysis overwhelmingly supports the view that jealousy and envy is not dominant in the culture of college [36: 1]. An analysis by work-role indicated all the managers felt the statement was mostly or definitely false.

### **Results for Section 9: Conflict Orientation**

Section Nine of the questionnaire, again pursuing one of characteristics of organisational culture described by O'Reilly [op cit] concentrates on what Brown [op cit] describes as 'conflict orientation', the level of conflicts within the organisation that might affect interpersonal relations and impede the development of a good working atmosphere. Aspects respondents are asked to consider include the amount of petty conflict in the workplace [9a, 9g]; the level of inter-departmental rivalry [9b, 9e]; and the quality of the relationship between professional criticism and personal offence [9c, 9d, 9f].

The first statement in this section asks staff to consider the level of petty conflict within their workplace. Responses to the proposition show there is some division among the staff over this in the college. While the majority indicated this statement was either mostly or definitely false

[10/17 responses, 59%], the remainder indicated there was some level of truth in it. The rating scale analysis reflects this division of opinion [16:8]. An analysis by work-role is inconclusive. Further, the analysis indicates there is no clear separation of attitude to this statement in relation to the School in which they worked.

Statement 9g presents a similar proposition to that in 9a; asking respondents to consider if the outcome of conflict in the organisation in which they work is more positive than negative. The data received indicated staff felt the outcome of any conflict in the college to be more positive than negative. Ten of the seventeen [59%] returns indicated this to be the case. However, the rating scale analysis [a ratio of 16: 9] provided a different emphasis compared with the analysis of individual data; emphasizing the view that the statement is, to a greater or lesser degree, false. Again the reasons for this discrepancy are unclear. Further analyses by their work role and the School in which they worked were inconclusive. As with other earlier propositions the concept of 'conflict' is open to different interpretations by respondents.

Statements 9b and 9e focus on inter-departmental rivalry and self interested sub-groups. Statement 9b asks respondents to consider the extent to which the departments in the college work together, and their perceived level of inter-departmental rivalry. The responses indicated a range of opinions among the staff. Ten out of seventeen staff [59%] felt

the statement to be at least to some degree true, while seven respondents [41%] indicated it was false. However, among those staff who felt the proposition was false only three staff suggested it was definitely false. The rating scale analysis reflects the division of opinion about this statement [17: 7]. An analysis by School provided no evidence of differences in attitude. An analysis by work-role was similarly inconclusive.

Again, it is important to point out that within the setting this statement may have been open to different interpretations. The different Schools operate independently and are managed differently, even located on different sites, where there can be little inter-personal contact among staff outside the School in which they work. It is possible that some respondent interpreted the statement with this in mind and answered the question from that point of view.

Staff opinion was similarly divided over proposition 9e. While six responses indicated the proposition that the college had strong and cohesive sub-groups which looked after themselves was definitely true, six others indicated it was false. The majority opinion was that there was some truth in the proposition. The rating scale analysis is much more clear-cut (with a 26:6 ratio in support of the statement). However, an

analysis of the data by School was inconclusive beyond reinforcing the divisions detailed above. An analysis by work role was inconclusive.

Statements 9c, 9e and 9f consider the role of sub-groups within a workplace and their influence on its wider culture. Statement 9c asks respondents to consider to what extent criticisms made in the workplace are taken personally in the organisation. The data collected on this proposition was divided, with responses spread across three of the four possible categories. Although seven staff [41%] feel the statement was to a degree false (five mostly false and two definitely the case), the majority of staff feel to some extent this statement is true and that criticism was taken personally. As with some other examples above the data from the rating scale analysis does not reflect the interpretation of the raw data, strongly inflating the support for the true answers compared with the individual returns [24:5]. An analysis by work-role and the School in which staff worked was inconclusive.

Statement 9d asks for a consideration of the extent to which staff are always trying to win an argument. The results obtained were largely polarized around the mostly false category. Ten staff [59%] indicated this statement was mostly false. These staff, in addition to one member who reported the statement was definitely false, comprised the overwhelming response to this statement. However, the rating scale analysis shows a different perspective, with less polarity compared with the individual

responses, where the ratio was 15: 10. There was no unanimity of views among staff from either the school in which they worked or their role within it.

Statement 9f also concentrates on a similar issue to statement 9d, asking respondents to assess the level of personal antagonism they have experienced from others in the workplace. The responses indicated the majority of staff [65%] regarded this proposition to be false. 11/17 staff responded this statement was mostly or definitely true and they had experienced little personal antagonism within the college. However, almost twenty-five percent of the staff expressed some experience of antagonism. Again the balance in the rating scale analysis does not reflect the balance found in the raw data. Here the balance is largely towards staff experiencing antagonism from other colleagues [a ratio of 16: 4]. A further analysis of the data by work-role or the School in which they worked was inconclusive. However, the combination of both the negative return to this proposition and the contrasting analysis from the data is felt to be sufficient to be followed-up in the subsequent interviews that are to be conducted in the next phase of this research.

### **Results from section 10: Future Orientation**

Section Ten of the questionnaire asks respondents to consider what Brown [op cit] describes as the 'future orientation' with a workplace. This Section is comprised of a series of statements relating to organisational

planning and the culture of involving staff in this process. To some extent this is a parallel category in Brown's analysis to the stability orientation described by O'Reilly [op cit]. These statements include asking staff to comment on future planning [10a, 10b, 10c, 10g]; their understanding of future developments [10d]; and the value given to staff potential in planning [10f].

There were a number of positive responses to the propositions in this orientation, particularly relating to future planning and a sense of direction in the college. The first proposition [10a] asks staff to comment on the degree to which they feel their organisation is focused on the future. The returns indicated respondents generally felt positively about this. The majority of staff responded that this statement was mostly true, with almost two thirds of staff indicating this to be so. The rating scale analysis also supports this view [21: 3]. An analysis by work-role in the college was inconclusive. However, an analysis by School indicated one School presented generally more positive views about this issue than the other. From the evidence available at this stage it is difficult to account for this and again this is to be followed up in the interview stage of this research.

The second proposition in this orientation [10b] links to 10a above. Proposition 10b asks respondents to give their views as to their perceptions of an organisation's focus on the future. The results obtained

indicate the majority of staff felt the college had a strong focus on its future. This is a view overwhelmingly supported by the rating scale analysis [30:3]. Twelve respondents [71%] indicated this was their view.

Proposition 10c has a similar focus to propositions 10a and 10b, focusing on perceptions of an organisation's willingness to concentrate on the future rather than its past. The results obtained indicated a majority of staff [13/17 76%] feeling the college was more concerned with future planning than reflecting on its past. The rating scale analysis, with a ratio of 29:3 also supported this view. An analysis by work-role in the college was similarly inconclusive. However, it is difficult from the nature of the statement to ascertain which people in the college they had in mind in relation to social location of the response they gave. If, for example, their response focused on only staff with whom they worked directly or if this was a more general comment about the whole staff in the college that they had in mind when making their comment is unclear. An analysis by the School staff worked in provided no further useful information.

The last proposition in this orientation, focusing on an organisation's long-term planning strategy [10g] provided less conclusive results. Although the rating scale analysis indicated respondents felt staff in the college took a long-term view on matters [a ratio of 17:8], a small majority [9/17] indicated the statement was mostly or definitely false.

However, an analysis by work-role was inconclusive, as was an analysis by the School in which staff worked. In conjunction with earlier responses received relating to the changes taking place in the college [e.g. 4e, 4f] again this was felt to be a surprising result.

A further statement in this orientation [10d] enquired about staff knowledge of their organisation's strategies for the future. The data received from this proposition provides contrasting evidence. Individual returns indicated a range of views across the possible available answers. Most responses received indicate the proposition that the organisation's strategies for the future were well known is mostly false, some 41% of those questioned indicated this to be the case. These returns, along with those who indicated the statement was definitely false, comprised a small majority of the returns [53%]. However, in contrast the rating scale analysis provides a ratio of 18: 7 towards the mostly or definitely true statements. An analysis by work-role in the college was inconclusive, as was an analysis by the School in which they worked. Responses made to this proposition reinforced earlier impressions that, despite all the changes that are currently taking shape in the college and the information provided about them to staff and the wider local community, a significant minority of staff are not aware of them.

Staff were also asked to comment on the level of discussion that takes place in relation to proposed changes in their organisation [10e]. Returns to Proposition 10e showed a wide disagreement that lively discussions on the future of the college are held among staff. Most of the returns [7/17, 41%] indicated little evidence of such discussion. Two other staff indicated this was definitely false [a total of 53% of the respondents in these two categories]. Similarly to the previous statement in this orientation, the rating scale analysis does not support the evidence collected as raw data, presenting a ratio of 19:7. An analysis by the School in which the respondent worked was inconclusive. However, an analysis by work-role was more productive. It was the part-time staff who indicated most strongly there were generally lively discussions about the future of the college. This was not supported by the managers, who responded unanimously that the proposition was mostly false and they participated in little lively discussion. However, the wording in the statement does not make it clear if the discussions referred to those held at a formal meeting level or if it was the more informal level of discussion which was the focus. As a result of this feature as well as inconsistencies noted as a result of the analysis of the data, it is intended to follow up this point in the interviews phase of this research.

Statement 10f asks respondents to comment on the level to which staff are appraised and valued in relation to their future potential within the organisation. Again opinion was divided on this proposition. There were

almost an equal number of respondents who generally felt this statement was true as false (59% as opposed to 47%). The rating scale analysis indicated staff felt the statement was to some degree true [a ratio of 21:6] although this was not so clear cut in the analysis of individual responses.

An analysis by work-role in the college indicated the most positive responses were received from part-time staff. An analysis by the School in which the respondents worked was inconclusive. As a result of it is difficult, from the small number of returns, to account for the results obtained for this question. As with other propositions in this orientation further data needs to be collected in the interview phase to gain a better insight in to this issues raised by this proposition.

### **Results from Section 11: Loyalty and Commitment Orientation**

Section Eleven of the questionnaire is described as investigating the perceived level of commitment and loyalty to be found in an organisation [Brown op cit]. The focus of this section of the questionnaire can be identified with the level of strength or weakness of an organisational culture discussed by Weiner [1988] and Robinson and Judge [2006]. This section of the questionnaire includes statements on the length of service of staff [11a]; staff loyalty [11b, 11c, 11f]; the organisation's commitment

to their staff [11d, 11g]; and the level of preferential treatment given to certain employees [11e].

Returns from this orientation provided a mixed picture, with staff indicating that although they had a loyalty to the college and particularly to some of their colleagues, many were concerned about the loyalty of the college to them. As a result, some staff did not see their long-term future in the setting.

Statement 11a asks respondents to comment on the proposition 'There are a lot of long servers in this organisation'. The results obtained for this proposition indicate a range of perceptions from the staff. While the majority (ten staff) indicated this proposition to be definitely or mostly true, nearly half indicated it was definitely or mostly false. However, once again the language composition of the statement may account for some of results obtained. As there is no definition of a 'long-termer' in this proposition this is left to the subjective interpretation of the respondent; a 'long termer' to one person may not be so to another. Such a difficulty may have distorted the results obtained. However, in order to gain a deeper understanding of this issue further research is needed. A rating scale analysis of this statement was not undertaken.

Statements 11b, 11c and 11f focus on a number of propositions on staff perception of loyalty in their organisation. Returns to proposition 11b

indicated the majority of staff considered themselves as loyal members of the college, producing a figure of over seventy percent of returns. The rating scale analysis supported this claim, with a ratio of 24: 6. An analysis by both work-role and the School in which the respondents taught proved to be inconclusive.

Statement 11c asks staff to comment on their thinking about a long-term career within the college. Both the rating scale analysis [27: 5] and individual responses to this proposition indicated the majority of staff were not committed to a long-term career in the college. Three respondents were very firm about this [placing their views in the definitely false category] and another nine indicating this was mostly false. An analysis of the data by either staff work-role or their age was inconclusive. However, an analysis by the School the staff worked in did indicate this feeling was much stronger in one School [School B] than in the other. This will also be followed up at the interview stage of this research.

Statement 11f focuses on a similar proposition to that in 11c above, asking staff to comment on their long term future working in the setting. The results provided a range of answers across all four responses. Although most of the respondents indicated this proposition was definitely or mostly true, the majority was small [53% to 47%]. However,

this small majority is not reflected in the rating scale analysis where the ratio is strongly towards definitely or mostly true responses [22: 2]. It may be argued that both the level of responsibility of staff, i.e. younger staff looking for promotion, or their age, i.e. those nearing retirement, may have an effect on their thinking on this issue. However, analysis of the data by both work-role and age was inconclusive.

Statement 11d turns the circumstances analysed in propositions 11b, c and f on its head, asking respondents to comment on their perception of the organisation's commitment to its workforce. The results obtained from Statement 11d provided an inconclusive picture in this setting. The returns show almost an equal split between those staff who feel the organisation had a commitment to them and those who did not [47% as opposed to 53%]. However, the rating scale analysis shows a 17:7 ratio towards those who felt this statement was true. Although an analysis by work-role was inconclusive, as was that by the School in which they worked, it is arguable that the general discontent illustrated in some data analysed in the earlier statements in Orientation 11 may be reflected in the responses to this statement. Again, this will be followed up in the interview phase of this study.

Another statement concerned with the loyalty of the college to its workforce [11g] asks respondents to comment on the statement 'When

the going gets tough the loyalty of the organisation to the workforce is questionable.' As with many of the responses in this section, the returns to this proposition provide a mixed picture. Although the majority of staff [59%] indicated this proposition, based on a difficult concept to define, is mostly true and three others that it is definitely true, a large proportion of staff regard this proposition as false. However, the rating scale analysis overemphasises this response, providing a ratio of 17: 7 towards the mostly or definitely false responses. Over eighty percent of the managers who responded felt this statement was mostly true. An analysis by work-role to this proposition was inconclusive.

Statement 11e considers the status of long-term staff from a different perspective, asking participants to gauge the level of preferential treatment given to them. The response to this proposition was much more polarised than many others in this orientation. An overwhelming number of respondents [16/17 staff, 94% of the returns] indicate this statement was definitely or mostly false. The rating scale analysis indicates a similar result that more staff felt preferential treatment is not given to long-serving staff. The proportion here was 8:2].

### **Results for Section 12: Work Orientation**

The last section of the questionnaire is concerned with what Brown [op cit] describes as 'work orientation', the culture of work in an

organisation. This Section asks for responses to statements relating to the level of motivation and enjoyment to working in an organisation [12a, 12d]; the attitude of staff to work [12b, 12c, 12f]; the distribution of the work-load between senior and other staff [12e]; and the effort required to work in an organisation [12g].

Returns from this orientation indicated staff felt a sense of enjoyment and motivation as well as commitment to their work. Further there are feelings that their managers and senior staff work hard. Statement 12a asks respondents to comment on the level of enjoyment staff derived from the work they do in an organisation. The results obtained for this proposition indicated the majority of respondents enjoyed their work in the college. This is supported by the rating scale analysis with a ratio of 27:3. Nine respondents indicated this was mostly true and three that the statement was definitely true [71%]. A breakdown of this data produces no particular pattern that work role in the college, the School in which the respondents worked or their age had any impact on the selection they made.

Statement 12d presents a similar proposition, asking respondents to comment on their perceptions of the level of motivation in an organisation. Although the rating scale analysis suggests this statement is to a greater or lesser extent true among the staff taking part in the survey, where a ratio of 21:5 is recorded, the evidence collected from

individual returns is less conclusive. Although a majority stated motivation was not a problem in the college [a 53% return] this was only a small majority. The evidence suggests that just about as many staff see motivation as a problem in the college as those who do not. Analysis by work role, the School in which respondents worked as well as their age were inconclusive. Unfortunately, there is a problem of focus with this proposition as it is not clear whose motivation should be the focus for the response, that of the respondent answering the question, other colleagues working with them or that in the organisation as a whole, a difficulty that may have led to problems for some of the respondents.

Statements 12b, 12c and 12f focus on the willingness of staff to work hard. Statement 12b asks respondents to comment on the proposition 'people in this organisation are always willing to take a break.' The data received from individual staff provides a complex picture of data received for this proposition. Approximately half of the respondents felt there was culture of taking breaks in the college, while the other half disagreed [53% to 47%]. However, the rating scale analysis is contradictory to that obtained from the raw data [a ratio of 25:4]. An analysis of the data by work-role was inconclusive, as were those by the School they worked in and their age.

Statement 12c asks respondents to comment on the statement 'people here live to work, rather than work to live'. An analysis of the individual return indicated over half of the respondents [11/17, 65%] regarded the statement as being to a greater or lesser extent true, the rest [35%] were not convinced of this. An analysis of the data, taking into account the work role of staff, the school in which they worked and their age, all proved to be inconclusive.

Statement 12f asks respondents to comment on the maxim 'business before pleasure' within their organisation. Responses to this proposition were more polarized than many in this section. This polarization is reflected by both the rating scale analysis [a ratio of 25: 4 towards the truth of statement that college staff put business before pleasure] and the analysis of individual returns. Eleven staff stated this maxim was mostly true in the college and another said this was generally so [71%]. An analysis by work-role indicates part-time staff were most likely to feel this statement was untrue. An analysis by the School in which the respondents taught was similarly inconclusive.

Statement 12e asks respondents to comment on a proposition that senior staff in their organisation work harder than other grades. The data collected from the targeted college staff on this proposition is both inconclusive and inconsistent. The small majority of staff [53%] thought this proposition might be to some extent true. However the rating scale

analysis is more decisive here and indicates that senior staff were felt to work as hard as staff on other grades [a ratio of 20:6]. An analysis of the data by the work-role of the staff was inconclusive, as was that conducted on the School in which they taught.

The final statement in this section [12g] asks staff to indicate how hard they feel they have to work in their organisation (their 'level of sustained or intensive effort'). The results obtained indicated respondents felt the proposition was false. The rating scale analysis indicates the extent of this polarization [a ratio of 36: 2]. Individual returns show that fifteen respondents [88% of returns] indicated this was a mostly or definitely false proposition; leading to the view they felt working at the college required a sustained and intensive effort. An analysis by work-role indicated that most managers felt this proposition was definitely true. Most full-time lecturers indicated this proposition was mostly true. An analysis of the School in which the respondents' taught showed this view was held equally in both Schools taking part in the survey. An analysis by the age of the respondent was, however, inconclusive.

### **Summary of the analysis of the questionnaire phase**

As a result of the analysis of the data collected at the questionnaire stage of this research, and bearing in mind the limitations of generalisability

from this small sample discussed in Chapter 4 above [a 56.6% return]the following conclusions can be drawn.

An analysis of the additional information requested in the first part of the questionnaire [Questions A to D] indicated that no connection could be made between any of the questions asked and the response made to the statements. Only in a minority of propositions was there any linkage between the work-role of respondent and the responses received, although the low number of responses received made any statistical analysis inappropriate.

The analysis of the data received provided a picture of the culture of the organisation, with many positive indicators alongside a few negative ones. Among the positive indicators, the majority of returns expressed a degree of helpfulness and consideration from colleagues, as well as evidence of team working, although this latter feature was felt to be somewhat underdeveloped by some respondents. There was also little evidence of extensive professional jealousy. The majority of staff indicated lines of communication with their immediate colleagues were strong and managers were reported as providing good two-way lines of communication with their staff. Although, there was evidence of a lack of consistent agreement over the interpretation of the rules and regulations and the effectiveness of control systems the majority of staff indicated

they understood and obeyed these rules. A majority of staff also indicated any violations of rules and regulations would be reported to an appropriate person.

The college was regarded as a place where people have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, particularly in discussion with other colleagues. Although the majority of staff felt they were given the opportunity to develop and mature professionally, there was less confidence expressed in the learning systems available to develop these professional skills. Respondents also reported the college to be a business-like organisation, where the majority of teaching staff enjoyed working. The majority of returns also suggested the college was a place where planning ahead occurred and where there was a firm focus on the future. However, it was reported from all levels within the workforce that these plans were not always well known. Perhaps unexpectedly in the circumstances, the College was reported to be a place where change in policy and procedure was undertaken slowly.

Negative responses were received in only eight of the statements set out in four of the orientations [Orientations 2, 9, 10 and 11] although there was no direct inter-connection between any of the individual statements. Only in Orientation 2 [power and conflict] and 10 [Future] was there more than one negative response. One orientation [enjoyment of work]

was particularly negative, producing merely two positive responses from the seven statements. However, this negativity towards work is supported by other recent national research. While an Institute of Management survey [Smith 1997] indicated a job satisfaction rate of only seventy-seven percent of staff working in the public sector, a survey among staff working across a range of HEIs [THES, w/e. 26 August 2006, p. 4] reported this group to be among the least satisfied workers in the UK].

There was evidence of staff displaying a lack of professional trust in the college, although there was not a consistent pattern across all the relevant statements in the various orientations in the questionnaire. The returns relating to professional respect were for example more positive. Nevertheless, this finding was considered to be important and it was followed up closely in the subsequent interview phase in the study.

Further, these data indicated there were negative feelings over the amount of time given to thinking through ideas. The returns also indicated staff felt their work often went unrewarded. This situation is highlighted in mixed economy colleges as staff working on HE courses there are generally paid at FE rates of pay and conditions rather than those commensurate with staff working in a university. This factor may also account for the negative returns about the long-term loyalty of staff to the organisation.

Other negative returns indicated that staff felt that good ideas were not always necessarily shared among colleagues and that there were communication difficulties in the setting. Perhaps also allied to the lack of communication and the sharing of good ideas was also an indication by some staff in the survey who felt of there were work-cliques within the college. However there was little reported experience of wider antagonism from such groups.

Nevertheless, the overall impression gained from those data received at this stage of the project provides a generally positive view of the majority of the propositions. Nevertheless, the level of agreement among the staff must be regarded as relatively weak, as in only eight of the eighty four questions [9.5%] the overall agreement rate is over 65%. Propositions where this was the case include: the professional imaginativeness of colleagues [1a]; the level of trust in the organisation [2a]; the systematic organisation of work in the college [4b]; the degree of acceptance of professional conventions and expectations [4c]; that useful professional information is readily passed on to other colleagues [5d]; the absence of stereotypical organisational people [6d]; the level of informality used to address colleagues [2b]; and that business does not always come before pleasure in their professional relationships [12f]. Importantly, in relation to the focus of the interview stage of this research, it is these eight

negative responses that will formulate the framework for the interview stage of this research set out in the next section of this chapter.

Although naturally the focus of the research on personal feeling towards an organisational culture called for subjective judgements to be made, the lack of clarity of some of the language used in the statements set out in the questionnaire by Brown [op cit] may also have caused some difficulties for respondents. As a result of this lack of clarity some of the statements lacked objectivity, requiring subjective judgements to be made about the meaning of the statement by respondents, e.g. the interpretation of 'slowly' [4e]; 'learning' [5c]; and 'mavericks' [6b] making data analysis more problematic. Although this was a difficulty foreseen by those who participated in the pilot stage of the process, the extent to which it may have caused difficulties for respondents in this phase of the process remains unclear.

Similar difficulties may also have occurred with problems where the statements used phrasing where their meaning was unclear and thus more dependent on the interpretation of the reader. Statement 1c is one such example of this where 'value' and 'reward' are used in this way and where in reality they can have two different meanings. Again statement 5g leaves the reader to distinguish in their own mind what 'a learning'

and 'a doing' culture is and where even an understanding of the relevant literature may not be helpful.

The analysis also provides evidence of a discrepancy in a small number of cases between some of the raw data scores and the results of the ratio scale analysis, at times leading to inconsistencies, even contradictions. This phenomenon is difficult to account for other than with problems in the way the rating scale had originally been set out. However, as this inconsistency occurred most frequently when there was a negative return from staff in the setting it was felt that the interview stage of this research would usefully provide further information on these cases.

## **THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS**

### **Introduction**

As indicated in the literature review both Handy [op cit] and Brown [op cit] argue a single approach to collecting data on organisational culture is insufficiently rigorous. Further, as the returns from the questionnaire phase were somewhat low it was felt this additional phase would also help to strengthen the quality of the data. As a result, follow-up interviews were conducted with thirteen staff who had completed the questionnaire. These staff were all volunteers who were asked if they

would participate in this stage of the project. Of those asked no one refused to participate in this second phase.

The purpose of these interviews was two-fold. Firstly, to investigate in some detail the perceived level of effectiveness of the questionnaire and secondly, to investigate in more detail some of the issues raised in the negative responses received in the questionnaires. By asking largely, open-ended questions within the framework set out in Appendix 2 it was hoped to gain a deeper insight into the factors accounting for this negativity and to what extent this was a common expression among staff in both of the Schools. Importantly, because both of the sensitive nature of the data collected in these interviews, as well as the need for the continuance of a close working relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees, it was felt to be important to preserve the anonymity of the participating staff. Consequently, no further details of the participating staff will be presented here.

### **Sampling strategy**

The sampling for the interviews was undertaken as a non-probabilistic, purposeful approach in order to gain both in-depth and insightful information from this stage of the research [Denscombe op cit, Cohen et al op cit]. Participation in this phase was based on a convenience sample, cf. Cohen op cit, of those who volunteered. Fortunately, all those asked

to take part in this stage of the research were willing to do so. In this naturalistic approach to data collection care was taken to ensure the sample included a similar range of staff to that which took part in the questionnaire stage. To ensure a balance across the level of seniority and length of service staff were drawn from both of the Schools (described as School A and School B). Participants included both Heads of School a Deputy Head of one School and ten members of the both the full-time and part-time lecturing staff in the Schools. There was also a gender balance between male and female lecturers who were interviewed. The length of experience of staff in the two schools was also taken into account.

It was felt to be important to capture not only the views of a large number at this stage but also the range of experience of the staff, as well as the range of roles played by them in both Schools. It was felt factors such as the job roles of staff, their seniority, status and length of service might impact on their experiences as well as on their answers and comments as a result of their interview. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis at mutually convenient times, lasting between ninety minutes and two hours.

Although a numerical approach was used to analyse the data from the questionnaire this approach was abandoned at the interview stage. At

this stage such an approach would have been largely unhelpful. Rather, and despite the concern shown by some, e.g. Denscombe op cit, that data based on personal memories and emotional responses can be unreliable, as the purpose of the interview stage was to capture the emotions, feelings and experiences of staff and to provide them with the opportunity to expand on these in detail, these data were subject to a narrative analysis [Merriam op cit p.159].

This narrative analysis focused on a framework of questions based on the negative responses to the eight statements identified from the analysis of the questionnaire. As a result the questions asked at the interview stage were based on the following eight themes:

- The negativity surrounding the atmosphere of trust in the organisation (Statement 2a). The intention here was to enquire in greater detail about the current level of professional trust among staff and their reasons and experiences which helped formulate their views.
- The criticism of policy and practice (Statement 2c). The intention here was to question staff about what criticisms they have and had met within their School of recent policy relating particularly to their work role.
- The existence of cliques which look after themselves (Statement 2e). The intention here was to question staff on their evidence of the existence of influential cliques in the college and their effect on the working practices in the college.
- The level of personal antagonism from other staff (Statement 9f). The intention here was to investigate the extent to which staff had experienced personal antagonism and, where appropriate, how this has affected their working lives.
- The level of forward planning (Statement 10a). The intention here was to ask about the staff member's understanding of the DEC initiative, as well as their experiences and understanding of aspects of forward planning being undertaken in their School.

- The level of discussions of policy change (Statement 10e). The intention here was to elicit to what extent there has been discussions on policy in their School, what form these discussions have taken and the resulting consequences of these discussions
- The long-term view taken on matters in the college (Statement 10g). The intention here was to question staff about the DEC initiative as a long-term plan in the college and also to question the staff more closely as to the implications of the DEC initiative on their professional lives
- The level of commitment of the college SMT to its workforce (Statement 11d). The intention here was to question staff about their perceptions of the commitment of the senior management team (SMT) to the DEC initiative.

The value of using negative responses is discussed by Geer [1967] who argues this approach provides specific goals from which to work. With this point in mind, the goals of the second phase of this study are to investigate systematically the experiences of staff as a result of the DEC initiative and to elicit not only “exactly what was going on” [Flick 1998, p.41] but also to discover what staff felt was relevant [cf. Cohen et al op cit]. As a result, the interview phase of this study set out to: provide a deeper insight into the more negative aspects of the DEC initiative; allow the systematic evaluation of the staff’s experiences of change in the organisational culture of the setting, particularly with regard to the more complex levels of cultural analysis described in the model by Schein [op cit]; allow the interviewer the best opportunity to understand the actions of those involved and the complexity of the circumstances.

A pragmatic view was taken of the process of checking the accuracy of those data received. Firstly, consideration was given to checking the

accuracy of data provided by interviewees at the end of the interview. A verbal recap of the summary of the main points was provided by the interviewer, allowing the correction of information to be undertaken as well as giving the opportunity for the interviewee to provide any further information [cf. Denscombe op cit, Cohen et al op cit]. Secondly, the 'rolling interview' approach that was adopted would be useful as a confirmatory device, e.g. Kvale op cit. This approach, through the use of semi structured interviews around these eight themes, would allow the best opportunity for data to contribute to the developing emerging theory from within the setting..

### **Analysing data from the interviews**

Although a quantitative approach had been taken to analyse those data received from the questionnaire phase of the project, this strategy was abandoned at the interview stage as it was regarded as unhelpful in providing the 'rich, thick' data required from this phase' e.g. Cohen et al op cit. Rather, and despite the concerns shown by some, e.g. Denscombe [op cit] that data based on personal memories and emotional responses can lack reliability, at this stage the analysis of data received was undertaken as a narrative analysis, e.g. Cohen et al op cit, Merriam op cit. The narrative analysis approach was used in order to collect the thoughts and concerns of staff as naturalistically as possible and also to

present them systematically. Further, it was hoped this approach would aid the capture of the impressions, emotions and experiences and the consequent judgement and change in the thinking of staff who were interviewed. Although it has been pointed out, e.g. Coffey and Atkinson op cit, that there is no best way of analysing data collected through this approach, it was also felt the narrative analysis approach would allow the interviewees to 'tell their own story' both easily and coherently within the predetermined framework of questions [cf. Cortazzi 1993, Flick op cit]. This approach provided the interviewees with the opportunity to expand on these details as well as helping to focus on the potentially complex emergent themes. In these circumstances a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to data was taken.

The results of these interviews are analysed in the subsequent sub-section of this chapter and are set out with the first sub-section focusing on any problems the interviewees had encountered with completing the questionnaire. The subsequent sub-sections focus on the findings relating to the eight themes identified above. The text of these interviews is set out in Appendix 3.

## **Completing the questionnaire**

All of the staff who participated in the interview phase of this research indicated they had experienced some difficulties focusing their answers when completing the questionnaire. As with those who had participated in the pilot study, some of the interviewees reported problems with considering if they should make their responses in relation to their immediate colleagues or to their experiences in the wider college community [Interviews 2, 3, 5, 8 and 12]. This problem was clearly expressed by two respondents. One reported her difficulties in terms of her working environment and being isolated from the wider college [Interview 12] while another interviewee saw the School and the wider college as “very different things” [Interview 3]. Further, while some other interviewees implied they had no difficulty in separating the two issues, others spoke of their confusion between answering the questions in relation to their perceptions of the wider organisational culture in the college and the culture within their School [Interview 8] and, in one case consistently, separating the two [Interview 12]. What effects these difficulties had on the quality and reliability of the answers received overall must remain unknown.

Staff in both Schools involved in this phase were willing to take time to respond at some length about the effect of change in the wider college on

their working environment. Some interviewees indicated they felt the process of completing the questionnaire had been interesting [Interviews 1, 8] but lengthy [Interviews 1, 2, 8, 11, 12]. However, for others the length of time taken to complete the questionnaire was not a problem [Interview 9].

### **The DEC initiative**

Despite the somewhat negative returns from staff to Statement 10a and 10b in the questionnaire, relating to future planning in the setting, all staff in the interview phase of the research indicated they were aware of the DEC initiative. Some staff spoke at length about its significance and potential implications on their professional lives during these interviews. As a result, the evidence collected at the interview phase of the project is a surprising contradiction to that collected at the questionnaire phase. Although this is difficult to account for the most obvious answer is that staff at the questionnaire stage did not equate the DEC initiative with future planning in the setting. The comment in Interview 1 that it [DEC] “seemed to be very much a bunch of people who were DEC but we had little knowledge of what it was and what it meant” is perhaps an indication that some staff also felt they were not part of the planning process. One interview further illustrated this possibility when stating “We have been largely informed of developments haven’t we?” [adding]

“I’ve attended all of the meetings where we have been told what is happening.”

This phase of the research provided a range of views among staff towards the DEC initiative and its impact on their working lives. Whereas some staff were very positive about its introduction, others were much more negative, even hostile, about its impact. Reactions at the time of the interviews can be categorised broadly into three groups on a negative-positive continuum.

In general terms all staff were positive about DEC up to the point when School B had a separate meeting with the Principal [see interviewee [11]]. This meeting, at which the future direction of the School and how it might change its working routines and focus, changed views considerably. Interviewee 1 described a dialogue taking place between the School and the SMT but “only up to the point was reached where [there was] a clear dichotomy of feelings about the direction the School should take”. Comments such as “We don’t know what is going to happen now” [Interview 11] and “The staff don’t like DEC” and “It has caused an enormous amount of tension in the School” [Interview 3] were typical of this increasing negativity.

A second group of staff, typified by interviewees 2 and 5, remained cautious of the impact of the DEC initiative. However, an analysis of the data indicates staff cautiousness took different perspectives. While interviewee 2 took a somewhat distant view of the DEC initiative, as if it was largely a demand set by people elsewhere, remarked they were "uncertain as to if we will be able to do all it's suggested it might", others took a more conceptual view. Interviewee 5, for example stated "I'm not sure about DEC. What is DEC? What value has it had for my school?"

Staff in School A were generally much more positive about the initiative. One stated "DEC is a challenge" [Interview 6] and another said DEC had had "a major impact." on their working life. In their view, it had also drawn staff together, which they regarded as "very helpful" [Interview 9]. Another commented that although they were "cautiously optimistic" about DEC they "remained uncertain as to if it will be able to do all it suggests it might", adding, "You know, does what it says on the tin" [Interview 2].

### **Effects of change**

Despite the somewhat contradictory evidence in later orientations, responses to Statements 2a and 2c in the questionnaire indicated a considerable lack of professional trust, as well as criticism of recent policy and practice in the college. As a result, a key theme of the

interview stage of this project was to investigate these feelings further, particularly in relation to the DEC initiative.

For many of those working on HE programmes the DEC initiative was both a personal and professional challenge which both individually and as part of a team of staff in their School were interested in participating in. Most of the staff interviewed stated they had been initially supportive of the DEC initiative, e.g. Interviews 6, 9, 11. However, almost all of the interviewees underlined a developing level of criticism and professional frustration in both of the Schools over time. An analysis indicates these criticisms were threefold relating to: the development of HE within the wider DEC initiative, the management of their School and, lastly, the influence they as staff had on strategic policy decisions relating to HE provision.

Importantly, staff from both Schools reported increasing tensions in the management of the DEC initiative between the SMT and their School, which they felt were counter-productive to its wider development. Staff from both of the Schools pointed out the introduction of the initiative had led to changes in the working routines in their School: changes which, in the view of some interviewees, did not suit its role or its aspirations to enhance its HE provision. In this context one interviewee described their “developing lack of confidence in the college management” [Interview 3]

another spoke of “problems of trust within the organisation, particularly with the senior management team” [Interview 4]. As a result questions were posed by those interviewed as to the future of School B in particular and their role in it. Typical was the comment by Interviewee 8 who asked “Where exactly are we going?” while Interviewee 12 posed similar questions: “Where are we going now? What is our future?”

The evidence indicated there were differences between the levels of willingness of staff in both Schools to fully encompass the DEC initiative. Although some staff across both of the schools expressed their willingness [e.g. “My school bought into DEC ‘big-style”... “We responded pretty positively to DEC”, “Some staff were really up for it” [and] “We were encouraged to be ambitious. Perhaps we were too ambitious” [Interview 2] and “We felt it was our future” [Interview 2]. Others though were less convinced than interviewee 2 commenting, for example, “People in the School do not want to buy into the idea of a university” [Interview 5] and “There were heated and emotional discussions on DEC.....DEC was a source of some tension between the School and SMT” [Interview 1] and also “He [the Principal] came with his brand for us and a baronial approach. This has led to a clash of personalities and a considerable lack of trust between us as a School and SMT” [Interview 4].

Importantly, although there was a discernable commonality of anxieties about the management of DEC in both Schools, there was a considerable difference of focus for these anxieties by the issues raised by staff who worked in School A from those working in School B. While staff in School A spoke of worries about their work/life balance in the new circumstances, they were generally positive about their experiences of the management of their School, indicating the DEC initiative had presented little change in the School's management style.

The comments received from School B on the effect of the changes were overwhelmingly negative. Staff in School B questioned the purpose of the change on what one described as "a well established, successful and innovative School" [Interview 12]. Interviewee 1, for example, spoke of SMT wanting to 'get rid' of their School and to "change what was already there", while another described the School being "systematically [.....] attacked". The view of the impact of the new initiative on HE provision can be best summed up by the thoughts of interviewee 11 who described "acrimony" and "hostility" as a result of what had happened and people being "fed up" and "pissed off". Some staff in School B were even speaking of "crisis management" and "management by fire-fighting" [Interview 3].

Particular concerns were expressed by staff from School B about the role of the senior management [SMT] within the DEC initiative. Many responses were particularly negative in this context. Some interviewees reported a declining morale and of staff being unsettled to the point of leaving as a result of this declining morale. One interviewee [Interview 3] spoke of the effect this decline was having on students in her School, reporting "they are increasingly aware of some of the problems we are having." Her concerns also related to the potential effect this would have on student numbers.

The interviews also provided evidence that some staff were not clear in their own minds as to the full implications of the changes that were being made by the DEC initiative. Again there was a distinction between the evidence gathered from the two Schools, Staff in School B was more negative than those in School A. One member in School B [interview 1] spoke of being "left out on a limb" as a result of the DEC initiative, while others spoke of "muddled thinking [interview 2] and "a lack of any overall rationale" for the project [interview 4].

For some staff difficulties arose largely as the result of internal pressure relating to how best the School might meet the need to develop the skills and knowledge of the local population. Other interviewees saw government economic and social policies as the source of their

difficulties. An example of the latter was a member of staff who felt the changes being undertaken were a result of external pressure from government and quasi-government organisations, she mentioned in particular The Quality Assurance Agency [QAA] and The Higher Education Funding Council [HEFCE [Interview 3]. This interviewee also argued such changes must inevitably have an effect on the role and functioning of the School, and thus its culture. For other staff from the same School the real changes the DEC initiative was bringing focused on the development of FE provision rather than HE, as that, as it was put by one interviewee “is our real bread and butter” [Interview 11].

Some of the criticism raised by staff in both Schools related to changes in the senior management within their School. Staff from School B, which had recently appointed a new Head of School, were particularly critical of subsequent internal changes that had occurred. Criticisms raised included the School’s new title [thus its changed branding and identity] as well as the apparently growing lack of autonomy within it to make independent decisions. A respondent considered the impact of the current position to be one where “You are given responsibility but its not real responsibility” [Interview 3].

Similarly, criticism was also raised about the imposition of policy “from above through a culture of control rather than delegation” over staffing

levels and budgets. One respondent in School B spoke of a developing culture, where she felt the traditions in the School were "being lost". The current position she described as being "in limbo ...where no one was [sic] talking to us" [Interview 3]. It was in the view of another member of the same School that the Head of School was professionally on "a steep learning curve" [Interview 1] and where there was "a developing feeling of being messed about" [again Interview 3]. A further interviewee described the situation as leading to "a culture of a lack of professional confidence" [Interview 12].

Staff in School A generally identified different contributory factors to the difficulties they were facing from those in School B. Although one interviewee in School A. commented she felt the DEC initiative was "the biggest problem at the moment" and "not liked by many staff" [Interview 8], the rest of the staff of the same School regarded the initiative in more positive terms. A common theme from those interviewed in School A was that both the professional and personal development which was being undertaken, including the writing and presentation of new programmes, as well as the development of personal learning would inevitably change the culture within their School; with a greater emphasis in their working lives being placed on HE provision.

Responses from the interview phase provide evidence of increased fragmentation of the culture [cf. Martin op cit]. In school B there is evidence that as a result of the changes the 'person orientated' model of organisational culture described by Handy [op cit] is being increasingly eroded. Rather than the 'light rein', professional judgement and experience approach to the management described by Handy [op cit], staff in School B provide evidence of a more 'club culture' approach [Handy op cit] with a greater degree of control from the centre.

The evidence also indicates few staff in School B felt motivated and empowered as a result of fully understanding the DEC initiative. As a result, there is evidence of greater cultural inconsistency in the setting and even the development of a counter culture [cf. Martin and Seihl op cit] where an increasingly uneasy relationship between the staff and the Principal and his SMT was identifiable. As a result, in School B there is a process of metaphorically 'circling the wagons' with the developing resistance leading to a counter culture within the School.

As a result, the increasing gap between the views of some staff and those held by SMT was enhancing an overall lack of organisational cohesion described in the literature, e.g. Trice and Beyer [1993]. This in turn was not only loosening the glue bonding the organisation together but also heightening the conflict between its members. Although it is argued by

some [e.g. Brown op cit] that conflict and antagonism can have a positive and creative impact on the culture of an organisation, at this stage of the change process in this organisation this was not evident. Rather the evidence collected suggested the effects of the development of the DEC initiative at this point was having a more negative and divisive impact on its organisation culture.

### **Staff discussions on the changes**

The analysis of the data indicated that the proposed changes had led to 'lively' discussions and an exchange of ideas and views among colleagues [Statement 10e]. The evidence indicates staff working in both of the Schools had some discussions on comparatively similar topics focussing on issues that were professionally problematic, even intractable. Discussions in both Schools also focused on the potential effect of the DEC initiative on both their professional and personal lives.

However, the evidence collected indicated there were considerable differences in the tone of these discussions in the two Schools. As described above, staff in School A saw the new DEC initiative presenting greater opportunities for professional development and personal enhancement compared with those working in School B. In School A this had led to major discussions about the nature of the new programmes

they should offer as well as ways of combining some traditional themes to present innovative programmes to potential students.

The majority of staff in School A. reported the discussions on the DEC initiative focused on its impact on their life/work balance. As a result of the DEC initiative staff in this School, as well as undertaking their normal teaching duties, were also developing a number of new degree programmes, and completing their own postgraduate qualifications. The staff in School A. also consistently reported discussions on developing good practice towards teaching these new programmes. Other interviewees [interviews 3, 6, 10] indicated such developments in School A. were seen as the development of "a new brand" for the School, stating "having created a product, discussions took place on how best to develop it." An analysis of the data indicates the impact of the DEC initiative on the tactical and organisational management of their school was discussed much less by staff in School A than their colleagues working in School B.

Staff in School A reported a degree of tiredness with the hard work and effort they were putting into the development of provision in their School and their own personal academic development [e.g. Interviews 6 and 9]. There was some evidence of difficulties in retaining staff in this School also, but nowhere near the extent of that reported in School B. Rather

staff in School A reported more difficulty in retaining some of their staff on full-time contracts whilst completing their studies. One interviewee also emphasised the value placed on the staff in School A and the excellent work they were doing in very difficult circumstances.

In contrast, in-depth probing of staff in School B, through a series of detailed explicit questions allowed staff to express their feelings at length [e.g. interviews 3 and 4]. Some of these staff described professional pressures and anxieties within their School. Interviewees 1 and 12, for example, reported "heated emotions", while interviewee 2 described "increased tensions" between staff, (which they argued) affected "both their working relationships and the work/life balance of the staff." Worries about the future of their subject area and the effect of the time that had been spent on discussing this during the current academic year were also seen as major concerns.

These discussions were initiated as a result of a number of factors including: the lack of consultation over the future of the School; the way in which decisions had been taken by the SMT; and the imposition of new and unnecessary changes to what staff regarded as sound working practices and their own professional future. All of these factors, in the eyes of staff in School B, were adding to the increasing negativity of their experiences and to a sense of increased divisiveness between themselves

and SMT. Again this feature resulted in the increased influence of a negative sub-culture within one part of the setting.

## **Future Planning**

Detailed questioning was used to probe staff consciousness of the amount of future planning being undertaken. Again data collected indicated there were considerable differences between the staff in the two Schools, particularly in relation to their active participation in the process. While some staff in both schools indicated they did not expect to be involved in planning at a strategic level, others implied some involvement in strategic planning or even within their own School would have been useful, e.g. Interviews 11 and 13.

While all staff felt the DEC initiative was a long-term plan, best described in the words of one respondent as "a significant event in the history of the college" [Interviewee 2] there were indications of concerns that there was an unspecified, even covert, agenda within the DEC initiative.

Perhaps not surprisingly in the light of the comments reported above, all staff interviewed in School B questioned the extent to which they would benefit professionally from the DEC initiative. Many staff, particularly in School B, also indicated a developing cynicism over the DEC initiative,

again reinforcing the increasingly widening cultural gap between the two Schools.

The staff in School A was generally more positive about the future planning for the DEC initiative. In the words of one interviewee we have "bought into the plan" [Interview 2] while another felt "for this to work, we all have to be in it together" [Interview13]. However, one interview from this school was less positive, talking of "strategic drift" and a lack of a sense of direction" [Interview 9]. For others, the future and the DEC project depended on the role of SMT.

Staff in School B was generally much more negative about future planning. Not surprisingly many from this school were very uncertain about their futures. An interesting analysis by one interviewee [Interviewee 7] during their interview provided an interesting insight into one person's view of the situation. This analysis presented three streams of opinion as emerging from the staff in this School. In their view, one stream of opinion argued the future for School B was to be closure and this was a deliberate act by the SMT. A second group also felt the School was to be closed but this would be an unplanned outcome; a situation which they felt the SMT may regret over time. The third group held no strong views on who was to blame for the circumstances that had arisen. This last group were described by one interviewee as "being unable or

unwilling to read the signs". Although an interesting personal analysis by the interviewee, the accuracy of this analysis remains questionable.

As a result of their meeting with the Principal, staff in School B also consistently reported difficulties and tensions when direct discussions took place with SMT. One person interviewed went as far as asserting "in the current climate there is no negotiation..." [arguing] "...even pseudo-negotiation would be useful" [Interview 3]. However, another perhaps best summed up the overall feeling of those interviewed in this School on this topic, stating "its sense of purpose has been lost at this time" and..."there seems to be little future for the School in its present role" [Interview 12]. The evidence collected here again emphasises the increased level of negativity in this School and evidence of the growth of a negative sub-culture.

## **Commitment**

The level of commitment within an organisation can be regarded as a positive re-enforcer of its culture. However, returns to statement 11d on the questionnaire, relating to the college's commitment to its workforce, indicated many staff questioned this statement. At the second phase of this research the concept of commitment was interpreted as the quality of the relationship between the SMT and the staff in both of the Schools.

The interviews conducted in both Schools indicated the SMT was regarded quite differently by staff in School A from School B. A minority of staff in School B held very strong views about the commitment of the SMT. It was from within School B that the most negativity, even antagonism was discernable. Although only one interviewee responded with a direct "no" to this question [Interview 12], some were not sure about the level of commitment of the SMT, .e.g. Interview 2, while others spoke of the increased levels of tension [Interview 1], decreased trust [Interview 4] and loyalty [Interview 7] and even aggression as a result of the changes to the function and the organisation of the school that the DEC initiative had made [Interviews 1 and 3].

The majority view of staff in School B was an increased negativity towards the level of commitment to their school and, as a consequence, their own role in the School. Some staff in School B regarded the commitment of SMT to be set within specific terms. (Interviewee 11 for example considered SMT was supportive of the staff in their work as long as the staff would be reciprocally supportive of them.) Discussions of these specific terms indicated different characteristics in the two Schools. One, for example, expressed the view that the SMT were not interested in the wider interests of the staff, stating they had "little or no sense of

loyalty" to their School. Very few staff in School B were positive about the commitment of SMT to their School.

In contrast, the staff working in School A were generally more positive about this level of commitment. While two member of staff in that School responded positively to this [interview 8, 11] some in this School expressed concerns about the commitment of the SMT. However, the nature of their concerns were different from those in School B. Perhaps, not surprisingly in the light of the planning and development being undertaken in this School as well as worries over their work/life balance outlined in the section above, staff in this School were concerned about teaching hours and salary levels.

Although worries over the commitment of staff in School A was considerably less overall than those described in School B, these concerns led to one member of staff explicitly saying there were feelings in his school that "staff were being exploited" [Interview 2]. Interviewees from School A also spoke of having to consider their long term future, particularly in relation to their salary. However, in contrast to the situation described by those working in School B no one interviewed in School A was considering leaving the college at this point. As with the effect of change on the increased fragmentation on the organisational culture of the college the evidence here indicates a level of negativity

sufficiently strong among some staff for them to be seeking employment elsewhere in the sector.

### **Self serving cliques**

An analysis of data received from statement 2e indicated there was some evidence of the influence of self-serving cliques within the setting. The interview phase of the study wished to confirm this finding and to investigate evidence to support this view. However, the response to this issue in the interview phase was mixed. While a minority of those interviewed were certain cliques existed in a number of forms in the college, both within their School and particularly between the SMT and the rest of the teaching staff others were less sure. More commonly reported was the isolation, sometimes seen as the cliquiness, of the relationship between the SMT and the rest of the teaching staff.

The difficulties in this relationship were commonly recognised in the interview stage by the majority of participants, with some of the comments received being particularly negative. One interviewee [Interview 9], for example, regarded the SMT as a "closed shop, which you either fitted into or not, or chose to fit into or not", with the Principal regarding staff as "stereotypes". Another interviewee [Interview 2] also reported "a growing gulf between SMT and the rest of the college".

However, in line with other staff they did not see this as a form of cliquiness.

From the viewpoint of another interviewee these cliques were based not only on the relationship between the SMT and the schools but also on differences in the corporate agendas of the two Schools. This interviewee [Interview 5] reported School B as having a "superior notion of what they do" to the extent that "they did not mix with any other part of the college". In the view of this interviewee School A also displayed a degree of insularity", with "its own private agenda .....but not so divorced from that of the rest of the college." For other staff the idea that their School was 'an elite' was seen as a more appropriate, perhaps less negative, word than clique. Interviewee 4 took this stance stating they were aware that they were part of a deliberately fostered elite that was intentionally separate.

A number of interviewees baulked at the idea of a clique, because they regarded it as a negative term. Interviewee 8 summed up the views of many in this group stating the word 'clique' "set a negative tone" and "was an inappropriate term." As with many others interviewed, they recognised a certain isolation in their position but considered themselves to be part of a 'working group', stating these were "groups with their own dynamic... ..based on their location in the college". To many of the

interviewees this was the reality of the charge of elitism, rather these were working groups based on their location with people with common interests. These staff also provided evidence to support that provided by Alvesson [op cit] of staff feeling their subject base was a factor in their working culture, as much as the culture of the organisation in which they were located.

### **Personal antagonism**

Statement 9f in the questionnaire indicated some staff experienced personal antagonism within the setting. The interview phase was used to seek confirmation of this and to elicit what form this antagonism took. However, when the staff was directly questioned about this only two interviewees made any direct reference to this. Although others interviewed described forms of antagonism they had recently met, particularly those working in School B, this antagonism was based on strategic decisions taken by SMT rather than personal antagonism. However, it was clear from many of those interviews conducted with staff from School B that this was becoming an increasingly personal issue. One interviewee from this School [Interview 11] described staff being 'totally pissed off' as a consequence of the decisions taken as a result of the DEC initiative.

As with the statement on cliques discussed above, some members of staff questioned the phrase 'personal antagonism' in the original questionnaire. For many the phrase 'personal antagonism' was a too terse and closely focussed phrase to express their views. As a result, there was a tendency towards staff searching for other words to describe their feelings. Words such as frustration and anger were more commonly used instead. Even then, staff who reported these feelings were often at pains to point out that these were isolated incidents rather than something which was continuous. Indeed, the interviewees were positive rather than negative when questioned on this issue. One for example, [Interviewee 6], despite problems with one member of the team, reported feelings of "professional goodwill" among staff in the School, while another, [Interviewee 8], a more recent recruit to the School, stated he had "not met this" [antagonism] and that "the immediate people in the School were particularly supportive" towards him. Quite why there was a discrepancy between the questionnaire and the interview data was not clear.

### **Summary of the interview phase**

As a result of the analysis of the data collected at the interview stage of this research the following points can be made. All the respondents in both of the Schools were more aware of the changes taking place in the

college as a result of the DEC initiative than that obtained in the questionnaire stage would suggest. It is hard to understand why this was the case but certainly the interviews conducted with staff brought the DEC initiative into a closer focus than was possible in the questionnaire phase.

These interviews also highlighted the growing differences between the two Schools in their response to the DEC initiative, and as a result the increasing fragmentation of the culture in the college. The data indicates there was evidence of increased polarization of the sub-cultures in the two Schools, particularly at the level described by Schein [op cit]. This increased polarization could be attributed largely to staff perceptions of what they had been told of their future role as a result of the DEC initiative by SMT.

The analysis indicates more of the staff from School A were positive about the changes and saw the initiative as both personally and professionally developmental than those working in School B. While all of the staff working in School A reported they continued to be enthusiastic about the initiative and were working hard to ensure the development of HE provision was successful, for many staff in School B the proposed changes not only were professionally questionable but also lacked compatibility with their perceptions of the purpose of the DEC initiative

as described in its literature [DEC 2003]. Indeed, some staff in this School were so demoralised they were reconsidering not only the future of the School but also their own future in it. Consequently, there was a discernable increase in both professional and personal anxiety in the minds of the staff in School B to the extent that the evidence received indicates the first shoots of growth of a distinctly negative sub-culture, even in some cases a counter-culture, in School B as a result of the introduction of the DEC initiative.

Despite the traditions of the loose decentralization of organisational culture traditionally found in HE setting, e.g. Kerr op cit, Ashby op cit Bok op cit, Hanan and Silver op cit, the DEC initiative had acted (or been used by SMT) as a catalyst for change in the function and purposes of the two Schools, particularly in School B. Arguably the actions of the SMT and in particular the Principal (none of whom were included in this survey) had a considerable effect on the thinking and attitudes displayed by all the staff at the time of the interview phase of this research. This was particularly noticeable in relation to the differences in the evidence obtained from the questionnaire and those from the interview stage, particularly as the gap between the completion of the questionnaire by staff and the start of the interview phase was less than a month. This may raise questions as to the sensitivity and effectiveness of the questionnaire used in the first stage of the data collection process in

picking this up this but it also may be the case that the time difference had allowed opinions, particularly in School B to harden and present an increasingly negative impact on its culture.

The evidence from School B in particular underlines the view that organisational culture is organic, e.g. Schein op cit, and based on personal rationality and the individual interpretation of activities, resulting in difficulties in controlling it. Even at times of planned change the effects on the culture of an organisation cannot be totally predicted, e.g. Handy op cit, Brown op cit. The results obtained from the interview stage indicated the effects the decisions made by SMT and the way these decisions were transmitted, rationalised and accepted had a considerable and immediate effect on the collective morale and attitude of the staff in School B.

This evidence also supports the view of Tierney [op cit] and Triandis [op cit] that organisational culture is based on cultural syndromes that develop as a result of both the individual and collective experiences and reflections of staff, and that of Furnham [op cit] that different sub-cultures in an organisation can have different priorities which can create conflict and hinder its management. This feature, it can be argued, leads to the development of a different psychological disposition [e.g. Goffee op

cit] as a result of the learning that had taken place [e.g. Lundberg op cit, Dyer op cit, Beyer and Trice op cit].

It was also the case that in School B in particular, the sum of effect of reaction to planned change was not only unpredictable but also largely uncontrollable on the changes in this organisational sub-culture, cf. Burnes op cit, Winter op cit. As a result, the organisational culture of School B in particular was rendered more unstable [cf. Burnes op cit, Huzynski and Buchanan op cit]. In School B this resulted in feelings of anxiety and increased negativity among some staff, which in turn had led to a deterioration of individual morale and commitment and a disengagement; the result of which was a deleterious effect on the organisational sub-culture in that School. The evidence elicited from these interviews with staff in School B questions the continuing influence of personal based organisational style described by Handy [op cit] in HEIs.

## **Conclusions**

The use of the open-ended, semi-structured interviews in this phase of the research allowed in-depth evidence from this setting to be collected and analysed. As a result a greater understanding of the views and attitudes of the staff working in this setting was possible. This increased

understanding led to a deeper understanding of both the overarching culture in the setting and particularly the sub-cultures within the setting.

Overall, the two-phase strategy to collect data argued for strongly in the literature, e.g. Schein op cit, Brown op cit, was a useful approach to gain both a width and depth of understanding of the organisational culture of the setting. The sequence of conducting the questionnaire phase before the interview phase was also appropriate, as the negative returns received from the questionnaire provided a valuable framework for the interview phase, although the extent to which this framework might be similarly useful in other HE settings remains unclear.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

It is the purpose of this chapter to draw conclusions and make recommendations from the research which has been undertaken, as well as setting out some reflections on the researcher's experiences while undertaking this research. As detailed in the introduction this research has two foci; firstly, to critically analyse relevant literature on organisational culture and secondly, to collect and analyse primary data on the changes in the organisational culture from that part of a mixed economy college setting presenting HE programmes in the UK.

In order to fulfil both of these tasks this chapter is set out in a number of sub-sections. The first sub-section will consider the understanding of organisational culture as a result of a critical analysis of appropriate literature. The second sub-section will consider the impact of the changes in the setting on its organisational culture, while the third sub-section will draw some conclusions about the methodology used to collect these data. A fourth sub-section will consider the originality of the research, and the one following will make a number of recommendations

based on the experiences of the author to others who may wish to conduct similar research. The last two sub-sections will be used to draw the author's personal reflections on his experiences in undertaking this research.

### **Gaining an Understanding of Organisational Culture**

The consideration in this research was to gain a better understanding of the nature and importance of the culture of an organisation. Evidence from the literature search indicates the notion of organisational culture lacks any clarity of definition and can be used interchangeably with the idea of organisational climate. Further, and bearing in mind the differences identified in the 'culture is'/'culture has' debate, e.g. Huczynski and Buchannan [op cit], organisational culture, although often regarded as a complex, dynamic notion, e.g. Schein [op cit] Handy [op cit] Brown [op cit] is also regarded, e.g. Hofstede [op cit], as normative and imposed and where the membership is largely impassive. However, it is the case that these notions may not be as clearly separated as is suggested in the literature as although there is evidence of attempts by the management within organisation to impose a culture on its membership this can be interpreted and accepted in different ways by individual members within the setting. Nevertheless, the literature demonstrates clearly whatever the balance between the attempt to

impose a culture in an organisation and the response by its membership, organisational culture is individual to a particular setting.

The literature also suggests some of the factors that help to determine the culture of an organisation are clearly identifiable and overt, while others are more hidden and covert, e.g., Schein [op cit] Harrison [op cit] Brown [op cit]. The characteristics of the culture of an organisation are largely determined by individual perceptions and reactions and are learned through experience, e.g., Isabella [op cit] Beyer and Trice [op cit]. Schein [op cit] argues organisational culture develops as a result of a triangular relationship between the unique working practices of the individual organisation expressed at different levels of understanding from explicit surface manifestation through its members' beliefs, values and attitudes and rationality; as well as the unique relationship of human behaviours that have been developed there [Schein op cit]. As a result of smaller group interactions, there is also the opportunity for sub-cultures or counter-cultures to develop, [cf. Harrison op cit, Handy op cit, Schein op cit]. The characteristics of these sub-cultures can be set on continua based on both the rationalisation of their perceptions of change of the membership, as well as its level of support for the purpose of change set by the leadership within the setting. Further, the evidence indicates the characteristics of the organisational culture of HEIs are no different from that of any other organisation, where individual members

take meaning, understand and react to this dynamic in order to survive and prosper, e.g. Hannan and Silver op cit.

The complex characteristics described above were clearly discernable in the mixed economy setting where the primary research was conducted. Although the literature on HEIs indicates the expectation of the prevalence of the 'person orientated' model of organisational culture to be evident, e.g. Handy [op cit] the evidence collected in the circumstances described in this setting indicated this model was less influential at this time. Rather, the evidence indicated that staff, whose thinking and professional expectations were influenced by the person-orientated model, felt the Principal in particular, and to some extent his SMT, employed the more centralised form of control described by Handy[op cit] than the more 'light touch' approach within the person orientated model.

### **The impact of change on organisational culture**

An analysis of the literature, e.g., DfES 2003, op cit, 2006 op cit, Bathmaker and Burns op cit 2006, 2007, indicates the strength of the linkage between current educational initiatives within the tertiary education sector towards further developing a sophisticated economy to advance the position of the UK in the global economy through strategies that will widen participation in formal education in this sector and build

the human capital of individuals. The extent to which these developments have been met can be noted in the changes within HEIs and the resulting impact on staff who work in this sector. As a result, these developments have also impacted on changes in the organisational culture of all HEIs in the UK. Arguably, this is the case in the setting where this research was undertaken, particularly in one School.

The literature search, e.g. Schein [op cit] Brown [op cit] Dawson [op cit], indicates that it is difficult to successfully manage organisational culture at any time let alone at times of planned change. The literature also indicates that organisational culture develops as a result of the both the perception of it membership and its reactions to internal and external pressures for change, e.g. Dyer op cit, Burnes op cit. Further, the literature indicates the tensions created at times of planned change may magnify changes in the culture of an organisation through the increased need for every individual in the setting to rationalise their reactions to the changes taking place, e.g. Burnes [op cit] Lundberg [op cit] Gagliardi [op cit].

The interview phase of the data collection process indicates particularly the introduction of the DEC initiative [DEC 2003a, b] as part of a regional initiative based on recent Government policy, e.g. DfES 2002 [op cit] LSC [op cit] Leitch [op cit], to develop human capital by raising formal

qualification levels to improve the knowledge and skills of the local population and thus enhance the local economy brought about a wide range of reactions from the staff in both of the Schools. These reactions can be set on a continuum ranging from those staff who were positive and supportive of the initiative to others who were negative, unsupportive, even hostile to the changes being made.

It was the combination of all these reactions, which in turn led to both perceptible changes in the culture of setting, as well as to an increased fragmentation within its sub-cultures; a phenomenon which had been observed elsewhere by Martin [op cit]. However, the data collected indicates that in these circumstances the level of opposition and negativity is closely associated with the views of staff in the different Schools, where staff in School A were generally much more positive about the changes than staff in School B. Without doubt the DEC initiative [op-cit] had a considerable impact on both the pace and direction of change in the setting. However, even taking into account the hostility encountered in School B, the extent to which this fragmentation is as a level similar to that described by Ogbonna and Harris [op cit] or Brown [op cit] remains questionable.

The impact of the DEC initiative not only acted as a catalyst for considerable change on management and working practice in the setting

as suggested in the literature, e.g. Brown op cit, Schein op cit, Huczynski and Buchanan op cit, Furnham op cit, but also challenged the perceptions of staff, which in turn impacted on the organisational culture and its sub cultures. The evidence collected in the interview stage indicated the DEC development had affected the morale of staff in School B. to the extent that it impacted negatively on their working practices.

As a result, there were indications of the development of a counter-culture in School B, similar to that described in other research by Hofstede [op cit], Martin [op cit] and Siehl [op cit]. While this may be accounted for as a result of the decision to concentrate on the negative responses to the questionnaire at this stage or as a result of a hardening of the opinions of staff in this school was not clear. Nevertheless, the impact of these planned changes led staff to re-examine not only, their professional values, assumptions and beliefs but also their commitment loyalty to the organisation. Further, although it cannot be assumed there was a similar starting point for this process this personal examination was common to each member of staff.

Further, this evidence also supports the view that planned changes in an organisation can have an unpredictable influence on its sub-cultures [Brown op cit, Hofstede op cit, Martin and Seihl op-cit]. Further, it supports the view that such changes can take place independently of

each other within an organisation, e.g. Ogbonna and Harris [op cit] Brown op cit].

## **Measuring Organisational Culture**

An important theme within this research was to consider the extent to which organisational culture could be measured. This literature generally indicates although a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis of organisational culture may provide numerical precision the sole use of this approach would provide little or no penetration of the deeper held views, values and insights of its members [Schein op cit, Brown op cit]. However, Schein [op cit and Brown [op cit] among others argue the quantitative approach, although appropriate to collect the 'rich thick' data described by Geetz [op cit], if used as the singular approach may also be inadequate. Rather, the overall consensus is that a mixed strategy approach to data collection will best serve this purpose.

In practice the mixed strategy approach generally worked well to collect primary data. Within its framework set by the statements on offer the questionnaire helped to provide an overview of some useful statistical data, as well as a useful framework for developing the interview schedule. However, a number of problems occurred with some of the statements in the questionnaire. The clarity of meaning within some of

the statements could be improved by making them simpler and thus more user-friendly. A brief description for users of the purpose of each of the orientations would also be a useful addition. The discrepancy in the response between the raw scores and its ratio scale in a small number of responses was disconcerting. Nevertheless despite these concerns, the questionnaire produced very useful and usable data from the setting.

The use of the negative responses from the questionnaire to develop the interview schedule also provided a useful framework to make further enquiries within the setting. This instrument not only provided a flexibility to discuss the issues but also through the rolling, open-ended, semi-structured interviews 'rich thick' data [Geetz op cit]. This data provided a vital insight into the thinking and actions of those who participated in this stage of the research.

The data collected in this research provides a one-time snapshot of the organisational culture in the setting. However, if this process were to be repeated regularly, those data would only provide a series of snapshots over time rather than a continuous picture. This lessens the ability to generalise from the results obtained.

## **Confirmation of information**

Phillips [1992] argues there is a range of ways of determining originality in research. She argues among these are: the setting where the research was conducted and the strategies used to collect the data. It is the case that these factors have been employed in this research. Firstly the setting; an FE college and a member of the MEG Colleges had not previously been subjected to this form of analysis. Secondly, from the review of the literature the questionnaire used in the setting had not been employed previously in published research in an educational setting in this sector. Thirdly, the interview phase of the data collection process was unusual as it was based on the negative findings taken from the initial questionnaire.

As a result of conducting this research a number of points found in other literature can also be given further confirmation. Firstly, the notion that the complexity of the characteristics of organisational culture in a large educational organisation, (with its overarching culture as well as evidence of sub-cultures comparable with that described in the literature found in similar size business and industry) has been strengthened. Secondly, similarly to other organisations under the pressure of planned change this setting produced a range of sub-cultures that were developed and strengthened as a result of the internal tensions between members.

The process also provided a useful 'snapshot in time' of the organisational culture of a tertiary educational setting.

## **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations can be made as a result of undertaking this research. These recommendations include:

- Despite criticisms levelled in the literature, e.g. Hofstede [op cit] Maull [op cit] Bishop [op cit] and Daft [op cit], using a mixed methods approach advocated by Schein [op cit] and Brown [op cit] among others is recommended in order to capture as fully as possible the complex characteristics of the organisational culture in educational settings.
- Within this mixed methods approach the use of the 'rolling data' collection approach alongside the use of a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire is also recommended
- Using the questionnaire phase to develop the interview instrument is also recommended. In these circumstances the use of negative questions to determine the framework for the interview schedule was particularly useful. However, there is no guarantee this will be the best strategy in every situation.
- A profile of the members of the group participating in the research is recommended. In this case the criteria used for this profile was useful in the analysis of data received
- The internal audience, particularly the members of any group who have participated in the research, should not be overlooked when giving feedback. Such data provides a valuable source of shared information and small group discussion.

## **Effects on professional practice**

Undertaking this research has had an effect on my professional practice in a number of ways. It has allowed me to become more knowledgeable

about the issues raised; providing an understanding of the notion of organisational culture, as well as a considerable insight into the organisational culture of the setting where the research was conducted. This increased understanding has also informed a number of my presentations made to teaching staff. Further, this knowledge has informed my teaching and the content of some of my lectures and tutorials.

The exercise also ensured my increasing sensitiveness to the effects of change on the culture of an organisation and both its actual and potential effect on staff. The notion that the process of change is a two-way process has also been heightened by this research. As a result I have become increasingly conscious of the potential effects of change on staff and the importance of not only providing opportunities for staff discussion of these issues but also leading these sympathetically.

### **Personal Reflections**

It was clear from the literature on organisational culture that the collection and interpretation of data on this topic was not going to be easy. The level of this difficulty can be identified by the number of times the word complex or its equivalent has been used throughout. Grappling with the concept of organisational culture can be related to some extent

with picking up mercury on a spoon, except all the mercury would be visible! That there is little evidence of literature on organisational culture in HEIs, let alone research undertaken there merely compounds these difficulties.

The ethical considerations in undertaking research in a setting where one works is well documented, e.g. Cohen et al op cit, Nachmias et al op cit, Robson op cit, let alone undertaking this on the culture of the organisational itself [cf. Schein op cit, Brown op cit]. The importance of avoiding personal bias in the approach to both the language of the interview questions and the questioning style is vitally important. It is also important to discard personal 'baggage' as much as possible.

Although the thoughts and the research conducted by Harrison [op cit] Handy [op cit] and Schein [op cit] were helpful throughout this process the challenge was immense. Despite certain criticisms which have been noted above, the instrument developed by Brown [op cit] was particularly useful in setting the framework.

On reflection, the interview phase of the data collection was the most personally rewarding aspect of the research process. The analysis of this data provided a fertile vein of information. The 'rolling interview' approach used at this phase was also useful in developing the potential of the interview to produce both 'rich thick' and usable data. As always in

these circumstances this somewhat looser-rein approach to data collection needed careful handling to produce best results.

As a result, both my personal understanding of the literature on the concept of organisational culture has developed as has my experience of developing, collecting, analysing and organising qualitative data. These experiences have been beneficial to me professionally and, hopefully, both the groups of staff and students to whom I have presented and discussed these findings.

## Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

### *Diagnosing organisational culture*

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. It will be of great value to me in my current research project. Responses will be treated in strictest confidence.

**I would be grateful if you could return completed questionnaires to me at the xxxx site.**

Richard Stakes

***Could you circle the appropriate response to the questions below?***

A. Gender:     Male                      Female

B. Age Range:                      21-30,                      31-45,                      46-55,                      55+

C. ***What is your current position in your School?***

Head of School   Deputy Head of School   Senior lecturer

Lecturer [full time]

Lecturer [part time]   Other [please state]:

D. ***Please circle below how many years you have been teaching at the college***

0-5                      6-10                      11-15                      16-20                      20+

	<b><i>Orientation and statements</i></b>	<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
<b>1</b>	<b><i>Creativity and innovation</i></b>				
1a	<i>People here are generally imaginative in their approach</i>	3	2	1	0
1b	<i>Novel ideas are welcomed in this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
1C	<i>Innovative people are valued and rewarded here</i>	3	2	1	0

1d	<i>People who lack creative minds are not tolerated by this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
1e	<i>Most people have time to think through new ideas here</i>	3	2	1	0
1f	<i>People generally risk sharing their ideas because they are listened to and encouraged</i>	3	2	1	0
1g	<i>Good ideas are quickly adopted by the organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
2	<b>Power and conflict orientation</b>				
2a	<i>There is an atmosphere of trust in this organisation</i>	0	1	2	3
2b	<i>Important people here are always addressed as Sir or Madam, or by job title</i>	3	2	1	0
2c	<i>There is much criticism of policies and practices</i>	3	2	1	0
2d	<i>People here tend to manipulate situations for their own personal advantage</i>	3	2	1	0
2e	<i>There are cliques here which look after themselves</i>	3	2	1	0
2f	<i>Politics is a way of life for many people in this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
2g	<i>Advancement is more a matter of who you know than what you know</i>	3	2	1	0
3	<b>Information and communication orientation</b>				
3a	<i>The organisation communicates effectively with staff</i>	3	2	1	0
3b	<i>Different departments generally transfer accurate work information on a timely basis</i>	3	2	1	0
3c	<i>Individuals tend to keep information to themselves</i>	0	1	2	3
3d	<i>The organisation has invested in reasonable IT systems</i>	3	2	1	0

3e	Managers promote two-way dialogue with their subordinates	3	2	1 J	0
3f	Important information usually finds its way to those who need to know it	3	2	1	0
3g	Disruptive gossip and speculation are rife here	0	1	2	3

No.	Orientation and statements	Definitely true	Mostly true	Mostly false	Definitely false
4	<b>Rules orientation</b>				
4a	People are expected to report violations of the rules	3	2	1	0
4b	Work is well organised and progresses systematically over time	3	2	1	0
4c	Most people understand and obey the rules here	3	2	1	0
4d	This is a highly flexible organisation	0	1	2	3
4e	Policies and procedures change slowly here	3	2	1	0
4f	There is a lot of argument regarding the interpretation of rules in this organisation	0	1	2	3
4g	Systems of control over people's work are generally effective	3	2	1	0
5	<b>Learning orientation</b>				
5a	People in this organisation tend to learn from their mistakes	3	2	1	0
5b	When errors occur, the issues are discussed and learning takes place	3	2	1	0
5c	Organisational systems and policies generally encourage learning from experience	3	2	1	0
-5d	When a department learns something of value to other departments, this learning is quickly communicated to them	3	2	1	0

5e	<i>In this organisation the same old errors are repeated over and over again</i>	0	1	2	3
5f	<i>People here are too busy to learn effectively</i>	0	1	2	3
5g	<i>Managers here value a 'doing' rather than a 'learning' orientation among workers</i>	0	1	2	3
6	<b>Individuality orientation</b>				
6a	<i>People here are encouraged to express their own personalities in their work</i>	3	2	1	0
6b	<i>Mavericks are tolerated here</i>	3	2	1	0
6c	<i>People here are able to retain a sense of their own individuality</i>	3	2	1	0
6d	<i>There are few stereotypical 'company men' or 'company women' here</i>	3	2	1	0
6e	<i>The organisation encourages people to develop and mature</i>	3	2	1	0
6f	<i>People here are not criticised for their personal style</i>	3	2	1	0
6g	<i>In this organisation image is less important than substance</i>	3	2	1	0

No	Orientation and statements	Definitely true	Mostly true	Mostly false	Definitely false
7	<b>Co-operation orientation</b>				
7a	<i>People here are generally helpful and considerate of others</i>	3	2	1	0
7b	<i>Formal rules and procedures encourage co-operation</i>	3	2	1	0
7c	<i>Most people here are good team players</i>	3	2	1	0
7d	<i>'Loners' do not tend to be promoted in this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
7e	<i>People who work well in teams are usually rewarded</i>	3	2	1	0

7f	<i>'Lend a helping hand' is a good description of how this organisation works</i>	3	2	1	0
7g	<i>Everyone here has a strong sense of being in a team</i>	3	2	1	0
8	<b>Trust orientation</b>				
8a	<i>People here are generally trusting of others in the organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
8b	<i>People here do not attempt to exploit others</i>	3	2	1	0
8c	<i>The rules here encourage mutuality</i>	3	2	1	0
8d	<i>Low-trust people find it difficult to survive in this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
8e	<i>People here respect each other</i>	3	2	1	0
8f	<i>People here do not take credit for work accomplished by others</i>	3	2 /	1	0
8g	<i>Jealousy and envy dominate the work atmosphere here</i>	0	1	2	3
9	<b>Conflict orientation</b>				
9a	<i>There are a lot of petty conflicts here</i>	3	2	1	0
9b	<i>Departments tend to work together without rivalry</i>	0	1	2	3
9c	<i>Criticism is taken as a personal affront in this organisation</i>	3	2	1	0
9d	<i>People here are always trying to win an argument</i>	3	2	1	0
9e	<i>There are strong and cohesive subgroups here that look after themselves</i>	3	2	1	0
9f	<i>I have rarely experienced personal antagonism from others here</i>	0	1	2	3
9g	<i>Conflict in this organisation is generally more positive than negative</i>	0	1	2	3

10	<b>Future orientation</b>				
10a	People here think and plan ahead	3	2	1	0

No.	Orientation and statements	Definitely true	Mostly true	Mostly false	Definitely false
10b	This organisation is firmly focused on the future	3	2	1	0
10c	Most people here are more interested in what will happen tomorrow than what happened yesterday	3	2	1	0
10d	The organisation's strategies for the future are well known by the workforce	3	2	1	0
10e	There are often lively discussions regarding where the organisation is heading	3	2	1	0
10f	People are appraised and valued in terms of their future potential	3	2	1	0
10g	People here generally take a long-term view on matters	3	2	1	0
11	<b>Loyalty and commitment orientation</b>				
11a	There are a lot of 'long servers' in this organisation	3	2	1	0
11b	Most people consider themselves to be loyal members of the organisation *	3	2	1	0
11c	Few people are committed to a long-term career here	0	1	2	3
11d	This organisation is committed to its workforce	3	2	1	0
He	Preferential treatment is given to long-serving employees	3	2	1	0
11f	I believe that my long-term future is with this organisation	3	2	1	0

11g	When the going gets tough the loyalty of the organisation to the workforce is questionable	0	1	2	3
12	<b>Work orientation</b>				
12a	People here generally enjoy their work	3	2	1	0
12b	People in this organisation are always willing to take a break	0	1	2	3
12c	People here live to work, rather than work to live	3	2	1	0
12d	Motivation is not a problem in this organisation	3	2	1	0
12e	Senior personnel work as hard (or harder) than those on other grades	3	2	1	0
12f	People here follow the maxim 'business before pleasure'	3	2	1	0
12g	Day-to-day activities do not require a sustained or intensive effort	0	1	2	3

Are you willing to take part in any subsequent interviews about this project? If so please write your work phone number in the space below.

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Once again thanks for your help. Richard Stakes

## Appendix 2:

### Framework for the follow-up questions

- To what extent did the original questionnaire allow you to express your views about the culture of the college? Did it cover all aspects that should have been included? If not what was omitted?
- Did you find any difficulties between your feelings about the overall college culture and that within your own school answering the questions?
- What in your view has been the most significant even in the last two academic years in the college? To what extent has this event changed your perceptions of the culture of the college? Has it changed the views of others who you work with?
- Has there been change in your School during the last academic year that has affected the professional relationship between staff?
- Can you identify the reasons for these changes?
- What effect has the DEC project had on the culture of *the* school?

### Appendix 3

Data sets collected from the questionnaire stage of the research

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	11 [22]	4 [4]	0 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 6: 1a, People here are genuinely imaginative in their approach*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [12]	7 [2]	7 [10]	0 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 7: 1b Novel ideas are welcome in this organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
5 [15]	1 [2]	10 [10]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 8: 1c Innovative people are valued and rewarded*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	4 [8]	10 [10]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 9: 1d people who lack creative minds are not tolerated in this organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	4 [8]	7 [7]	5 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 10: 1e Most people have time to think through new ideas here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	7 [14]	6 [6]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 11: 1f People generally risk sharing their ideas because they are listened to and encouraged**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	3 [6]	7 [7]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 12: 1g Good ideas are quickly adopted by the organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [0]	6 [6]	1 [1]	6 [18]

N=17

**Fig. 13: 2a, There is an atmosphere of trust in this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	1 [2]	2 [2]	14 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 14: 2b, Important people here are always addressed as 'Sir' or 'Madam' or by work title.**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
7 [21]	5 [10]	5 [5]	0 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 15: 2c, There is much criticism of policies and practices**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	6 [12]	6 [6]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 16: 2d, People here tend to manage situations for their own personal advantage*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
5 [15]	5 [10]	4 [4]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 17: 2e, There are cliques here which look after themselves*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2	8	5	2

N=17

*Fig. 18: 2f, Politics is a way of life for many people in this organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	6 [12]	4 [4]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 19: 2g Advancement is more of a matter of who you know than what you know*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	9 [18]	4 [4]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 20: 3a, The organisation communicates effectively with staff*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0	5	8	4

N=17

**Fig. 21: 3b, Different departments generally transfer accurate work information on a timely basis**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [0]	5 [5]	9 [18]	2 [6]

N=17

**Fig. 22: 3c, Individuals tend to keep information to themselves**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	6 [12]	4 [4]	4 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 23: 3d, The organisation has invested in reasonable IT systems**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	9 [18]	3 [3]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 24: 3e, Managers promote two way dialogue with their subordinates**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	7 [14]	7 [7]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 25: 3f, Important information usually finds its way to those who need to know it**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [0]	4 [4]	9 [18]	2 [6]

N=17

*Fig. 26: 3g, Disruptive gossip and speculation are rife here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	9 [18]	3 [3]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 27: 4a, People are expected to report violations of the rules*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	12 [24]	2 [2]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 28: 4b, Work is well organised and progresses systematically over time*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	12 [24]	4 [4]	0 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 29: 4c, Most people understand and obey the rules here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	6 [6]	5 [10]	3 [9]

N=17

*Fig. 30: 4d, This is a highly flexible organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	8 [16]	8 [8]	0 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 31: 4e, Policies and procedures change slowly here**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [0]	6 [6]	7 [14]	3 [9]

N=17

**Fig. 32: 4f, There is a lot of argument regarding the interpretation of rules in this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	8 [16]	6 [6]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 33: 4g, Systems of control over people's work are generally effective**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	10 [20]	2 [2]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 34: 5a, People in this organisation tend to learn from their mistakes**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	8 [16]	5 [5]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 35: 5b, When errors occur, the issues are discussed and learning takes place**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	8 [16]	7 [7]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 36: 5c, Organisational systems and policies generally encourage learning from experience**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	3 [6]	13 [13]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 37: 5d, When a department learns something of value to other departments, this learning is quickly communicated to them**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	3 [3]	7 [14]	4 [12]

N=17

**Fig. 38: 5e, In this organisation the same old errors are repeated over and over again**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
6 [0]	8 [8]	0 [0]	3 [9]

N=17

**Fig. 39: 5f, People here are too busy to learn effectively**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	7 [7]	6 [12]	1 [3]

N=17

**Fig. 40: 5g, Managers here value a 'doing' rather than 'learning' orientation among workers**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	7 [14]	5 [5]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 41: 6a, People here are encouraged to express their own personalities in their work*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	6 [12]	4 [4]	5 [0]

N=17

*Fig 42: 6b, Mavericks are tolerated here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
5 [15]	9 [18]	2 [2]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 43: 6c, People here are able to retain their a sense of their own individuality*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	13 [26]	1 [1]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 44: 6d, There are few stereotypical company men or company women here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	5 [10]	6 [6]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 45: 6e, The organisation encourages people to develop and mature**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	8 [16]	3 [3]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 46: 6f, People here are not criticised for their personal style**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
6 [18]	7 [14]	2 [2]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 47: 6g, In this organisation image is less important than substance**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
5 [15]	10 [20]	1 [1]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 48: 7a, People here are generally helpful and considerate of others**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	8 [16]	7 [7]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 49: 7b, Formal rules and procedures encourage co-operation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	9 [18]	3 [3]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 50: 7c, Most people here are good team players*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	11 [22]	3 [3]	0 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 51: 7d, Loners do not tend to be promoted in this organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	8 [16]	4 [4]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 52: 7e, People who work well in teams are generally rewarded*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	6 [12]	7 [7]	1 [0]

*Fig. 53: 7f, 'Lend a helping hand' is a good description of how this organisation works*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4	5	7	1

N=17

*Fig. 54: 7g, Everyone here has a strong sense of being in a team*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	7 [14]	5 [5]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 55: 8a, People here are generally trusting of others in the organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	7 [14]	6 [6]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 56: 8b, People here do not attempt to exploit each other*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	8 [16]	6 [6]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 57: 8c, The rules here encourage mutuality*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	6 [12]	9 [9]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 58: 8d, Low-trust people find it difficult to survive in this organisation*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	6 [12]	5 [5]	2 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 59: 8e, People here respect each other*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	8 [16]	5 [5]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 60: 8f, People here do not take credit for work accomplished by others**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [0]	1 [1]	9 [18]	6 [18]

N=17

**Fig. 61: 8g, Jealousy and envy dominate the work atmosphere**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	5 [10]	8 [8]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 62: 9a, There are a lot of petty conflicts here**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	7 [7]	4 [8]	3 [9]

N=17

**Fig. 63: 9b, Departments tend to work together without rivalry**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	6 [12]	5 [5]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 64: 9c, Criticism is taken as a personal affront in this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	3 [6]	10 [10]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 65: 9d, People here are always trying to win an argument*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
6 [18]	4 [8]	6 [6]	1 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 66: 9e, There are strong and cohesive subgroups here that look after themselves*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
7 [0]	4 [4]	2 [2]	4 [12]

N=17

*Fig. 67: 9f, I have rarely experienced personal antagonism from others here*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [0]	9 [9]	5 [10]	2 [6]

N=17

*Fig. 68: 9g, Conflict in this organisation is generally more positive than negative*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	11 [22]	3 [3]	3 [0]

N=17

*Fig. 69: 10a, People here think and plan ahead*

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
6 [18]	6 [12]	3 [3]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 70: 10b, This organisation is firmly focused on the future**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	10 [20]	3 [3]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 71: 10c, Most people here are more interested in what will happen tomorrow than what happened yesterday**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [6]	6 [12]	7 [7]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 72: 10d, The organisation's strategies for the future are well known by the workforce**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	5 [10]	7 [7]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 73: 10e, There are often lively discussions regarding where the organisation is heading**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	6 [12]	6 [6]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 74: 10f, People are appraised and valued in terms of their future potential**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1	7	8	1

N=17

**Fig. 75: 10g, People here generally take a long-term view on matters**

The results obtained for this statement are set out in Fig. 76 below.

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	6 [12]	6 [6]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 76; 11a, There are a lot of 'long servers' in this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3	9	4	1

N=17

**Fig. 77: 11b, Most people consider themselves to be loyal members of this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2 [9]	5 [18]	9 [4]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig.78: 11c, Few people are committed to a long-term career here**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	7 [14]	7 [7]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 79: 11d, This organisation is committed to its workforce**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
0 [0]	1 [2]	8 [8]	8 [0]

N=17

**Fig 80: 11e, Preferential treatment is given to long service employees**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
4 [12]	5 [10]	2 [2]	6 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 81: 11f, I believe my long term future is with this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [0]	7 [7]	4 [8]	3 [9]

N=17

**Fig. 82: 11g, When the going gets tough the loyalty of the organisation to the workforce is questionable**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	9 [18]	3 [3]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 83: 12a, People here generally enjoy their work**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [0]	8 [8]	7 [14]	1 [3]

N=17

**Fig. 84: 12b, People in this organisation are always willing to take a break**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	8 [16]	4 [4]	2 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 85: 12c, People here live to work, rather than work to live**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
3 [9]	6 [12]	5 [5]	3 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 86: 12d, Motivation is not a problem in this organisation**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
2	7	6	2

N=17

**Fig. 87: 12e, Senior personnel work as hard [or harder] than those on other grades**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
1 [3]	11 [22]	4 [4]	1 [0]

N=17

**Fig. 88: 12f, People here follow the maxim business before pleasure**

<i>Definitely true</i>	<i>Mostly true</i>	<i>Mostly false</i>	<i>Definitely false</i>
<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>6</i>

*N=17*

*Fig. 89: 12g, Day-to-day activities do not require a sustained or intensive effort*

## Appendix 4

### Copies of interview schedules

#### Interview 1

[A long-term, full-time member of staff]

R: thanks for doing this interview with me. Of course, you completed the questionnaire for me also. I wonder if you could comment on how you found that exercise.

I: It was an interesting exercise, if a little long. I was quite some time completing it for you.

R: Can we firstly discuss your understanding of DEC? To what extent are you aware of its existence?

I: I have attended the meetings in the School about it so I feel I know about it?

R: Do you feel you have been kept informed about what is happening?

I: Yes, generally.

R: What do you mean by 'generally'?

I: I feel I know enough about it at the moment as to its purpose. I am less sure about its implications for me personally though.

R: From the returns received to the questionnaire there seems to be a lack of understanding even trust relating to the DEC initiative among staff. Could you comment on this?

I: Yes, from my point of view DEC was happening somewhere else, with other people, with a different agenda.

R: Can you explain further?

I: People didn't know what it was and what it meant.

We had little or no involvement with any of the decisions taken over DEC that were made...either strategically or within our School.  
There has been some confusion over the position of HE within DEC.

R: Could you explain that last comment further. That would be very helpful.

I: DEC seemed to be very much a bunch of people who were DEC but we had little knowledge of what it was and what it meant. Our HE programmes didn't really seem to have a place anymore. It seemed as if we [name of School omitted here] were left out on a limb. It was clear that the senior management team [SMT] wanted to change the focus of the School but we had little knowledge of what they wanted to do. Rather, we knew what they didn't want, which was largely what we did at the time.

R: That's helpful. Did that lead to discussions in the School on policy and practice?

I: Oh, Yes. There were heated and emotional discussions on DEC. Dec was a source of tension between the School and SMT. Our reputation was well known and there was considerable reluctance to change what after all was a winning format for something we didn't really know what it was.

R: What discussions took place with SMT?

I: What discussions? Rather, direction, not consultation we had from the SMT. There was some dialogue with SMT until the point was reached where a clear dichotomy of feeling about the direction the school should be taking then. SMT made the decisions regardless of the views of the staff in the school. This confirmed a lack of direction for the school at the time.

There was the impression that SMT wanted to get rid of the School and to change what was already there. We had something that employers saw of value that was positive work in what we were doing.

R: What other discussions took place at that time?

I: Discussions over changes in personnel from a to b to c [names of Heads of School during this time]. This didn't help in sorting out the sense of direction, which had been lost when 'a' left. There was a structure when 'a' was there. After then there was a gradual sense of school being messed about. Everybody could see what was happening. 'B' came in as a figure head. We had a lot of disturbance ...we had no sense

of direction. The sense of identity [of the school] was lost. G [the Principal] wanted to destroy the identity of the School. The School was not valued anymore. G said we were elitist It as about that that the changes were made. 'A ' was a charismatic figure, there was a sense of direction. He had respect from the staff. 'B' was a transition what were the aims of the School at that time. She had good knowledge a good professional background but was never really going to move the School forward. 'C' had no drive to take the School forward. At that time, the impetus from when 'A' ran it was beginning to run out. She didn't have the right skills to move the School forward. She is on a steep learning curve at the moment, and it shows.

R: Are you saying there was no long term commitment to the school by SMT?

I: Oh, Yes. It was very personal to the School, or at least it felt like it. Tensions that were created by the introduction of DEC were not a cause and effect but as much to do with changes in personnel involved, and I use the word advisably. G. actively wanted to destroy the School. He was out to destroy the School. The change in management style led to people leaving.

R: Could you link that to long term commitment?

I: Staff leaving was a direct consequence. One of the reasons why staff left was that they did not feel strongly enough to stay.

R: Was there, do you think a lessening commitment by the staff in the school?

I: No commitment to stay. There had always been a commitment in the school but that was lost.

R: There is a history of people moving on in the school though isn't there?

I: Yes, to some extent... of people using the School as a vehicle for developing their career. This was confirmed at the time. 'A' was good at recruiting practitioners and encouraging them to build up their academic skills. He also drew people like H in [an academic who had retired and took up a part-time post in the School] to help staff growth and development.

R: Do you feel the circumstances encouraged an antagonistic climate in the college?

I: No. Despite the comments about the change in the climate within the college, I have found no evidence of that from my experience.

R: Thanks, for that. What about influential work cliques? Have you experienced these here?

I: Well to some extent but not in a negative sense really. This is a big organization so groups by subject interest are not surprising. The School is insular I suppose to some extent we have little or no contact with other parts of the college. To say I have come across cliquiness would give the wrong impression.

R: How would you describe it then?

I: A close working group: a self supporting group.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have said at this time?

I: No

[End of interview].

## Interview 2

### [A long-term, full-time member of staff]

R: Thanks for doing this for me. I wonder first if you could comment on if you had any problems with the questionnaire.

I: No, not really. It was long. I sometimes couldn't work out if I should answer the questions about the School or cross college. In the end, I decided to concentrate on the School, as I knew more about that.

R: A number of questions have been raised as a result of staff completing the initial questionnaire. I wonder if you could comment on a number of these for me please.

I: Yes, I'll try.

R: Firstly, could you tell me if you feel you have a good understanding of the DEC initiative?

I: Yes, I have been to the meetings called by G and listened to what he has had to say.

R: Are you confident about what you have heard?

I: Yes. Generally. I feel we have been kept in the picture and I like what I've heard. I think it is a good direction to go in.

R: Questions have been raised as to the level of professional trust and the general atmosphere in the college as a result of the DEC initiative. Could you comment on that please?

I: Well I feel cautious about the new developments myself and how they will pan out.

R: Could you explain in more detail?

I: I feel in the faculty that ...we responded pretty positively to DEC. My School bought into DEC big-style. But I remain only cautiously optimistic about its future. ...I remain uncertain as to if it will be able to do all it is suggested it might. You know 'does what it says on the tin'.

R: What really do you mean?

I: Well...We were encouraged to be ambitious. We've gone ahead and developed a range of HE programmes without the full range of resources to put them in place. Perhaps we've been too ambitious. I don't know. I really don't know.

R: What effect has this had in the School?

I: It's increased tensions between us, relating to both our working relationships and to the work/life balance of the staff particularly those working on developing new programmes and conducting their own staff development projects. A lot of staff here has signed on for a higher degree programme as a result of the possibilities DEC has raised. That has created a lot of extra work for them and their social lives have suffered. You can see that and the state some of them have got into. Many will talk about this quite freely also.

R: What effect has this had on staff morale in the school?

I: Well, there has been an effect on morale. Some staff are really up for it though while others are far more cautious. It's what you'd expect really, - a different reaction from a range of different people.

R: Has this and the wider changes DEC has encouraged, been a major discussion point among staff in the School?

I: Oh, yes. We talk about it all the time. Staff are finding it hard to cope with all that's going on. It's about personal survival at the moment. Things will ease of a little once we've got all the new courses set up and validated.

R: School x see part of its role in developing staff who will then move on to work elsewhere. Is this one of the issues here?

I: No, it's not ever been the case in this school. Staff tend to stay, although a number of them are thinking about going part-time so they can complete their post-grad research. That is part of the problem at the moment, as we increasingly have to try to find staff to do small bits of teaching to allow others to go part-time.

R: Have these changes led to changes in the way the school has been managed?

I: No, there have been no changes in the way we have been managed as a result of DEC.

R: Do you feel there is a strong commitment from SMT for the DEC programme?

I: Oh, yes. Generally. Although I do wonder at times the extent to which we are being exploited.

R: Exploited? What do you mean?

I: Well, we are doing an awful lot of work for no extra money. I feel this is a form of exploitation to perhaps develop our HE portfolio at the same time as continuing to pay us FE level wages.

R: Yes, I see. Moving on though have you felt personal antagonism as a result of the changes that have been made?

I: Personal antagonism... no.

R: Are you aware of influential cliques in the college staff?

I: No. Its never struck me as a word that comes to mind working here.

R: Nothing like that at all then?

I: Well, there is a noticeable growing gulf between the school and SMT and the rest of us. I don't think that's a cliquiness thing so much as an elitist one. There seems to be an invisible wall developing there.

R: How do you mean an invisible wall?

I: Differences relating to working ups. The SMT seems more isolated and dictatorial now than it used to be. That could be about personnel though as much as anything else.

R: Do you feel SMT are committed to the workforce?

I: Not sure. Not as it used to be. I feel a feeling of being exploited to develop programmes of study to some extent. There are issues relating to pay and conditions which have not been addressed. For staff working on HE programmes it's about personal status individual reward rather than professional rewards. The issue of teaching hours and pay for staff working on HE programmes compared with FE colleagues remain unresolved and is a continuing source of tension.

R: Do you think there has been much long-term planning undertaken by SMT about HE provision?

I: G is a visionary. This is the vision. DEC is the only long-term plan. DEC is a significant event in the history of the college. It has had a ripple effect on all of us. We have all been affected by DEC in some way or another.

[End of interview.]

### Interview 3

#### [A long-term, part-time member of staff]

R: Thanks for agreeing to do this interview. I would like to start with the question of the questionnaire itself. Did you find it difficult to fill in?

I: Not really, it was just time consuming. It was a little long. It was sometimes difficult to know if to fill it in for your experiences in your School or if it was a more college-wide thing.

R: That's an interesting point and was raised by the staff who took part in the pilot.

I: Yes, 'cos I know next to nothing about the whole college. But there again things are different in our team than in the wider school things are done differently there than in the wider school and again, I suppose in the wider college.

R: Could you say something of your understanding of the DEC initiative and your understanding of it? Do you, for example, feel you understand what is proposed?

I: I feel I understand what is proposed but I don't really like what I've heard, particularly about the future for our school.

R: What do you mean?

I: Well, what was originally outlined and what is proposed for our school seems to be increasingly different. The meeting the School had with G. seems to suggest what we do is now under discussion.

R: I wasn't at the meeting though. Can you explain that further?

I: We were told that what we do at the moment is under discussion by SMT and that our future role is not clear.

R: What impression do you have of the future for your school and DEC? What sort of an identity might it have within that concept?

I: I don't think it has an identity really. It is my impression that they don't want us to develop. This talk about moving sites has been very unsettling again. I've heard that we will move from this site if there aren't enough numbers to satisfy the requirements of DEC. There is a lot of

muddled thinking going on in my view. There is a developing feeling we are being messed about. That's my experience.

R: Oh, really?

I: But really all this swinging about our role and location has come across, along with cuts in the advertising budget and not allowing approval of new posts to go through quickly, to have everything sanctioned by SMT is almost stunting growth.

R: Can I look at that point further; the identity of the School and its relationship with the rest of the college. What could you say about that?

I: It's an issue we are seen as separate. We see ourselves as having a separate identity. A wanted us to have a separate identity. He saw it as a selling point. BVBS sounds better in our world than Brancaster College.

R: So to an extent it's about branding?

I: Yes. That's important to our clients, particularly our more important earners. This is the problem at the moment I think its wrong to almost subsume it back into the college and for it to loose its identity. This halfway house doesn't work A lot of people are very unhappy about it Things that go on in a School like ours don't happen in the wider college and visa versa.

R: Does that comment say something about the whole relationship between FE and HE?

I: Not really. This is a third dimension with our School, where some of the students fit into a professional dimension. They don't fall into the same funding régimes either. A lot come with degrees also so are not undergraduates, while other come with no degree.

R: Is the arrangement for budgeting and marketing in the school changing?

I: Yes, at one time you did your own marketing. Now everything has to be done on a college basis. Budgets slashed or suddenly stopped. Staff appointments were suddenly stopped. We are understaffed but suddenly, no more staff. That doesn't give you confidence in the college hierarchy.

R: Professionally people do come here as a staging post to go somewhere else. Those who work in your School in particular and move on to other posts in universities Is that part of the role of your School?

I: Yes, The culture of the moment is get out of a sinking ship.

R: That's interesting.

I: ... You might as well have the lot as I see it... Because so many staff are leaving ... everything else is getting jittery. I feel the links to the loss of identity as a brand is ... a loss of support of SMT, people don't think it's a very good staging post, rather they want to get out.

[.....].

The reputation the School once had is disappearing.

Students have noticed. Students have come up to me and said "how many other people are going to leave" and "Are going as well?" They feel upset by it because students like continuity. They like what they are familiar with. To see people going doesn't instill them with a lot of confidence.

R: Can I ask a tangential question. Do feel you have lost confidence in SMT?

I: Yes, It does feel like that. They [the staff] feel they don't belong anymore. There is considerable tension now.

R: What differences have these developments made to the long term planning in the school?

I: Considerable. We now work on a fire-fighting basis. That has been a knock-on effect. We also now have a completely new management team and they haven't gelled yet. There are no guidelines for this.

R: Is it possible to say these are the most important points in relation to the future of the school?

Yes, even minor things like enrollment. The arrangements, which have changed without being checked out, without either what the students or the staff realizing. This caused problems as we were expecting them [the students] to come in and enroll at one time, when they got the information they were asked to come in at another date. That doesn't lead to an awful lot of good feeling, as they didn't know what they were supposed to be doing.

R: There were tensions then?

I: These were our prospective students. They were sent a letter to come in at one point then SMT said no we're not doing enrolments then. Why couldn't they have been told this at the beginning? It's that sort of thing that causes tensions.

R: It appears that the philosophy in your school is changing considerably?

I: Yes, a lot of what is happening is being imposed against the philosophy that people in the School like to adopt.

R: To what extent do you feel the C [HOD] just has to go along with what SMT says?

I: Yes, she has an idea of where she wants the School to be. She communicates that. Some know what's on her mind but she does have her hands tied by decisions taken above her.

R: She's a pig in the middle then?

I: Yes, she's definitely a pig in the middle then. All middle management are –they always are. This happens all over, in my experience. I wouldn't have her job. It is a very difficult situation to be in. You get grief from all over. I think because she is still learning she doesn't have the confidence to say no to senior management and to be able to justify her reasons. She has had her hands tied because of her inexperience in the position.

R: Is all this linked to DEC?

I: Yes, the staff don't like DEC. It's caused an enormous amount of tensions in the School. It's about our insecurity. Are we to move into town? That wouldn't work in my view. Many of our students come here straight from work and can park easily. They are not going to go to the middle of town where there is no free parking and where you have to walk a vast distance to get to college. This idea of park and float will not work. I don't think so.

R: Is it true to say the objections to DEC are practical then?

I: I think it's true to say that the main objections are about the School per say. DEC appears to be concentrated towards the 14 to 19 year olds market and not beyond, also that cuts out HE. It cuts out our professional; courses ... It's this not knowing that's upsetting.

It's the amount of money that's being spent on the project and we're told you can't have x money to pay for an advert for a course.

R: I wonder if at this point you could say something about professional tensions here.

I: Well, these tensions are there but they are different now. I believe there has to be tensions in order to get things done, without tensions nothing will grow but there is a difference between tensions and aggression. I've heard that its us that are being awkward. You have to look at it from your own perspective and the perspective of our students. Our perspective is that professional students come here because of the lovely campus to be on there, because it's safe parking and we've got all the facilities.

R: Is there much aggression within the School at the moment?

I: No not within the School. Rather between the School and SMT. It's got a lot more aggressive since G made the announcement that he didn't like what we were doing and wanted a complete rethink. Not surprisingly, a lot of people are very unhappy and that causes aggression, but not, so far at least, between ourselves. It's against senior management. There is a lot of anger and hostility against them at the moment.

R: Are you sure DEC will do nothing positive for your courses?

I: Yes, I think it's extremely negative. But again, I don't think SMT have been giving our School a thought. You know your there to make up the numbers but beyond that....

R: So you're a make weight then?

I: Yes. We're useful but not in the same way as we were before G came.

R: Can I ask one final question relating to cliques in the college? Do you feel there are influential cliques working in the college?

I: No, not really. The organization is large and there are certainly groups of people who work together and are located solely on one site but not cliques. I feel in the School we get on well together, no real problems. Some people of course, know better than others and do collect people on their side sometime but that's not a problem as I see it. No, no cliques at all in my experience.

R: Thank you for taking part it has been illuminating. I will have to go away and analyse what you have told me very carefully. I appreciate the time you have spent with me this afternoon.

I: That's' OK, I'm pleased to be of help to you.

[End of Interview]

## Interview 4

**[A long-term, full-time member of staff]**

R: Thanks for undertaking this interview for me. I would like to ask you a number of questions as a result of the analysis of the questionnaire you completed for me earlier.

I: Yes that fine. Go ahead.

R: Firstly, Did you have any problems with the questionnaire when you filled that in?

I: No. It was relatively straightforward

R: Moving on to the outcomes of the questionnaire. Could you say something about your awareness and understanding of DEC?

I: Yes I understand DEC. I've been to all the meetings about it on this site and listened to what G. had to say.

R: Do you feel what is proposed is workable?

I: Yes in the wider objectives for it. The skills base in the borough is weak and there is a great need to develop the skills of people locally. Traditionally this has always been a low skills area of the country. From that point of view, DEC should have a great impact. It is essentially a saleable product, which local people can buy into. This must be good for lots of school leavers to raise their aspirations

R: Do you feel comfortable with what you have heard?

I: Personally, I have worries about the future of this School. It doesn't seem to have the same role now and I'm not sure where it is going. I am very apprehensive about where we are going.

R: Have you come across much criticism of college policy and DEC recently?

I: Yes, we have had increasing criticism in the School.

R: Could you say why?

I: Our working routines have been changed as a result of DEC if that's what you've got in mind.

R: Can you explain what you mean for me?

I: Our working routines didn't fit into normal weeks Monday to Friday and we always worked half terms for example. Changes demanded there that we should follow a more conventional routine, particularly enforced half terms, have not been helpful to the School. They were contrary to our way of working, our culture in the School. We've always tried to run HE as HE. Recently we've had increased problems with things like contracted hours and payments.

R: What effect has these changes had on the staff in the school?

A lack of any overall rationale. People are being ground down from within. It's increasingly difficult to work successfully here.

R: Do you feel there is a lack of commitment at the moment to the staff in the School then?

I: We've had a tradition of taking people and developing their skills we were a 'proving ground' for staff. A [the former head of School] gave a window of opportunity for us to see how we got on. Being a small organization helped as staff we able to get a good grasp of the range of tasks and activities working in an HE environment

R: To what extent did the pervading culture in the school help this?

I: Staff were supported by A as long as they were supportive in the direction the college wanted to go. This was the case when A was in charge.

R: Of course, A has left now and there have been a number of other changes since then also. What is your experience of the changes which have occurred recently?

I: There have been criticisms of policy recently in the school. The school has been systematically recently attacked by G [the principal] and SMT. He came with his brand for us and a 'baronial' approach. This has led to as clash of personalities and a considerable lack of trust between us as a School and SMT.

R: To what extent has this affected trust in the department?

I: Within the School, hardly at all we all still get on well together, pulling together against the odds as it were. The problems are between us and SMT, This situation has led to a clash of ideas about the future of the school, a clash of personalities as well as a lack of trust in them and their judgments.

R: What about DEC? What the feelings there?

Initially the School was very positive about DEC. We felt we were doing what it should have been doing to work with the DEC brand. A was very interested in DEC. He felt it would help develop the role of the School. It more of a question of personalities. G arrived with his sycophants who didn't help and A left which again was not helpful.

R: I note you mention sycophants. Would like you to consider the suggestion that there are influential cliques who operate in the college?

I: I don't know about cliques. Rather, School x is perceived as elitist and separatist by staff in the college. People have come to work for school x because of its reputation. Really, it was A they came to work for they saw him as charismatic and also they believed in the brand. The school was seen as a separate organization within the college, which I know was regarded by some as elitist. It had its own brand, which was sold through the work of its charismatic leader.

Thinking about it, no not cliques. I would prefer not to use that word because of its negative implications. Rather self-supporting working groups with their own dynamics –you know groups of people working together on one site but with networks here and also across the country. Clique has a negative tone to it, which, I feel, is not an appropriate term here.

R: Have you ever met personal antagonism while you have worked here?

I: I haven't no. I hope I've not been seen to present that to others.

R Thanks for doing this. Is there any thing you want to add to what you've said already?

I: No thanks but I was pleased to be invited to give my views.

[End of interview.]

## Interview 5

### [A long-term, full time member of staff]

R: Thanks for giving me this opportunity to ask you a number of follow-up questions from the questionnaire you recently completed. Perhaps I could start with your thoughts on recent changes in policy and the influence of DEC on this. I wonder what your thoughts are relating to current policy decisions. But first was filling in the questionnaire OK?

I: Yes. I had some difficulty with what I should focus on. Should it be the School or the whole college?

R: Which did you choose?

I: The School, it was easier.

R: Could I start by asking you about your knowledge of DEC? Do you feel you have an understanding of its purpose?

I: Yes, I have attended all the meetings and read the documentation, so I feel I know what it is about.

R: Moving to the outcomes. Could we look at current policy in HE and DEC?

I: Yes. I'm not sure about DEC. What is DEC? What value has it had for my School? I don't really understand the purpose. Some people have bought into DEC. Some schools particularly y school have bought into it big style. Staff in School x less. In my view they do not want to buy into the idea of university. School x has always seen itself as separatist. They've always been separate, elitist. Many in other schools are pleased things have changed.

School y are much more into the business of scholarship and being scholarly. They've gone much more for a big change with their staff, they've gone for teamwork. There is a difference in culture between the two schools.

School x will not debate as much-they are much more directive. However, they can operate on their own much more. They have much more income to play with and support its work. A was a charismatic figure who ran the School as a business.

R: Do you feel the college has a long-term view of where it is going and what it wants to do?

I: Yes, there is a long-term view. The college is looking for university status in the long-term. This is the very long-term view. One of the strategic points is TDAPS [Taught Degree Awarding Powers] which is, I suppose, a medium term goal. This is realistic perhaps in the next five years but so much depends on our level of success on the IQER [Quality Enhancement Review for HE in FE colleges] engagement. We are currently working with them. They will report officially in January 2008

This must also take into account devolved admissions which we are working on at the moment. In a mixed economy college like this one. One part of the issue is to keep SMT on-side. Some are by inclination not really interested in HE ...rather in the development of FE and the requirements of OFSTED.

R: I wonder if I could move to another topic at this point. To what extent do you feel the present organisation has a commitment to its staff?

I: Brancaster, in my view, is not a place where people want to stay long. Other places have been expanding locally and many staff, particularly from some of the School here moved on to other more prestigious places. This lack of commitment is in my view mutual. Staff don't want to stay long generally and generally, they are not expected to if they work on HE courses.

R: Just a couple of shorter points perhaps. Have you ever met any personal antagonism from other colleagues here?

I: No, not at all. Never.

R: Secondly, to what extent are you aware of influential cliques in the college?

I: No not really. There are groups who I feel have a superior notion of themselves but their influence over the whole college is very limited.

R: That's interesting. How would you describe this phenomenon ?

I: A certain insularity I suppose. They have a private agenda they want to pursue. I think there not so divorced from the rest of the college though. All the schools have a sense of superiority to some extent, but it's a positive not a negative idea. It's not like a clique, which I see as a negative concept.

R: Thanks for this. Is there anything else you want to add at this point?

I: No thanks. I hope what I've had to say has helped

[End of interview.]

## Interview 6

### [A long-term, full time member of staff]

R: Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me. I wonder if we could start by looking at your understanding of DEC? Do you feel you have a good understanding of its purpose?

I: Yes, I have been to the meetings and I feel I understand what it is about and the changes and developments it will bring.

R: Do you feel there have been recent changes in policy as a result of the DEC initiative.

I: Yes, fine. I have seen DEC as a challenge, both personally and professionally. I have worked hard to deliver the DEC message and to work towards its aims regarding the future and HE in the college.

R: Could you possibly say what effect that has had on you directly?

I: Tiredness. I am very tired as a consequence of all the work we have done. The School has taken on board the potential impact of DEC and worked hard to meet its demands in relation to delivering HE programmes.

R: Would you describe the experience then, in negative terms?

Negative? No. not really. Staff in the School have worked really hard to develop programmes within the school and look towards their own professional development. This has led to tensions in their work/life balance for some. As I say, we have all worked hard to fulfill the requirements in relation to DEC. Where there has been any negativity, it has been as a result of the hard work that has been done and the tiredness of staff. Really we felt it was our future.

R: Do you feel these difficulties are common across the college at this time?

I: I can't tell I don't really know enough about what is happening outside this School to comment.

R: Could you comment on the degree of forward planning that you are aware of in the college?

I: Assuming the future of DEC then there has been much of this evident, certainly within the School. Part of this links to our need for re-branding the work of the School towards drawing in students to appropriate programmes. Having created a sound product how can we best use it to develop further?

R: I wonder if you have come across influential cliques during your time here.

I: Well yes, I have come across evidence of cliques, particularly in relation to heads of department and SMT. SMT, you know, is a closed shop. You either choose to fit into it or you do not. There is an element of sexism here too at times. G has phrase for the senior women in the staff, In his eyes they are either fillies or workhorses.

R: Would you say there are lots of cliques across the college then?

I: No, there are a large number of staff who work together very successfully and that is a positive. Cliquiness is a negative term really and that exists in the relationship between heads of school and SMT in my experience. ....

...There is no cliques between FE and HE staff in our School. We needed to stabilize that as a result of DEC where the two sections could have drifted apart. Rather, we have grown together professionally as a result of the changes.

R: I wonder if you could comment, particularly in the light of your comments relating to cliques in the college about any personal antagonism you have met during your time here. Has there been much of that?

I: No. not generally. Although I have experienced some personal antagonism, particularly within my own School. This has been the case with one member of staff in particular and has led to tensions. Yet beyond this one example, there is I feel a strong feeling of professional goodwill at this time.

R: I think I have covered all the points I wanted to at this stage. Thank you for your help with this.

[End of Interview.]

## Interview 7

### [A recently employed, full-time member of staff]

R: Thanks for doing this. I wonder if I could start by asking about your understanding of DEC.

I: Yes, I feel I have a good understanding. I was provided with some information with my application form and had a good discussion about it at my interview.

R: Have you attended any of the School meetings about it?

I: Yes, one I think in the School. That's the only one we have had since I came.

R: I would be grateful if you could comment on the feeling of negativity you have found in the college since you came.

I: This is quite hard, as I have not been here long. I've nothing really to base my thoughts on I can provide an analysis of typologies within the school as a result of the DEC initiative if that would help.

R: That would be very helpful. Thank you.

I: This analysis is based around the feeling in the school that the school would close. As a school, we are very confused about this. I have not been here long when this decision was made. We were all at a loss to work out why. We couldn't work it out if it is a deliberate decision, an accidental happening or a mistake. Staff in the School can be placed largely in one of these three camps.

Three camps. Yes, one group feels it is a deliberate act by SMT that will result in the closure of the School. A second camp feels it is an accidental act by SMT which they will eventually regret, while a third camp have no strong views as to who to blame. Certainly, there is a great deal of anger within the school as a result of this.

R: Where is this anger directed?

I: The SMT and G in particular. There is a stark awareness in the School that the School is bound to change.

R: I wonder in the light of these comments, the anger in the school etc if you could comment on the level of commitment of SMT to its staff?

I: The college is not interested in its staff. There is no sense of loyalty to them.

R: That's very damning isn't it?

I: Yes, but it represents my views at this time.

R: Do you think you will work here for much longer yourself?

I: It's hard to tell at the moment. Possibly, that decision will be made for me if the School closes.

R: Could I now turn to two other matters that came out of the initial questionnaire? Cliques and any personal antagonism you might have met.

I: Cliques. I haven't been working here long enough to comment. As for personal antagonism, I've not met this as an issue. Immediate people around me have been particularly supportive colleagues.

R: That seems to cover the main points I had in mind. Have you anything else you wish to add?

I: No, not at this time. Other than, to say it was an interesting experience taking part in this exercise and also doing the questionnaire. It has made me think about things.

[End of interview.]

## Interview 8

### [A long-term, full-time member of staff]

R: I would like to start by asking you about the questionnaire you completed and what difficulties if any that presented?

I: It was not a problem really. A little long perhaps but it was interesting or at least most of it was. Sometimes I found myself asking should I focus on the School or the wider college.

R: What did you choose to do there?

I: On the School, I think. I'm not sure how consistent I was throughout though.

R: Could we start with a question about your understanding of DEC? Do you feel you have been kept informed about it?

I: Yes. I have attended the meetings with the rest of my colleagues. I feel I know as much as any of them.

R: Are you aware of its implications for you.

I: Yes but that is only emerging as time goes on. What is the intention and how it will progress may be two quite different things in the end.

R: How do you mean?

I: It's the difference between the plan and its outcome. I understand where we are going, raising aspirations and skills and developing the local economy but it doesn't mean that the original plan will be the exact outcome. That's far more of an uncertainty.

R: Do you feel the uncertainty has led to a more negative, untrusting atmosphere around the college as a result of the recent changes?

I: In general, this is the biggest problem at the moment. It's hard, at times, to know exactly where we are going with DEC and how we might get there.

R: Could you expand on this a little please?

I: I feel at times that there is a mismatch between where we are with DEC and where the plan says we might be going. It's hard at times, in my

opinion; see how what is set out in the planning documents can be reconciled with what is happening on the ground, as it were. At times, I feel the plans are very ambitious and we are far from achieving many of them, let alone developing university status by 2010. I don't feel it's liked by many staff.

R: Is this a question of personal trust of the SMT to deliver on DEC or is it rather more about the ambitions planning?

I: It's about the plans for me really. One has to trust SMT to deliver at this stage and to go along with their judgment, I feel.

R: That leads me on to another question relating to the opportunity to criticize current policy and practice in your role.

I: There have been few opportunities from really to make any criticisms of what is proposed, certainly not, of what is happening. It was presented to us as a package, a rather take it leave it situation. This is what we are going to do. The 'are you with us or against us approach'.

R: So, there has been little discussion at any level for people in your position?

I: There has been little or no discussion at our level about what was to happen and our role in it. Rather it was as I said earlier, a 'fait accompli' very much a 'take it or leave it' situation.

R: How did you react to the lack of consultation?

Fortunately, I was very happy with the DEC initiative in principle. I feel I am generally in tune with its purpose. I would like to see the expansion of HE in my area. I feel my subjects can only benefit from this development.

R: What are your current worries then?

I: I worry about the progress that is being made and the direction we are going. It doesn't seem as if we are too coordinated at this time and the overall sense of purpose and direction that was explained to all of us at the beginning is not in place at the moment. You know... where exactly are we going

R: I wonder now if I could turn to another issue. Have you come across any influential cliques in the college?

I: No, not really. I suppose there are groups of people who work closely together here but not cliques, that's too negative a term. It's not an issue for me. I feel I can work with any individuals in the college and feel comfortable within any group in the college.

R: On a similar theme, do you come across personal antagonism in your role here?

Oh no. That's not a problem nor has it ever been. I have always found people here willing to help and easy to get on with. Of course, there are people you like better than others but antagonism, no, no not at all.

R: Another issue that came out of the original questionnaire. Do you feel there is evidence of forward planning in the college? Could you comment on that for me?

I: Oh, yes certainly, the strategic plan for DEC, the new build and all the changes at The Hub. That's our forward planning. I wonder, at times, the extent this will be transferred into day-to-day management of the project and how successfully that will be delivered but yes, there is a clear plan and sense of direction in the college. There is this documentation which sets it out. Maybe some people are less well informed than I feel about future developments. I suppose others are more resistant to change than I am.

R: Do you feel SMT are really committed to the future of the college?

I: Yes, in the circumstances, with all they are planning to do with DEC they must be, don't they. They have to be, so much depends on it.

R: Thanks for this. I am grateful for your help. Is there anything else you wish to talk about at this time?

I: That's fine.

[End of interview]

## **Interview 9**

### **[A relatively new employee, full-time]**

R: Thanks for helping with this. I wonder if I could start by asking you about the questionnaire you completed. Did that cause you any problems?

I: No, none at all. I managed to do it in about 25 minutes. So it wasn't that onerous.

R: I wonder if I could ask you about the DEC initiative? To what extent are you aware of it?

I: I feel informed. I've been to all the meetings in the School and worked towards its implementation

R: How has that impacted on your work here?

I: The DEC initiative has had a big impact on my working life here. I have written new modules for my programmes and started a Masters programme. So yes, DEC, there has been a major impact.

R: Has recent professional development had an impact on all staff in the school?

I: Oh, yes a major impact. I think it has drawn us together though, which has been helpful.

R: Helpful? How?

I: It's brought us together more, perhaps in adversity but we have worked closer together recently as a result of that, I'm sure we feel as a staff we are growing as individuals and collectively.

R: A key tension which has been reported to me is that between the work-life balance of staff that have had your experiences [additional professional development and individual study]. Has this been an issue for you?

I: I think the answer to that is that we have struggled with this at times, particularly recently. Writing new modules and post grad study on top of your normal days work is very difficult, tiring, even exhausting at times. I have found doing my masters...at times, I have neglected my family. I have found that difficult, as I'm sure you would recognize.

R: It would be useful to me if you could comment on the future planning of the college.

I: Future planning? What is becoming to come out as part of the restructure is now a very difficult animal. I also think we have all learned a lot about what MB [another member of staff] calls 'strategic drift'.

R: Could you explain that?

I: Strategic drift. Yes, a lack of a sense of direction. I feel we are beginning to suffer from that. I feel we don't really have a plan of our own for HE. We are still seen as a college with a few HE courses. G plans to make HE provision more central. You know I feel we are in danger of getting totally lost.

R: Can I talk to you about branding. Others have mentioned this to me. Is it a fair comment to say that your School is seeking a particular brand for its programmes at the moment?

I: Yes, well. That's interesting. I guess so. In a strange way the re-organisation has led us to query our whole HE focus. There is a dilemma here, which currently we've not resolved, about how to best structure our HE courses to ensure as many students as possible move on to our HE courses. This has been a problem here, as the FE programmes don't always make it that easy. And consequently, we lose a lot of students to other places. As part of our development planning, though we are addressing this. The other thing is the frustration about what our FE courses seem to do. Certain things which we do at HE are fundamentally non-starters. We are also trying to sort this out.

R: I don't think I understand what you mean.

I: Well ....we are much more about students finding their own way. Making their own decisions, learning and reflecting on this learning. In FE, the concentration is much more on directing students. We need to address this so the gap is not so wide when they make the transfer. We will also re-brand towards the eighteen year old market. A lot of the MA research done by staff has helped with this process.

R: Could we move on to the commitment of SMT? To what extent do you feel they are committed to the project and the work of the staff in the school?

I: Yes, I generally feel they are committed to the project. I feel they must be to have put in this much effort. I don't know directly of course beyond

what they have said in the meetings with us but that's all I have to go along with.

R: Thanks for that. I wonder if I could ask you about your knowledge of cliques in the college. Have you come across this as a feature here?

I: I think there are cliques here from SMT down. I thought SM was a closed shop. I feel G didn't recognize us for what we were. He worked in stereotypes, I feel. And once you were identified, you were labeled for ever I don't feel I related well to G. I think women at the top were approachable but I'm not sure how much influence I had with them.

R: Is one of your perceptions of the college then that it is elitist?

I: No. The faculty doesn't work like that. I have never felt that really, anyway. There is a divide where the work takes place of course -HE here and FE in town, sort of,-if you know what I mean. But as a School, that has not been a problem. We get on well together. Both professionally and socially. The amount of student progression between FE and HE helps to bring us together. As for the rest of the college, I can't say anything about that.

R: Finally, I would like to ask you about any examples of antagonism you have met personally. Is that something you have personally met here?

I: Antagonism no. It would be the wrong word. If you replace it with frustration then yes. Many colleagues would respond to that I think. But it is the job and all that is going on at the moment rather than anything that is personal. There is a feeling of when is all this tension going to move away from us. There is a lack of positive thinking at the moment. There is so much going on at this time. The college is losing a good deal of goodwill as a consequence. I think people are less likely to do things out of good will than they used to. Because the work load and the complexity of what we are trying to do is not working too well. Hopefully, things will improve.

R: Do you think they will?

I: Yes, I hope so. Ever the optimist, you know!

R: That's been very helpful. Thanks for giving me your time and your help with this. Is there anything else you wish to add?

I: No.

[End of interview]

## Interview 10

### [A long-term, part-time member of staff]

R: Thanks for doing this with me and for completing the questionnaire. One of the points that came from the questionnaire was that staff were not sure about the long term planning in the college. Do you feel this is an issue? Are you aware of the long term plans for the college?

I: Yes, I think so> I have been to the meetings on DEC and that is a major part of our long term plan isn't it?

R: One of the outcomes of the survey you agreed to complete was that there is an apparent negativity and lack of trust among staff in the college working on HE programmes. Could you comment on this from your own experience?

I: That's difficult. I've been here a long time. I've not really experienced any negativity. Not in my school anyway. I do keep myself to my self in such circumstances and would avoid anything like that if possible but I've not felt any negativity in my School. We are all working really hard both personally to develop our careers and to write our new courses and that been really positive...really exciting actually. It's hard work on top of everything else of course but no not at all negative. Rather, everyone else seems very positive about things.

R: I wonder, have you come across much criticism of the current policy relating to DEC recently?

I: No, again no, not at all. As I said we are largely focused on developing what we do and our courses as a result of DEC. There has been little obvious criticism of policy from anyone I've met. The DEC initiative is one of the reasons I'm here It seem an exciting venture for me both personally and professionally.

R: You seem to imply from what you've already said there is a considerable amount of forward planning taking place. Is that the case?

I: Oh yes, certainly. The School is involved in a great deal of planning at the moment for the reasons I've described above. That is the main focus of much of our thinking in the School at the moment. The quality of our courses and their 'original ness' [word reported as accurate here] for a new market. I am looking to the future, what I do and planning for it is an important part of this.

R: How much discussion about the changes in policy have you been involved with personally?

I: At School level a great deal. In order to produce our new programmes we have all had prolonged discussions over months. Months and months of work. We continue to do that. We are writing the modules at the moment, so there is much more of a solo effort than some of the earlier things we had to do but we still collaborate together heavily.

R: That's at school level of course.

I: This is at school level of course. I've never been involved in any of the major decisions regarding DEC beyond that level. I wasn't here at the time anyway. At my level, I wouldn't have expected to be directly involved anyway.

R: Do you feel there are influential cliques in the college working for their own benefit?

I: No cliques in our school. We all get on together well, certainly on this site. We all work closely together. We go out socially as a group, so no problems there.

R: Have you experienced any personal antagonism at work in the college?

I: No, not at all. Never anything like it either.

R: Finally, do you feel SMT is committed to you and your future?

I: I feel its good by implication though I've not really met any of them directly. They were not involved in my interview. But the fact that SMT both set up and clearly endorsed DEC, for which I'm working, they must be supporting both it and, by default, me. I hope so anyway, otherwise it's a bit pointless.

R: Thanks for that. Is there anything else you wish to add at this point?

I: No thanks.

[End of Interview]

## Interview 11

**[A relatively new, part-time member of staff]**

R: Thanks for agree in got do this interview. I wonder first if I could ask you about the questionnaire and how you found completing that?

I: A little long. It too me quite a while to complete?

R: Could you say how long?

I: About 40 minutes, I think. A long time for a questionnaire.

R: No other problems then?

I: No.

R: Could we start with a question about your understanding of DEC, do you feel you understand what it is about?

I: Yes I think so, developing skills and the local economy..... widening participation from non traditional learners.

R: Do you feel you have been kept informed with its progress and development?

I: Yes. I've attended all the meetings

R: I would like if we can to look now at the question of negativity among staff. Is this an experience of yours here that staff are negative now as a result of DEC?

I: No not personally. But there is some increased negativity about now as a result of DEC. Some staff have become increasingly negative

R: Can you say why?

I: In some cases, it is the result of what the changes mean. We staff in School B are concerned about our future. We are not sure what is going to happen to us. Everything seem to be up in the air at the moment.

R: What do you mean?

I: Well after the meeting last week, we don't know what is happening to us.

R: Could you explain about the meeting?

I: We had a meeting last week all of us in School B where g said he couldn't guarantee the future of the School and he didn't like what we were doing. That wasn't very helpful at all.

R: No, I can imagine. Morale must have suffered as a result of that.

I: Oh, yes. It wasn't too bad before that and we were all positive about DEC but things have changed considerably as a result of the meeting.

R: Yes, I can imagine. How did the staff take it at the time?

I: Well, not well, as you might expect. There was a lot of acrimony and hostility as a result of what G said. There has been a lot of discussion since. People are really fed up as a result. A lot will leave I'm sure. It's not good.

R: So, the announcement has provoked a lot of discussion among staff.

I: Well, not surprisingly.

R: Was the announcement a total surprise then?

I: Yes, totally out of the blue. G just called this meeting with us and made the announcement. It was a total surprise.

R: What is the general feeling among the staff now then?

I: Well, some are totally 'pissed off' and looking for other jobs. Others think they will wait and see what happens and one or two older staff are hoping to last out until they can get retirement. This and working conditions, salaries in particular are always a problem in retaining staff. That reason as much as anything makes staff move on. They are better paid elsewhere.

R: So the announcement provoked this discussion? Was there much discussion about DEC before then?

I: Yes, some but it was much more about what we should do about developing our profile and working to the aims of DEC. Before the announcement, we had very little discussion of DEC though in principle, just its implications.

R: What is the current thinking about DEC?

I: Well, staff are cynical about it now. Recent events haven't helped, and it is a massive project. So far, we haven't seemed much for all this effort in real terms. The start of the building in town but that's mainly for FE. ...There seems to be nothing happening with HE at all, except for reorganizing towards a flatter management structure. But that was last year now. Other than that very little seems to have happened.

R: Is that because FE takes precedent at the moment?

I: Yes. But I suppose it has to after all HE is only some ten percent of our business. FE is the bread and butter of the place. Even a large number of our students come through that route. So we cannot complain too much, I suppose.

R: To what extent have you been involved in the decision making process to develop DEC?

I: Hardly at all. We have been largely informed of developments haven't we? I've attended all the meetings where we have been invited to be told what is happening. So, no I've not been involved at all at any stage.

R: Would you like to have been more involved?

I: Well, yes in that I feel I would have had a greater ownership of the project. I realize I only part-time here but to have been involved would have been interesting and I would perhaps have a better feeling about it.

R: Do you feel there is much evidence of forwards planning in the college?

I: Yes, DEC was all about that: the vision. SMT are part of this forward planning. The executive have been heavily involved but we have not. Little or nothing has been asked of us. Forward planning seems to stop here at a certain level and we are expected to follow.

R: Do you feel the college has a long-term view of things?

I can't tell. DEC is clearly a long term vision. It's clear that G. wants a university here. That's a major part of my understanding. The problem is also we were not part of the plan unfortunately and also it seems to be coming apart a little.

R: Do you feel the college management is committed to its workforce?

I: Well yes. I've always thought so. I always felt they were supportive of us. I always felt it was a self-fulfilling prophecy really. They will support us if we support them in what they want. But this last week or so this has gone out of the window to some extent. They are not going to support our courses so by inference they are not supporting us. This, in turn has had an effect on our attitude to them.

R: I wonder do you feel there are interested cliques at work here?

I: No, not at all...

R: Have you ever come across any form of cliques here?

I: No, never.

R: Have you come across personal antagonism here?

I: No, never. The antagonism at the moment is about what I do not me personally.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add to any thing you have said?

I: No.

R: thanks for your help.

[End of Interview]

## **Interview 12**

### **[A long term full-time member of staff]**

R: Thanks for agreeing to do this. I would like to ask you about your experiences of completing the questionnaire. How was that?

I: Lengthy. I nearly didn't do it at all. It was a task and a half.

R: How long did you take over it?

I: Don't know ...more than half an hour I suppose.

R: Was that the only problem with it?

I: Well, the focus on should I answer about the school or the wider college cropped up a time or two. I never did sort that out. I think I may have mixed up both actually, as I went through it.

R: What problems did that create?

I: Well, we are somewhat isolated from the rest of the college and I found it much more difficult to focus on the wider college than the School that you know much better.

R: Do you feel the culture in the college and that in the school are not the same then?

I: I'm not too sure about that at all. It is hard to tell if they are directly comparable or not. I can't answer that question it's far too complicated. The School has its culture, as does the college. I don't think they are the same. I can really express what I mean here.

R: To what extent are you aware of DEC?

I: I know some things about it. I've been to the meetings and listened to what G. had to say to us, so I feel I know something about it and it's purpose.

R: There is evidence from the questionnaire of a negative feeling among staff at the moment. I wonder, firstly, if you could comment on that for me?

I: Do you mean the impact of DEC?

R: If that's what you, want to talk about.

I: The impact of DEC was far reaching. The school, we thought, was well established, successful and innovative at the time. DEC changed that. What was our future? Where do we go now? What is our future?

R: I suppose you are talking about the recent meeting with G?

I: Yes.

R: Could you talk about the meeting?

I: An interesting meeting to say the least! A lot of heated emotions. It has led to staff not knowing where they are now. This has led to a lack of professional confidence in the school with SMT. A lot are thinking of leaving or saying they are intending to do.

R: Your comments imply there are lots of criticisms of policy as a result of DEC in your School.

I: I'll say. It's not surprising really, in the circumstances. We feel we have no sense of direction now. We've been left with an open wound. G. changed everything, the perception of what we did and how we did it. Previously we had been given our head. We were able to go off and do things that did not necessarily toe the party line, as long as we kept with certain bounds. We were able to use our initiative and be innovative. We were encouraged to do this.

R: Does this say something about the previous head of department?

I: Oh, I suppose so. He was very innovative. Bordering on a maverick, I suppose.

R: What does G want to do with the school?

I: He wants to make it like any other school in the sector, leaving innovation and enterprise behind. I think he wants to close it. Why would he want to close what is the most successful part of the college financially. It doesn't make sense. Close it and start again? The School is a 'cash cow' for the college. It makes more money than any other part of the college. Its sense of purpose has been lost at this time. I feel there is little future for the School in its proposed role as we will be so similar to others, who have a greater drawing power. Our unique identity will be lost as a result.

R: Do you feel you get support from SMT?

I: Well not now. The level of support of clearly not there from SMT. There is none. We have no sense of enthusiasm from them. That's another reason why people are leaving in droves.

R: Moving on now. Do you think the college has any influential cliques?

No not cliques. It's size gives it a separateness round job areas. I suppose there are some problems in some areas about how they see themselves. Also how others see them. But not cliques. It's too negative a word.

R: Have you ever feel personal antagonism working here?

I: There is a certain element of this at times I feel.

R: Could you say more about that for me?

I: Some people get aggressive at times through a lack of recognition of what they have done; what they feel they have achieved.

R: Would you say this is a big problem?

I: Oh no not really. It has cropped up again recently because of our insecurities and G's announcement.

R: What form does this take?

I: Verbal aggression, really. A certain amount of jockeying and anxiety. Some people are insecure and looking at their achievements with the intention of moving on.

R: A problem though nevertheless?

I: Yes. It's difficult at the moment. ....

R: Is there anything else you wish to add to what you've said.

I: No.

R: Thanks for this. It's been very helpful.

[End of interview]

## Interview 13

### [A long term, full-time member of staff]

R: Thanks for doing this. Could we first look at your experience of completing the questionnaire? Did that throw up any difficulties?

I: not really. I would have preferred it a bit shorter but the topic is complicated so I suppose any useful questionnaire has to be too.

R: To what extent are you aware of the DEC initiative?

I: Like everyone else I've been to the meetings and heard what has been said.....the development of the local economy and developing the skills base. That seem fine to me.

R: I wonder if we could look at the level of negativity in the college. This was something that came out of the original questionnaires. Do you feel there is a negativity here?

I: It's hard to tell across the whole college just how true that is.

R: what about in your School? Is there an experience of negativity there?

I: We are lucky, I feel. I suppose negativity is driven by unhappiness and we are generally a happy bunch.

R: So no negativity then?

I: There are pockets of it. I don't think our School has been as badly affected as others though. There is not much of a problem with us though. The FE staff are really pleased to be moving from W, there are no problems there, rather the opposite. They are motivated and think things will be better as a result of the move. Other Schools, I hear, are perhaps more negative about DEC than we are but I have no first hand knowledge of this I can speak about.

R: To what extent do you think senior management may be responsible for any negativity at the moment?

I: To some extent, they must have a responsibility but negativity is not always as a result of what SM do is it?

R: SMT has a responsibility for DEC. how do you feel about the effect of DEC on the future of your School?

I: I'm optimistic about DEC. It can only benefit us.

R: So you're hopeful there then?

I: Yes generally. I have hope that it will be beneficial. From what I've seen the SMT believe in DEC. They certainly sell it well. That's the direction they want to take the college. I don't know to what extent they will succeed. However, current thinking at government level is with them. When you look at the skills base in the town and the fact that on fourteen percent of school leavers last year went into higher education we must stand something of a chance.

R: Fourteen percent?

I: Yes, government figures stated this. It was in The Star [the local paper] yesterday. It's not very good is it? Particularly now as more students are likely to study and live at home. That may help. Ewe should also be able to take on more students from FE courses as they too have less chance of employment at sixteen. So, in that sense the tide is with us.

R: So, we should all stand a better chance from that point of view alone?

I: Yes, we should. I'm not sure where HE stands in relation to DEC though. It's not as clear as FE I feel. The focus is certainly on FE. I'm not too sure, where HE is in the plan. Yes, I understand G promised a university to the governors when he came but can he deliver? I don't know. I sometimes think it will all fall apart. Maybe the number of students will not come to give us our extra numbers. When you think about it, why should they come here? I don't know really, as I've said.

R: Are you aware of these criticisms among staff or is this something you've not discussed with anyone else?

I: Oh, Yes. There is a wide range of feelings among many staff on the current policy. Many are like me, think it's a good idea, DEC, but wonder about our ability to carry it out and if SMT have the ability and commitment to deliver.

R: Why commitment?

I: Who knows how long all this will actually take and if SMT will still be here. Will policy have changed again? Will we all still be here?

R: Do you feel there is a good level of forward planning here?

Yes. SMT and G in particular have a clear view of what we should be doing and where we should be going, the university and all that, that's all part of the future for the college. I just hope, as I said earlier they can deliver.

R: Have you been involved in any of the discussions about DEC, you know, at a strategic level?

I: No not at all.

R: Not even at school level?

I: No, not at all. I leave that to L [Head of School] who says little or nothing about it at the moment.

R: Really?

I: Yes, that's one of my worries. Nothing much seems to be happening with HE. It's all about FE. Perhaps after the inspection things will change. [The college was due to have its first OFSTED inspection shortly after these interviews were conducted.]

R: Do you think the college is committed to its workforce?

I: That's much harder to say. I would like to think so. But it's difficult to be sure. Hopefully, they are because for this to work we all have to be in it together.

R: I wonder could we turn to something else I would like to look at? The questionnaire suggested there were influential cliques working in the college. Is this your experience? Could you comment on that?

No, it's not my experience. We all get on together well in the School. What groupings we have are set around the work and their personal interests and the subjects they teach. Perhaps where they are based, it is those things that determine groupings as far as I can see.

R: The questionnaire suggested there was some personal hostility among staff here. Have you ever suffered personal hostility from other staff?

I: No, not at all. Never.

R: Thanks for this. Is there anything else you want to add to what you have said?

No. I don't think so. But thanks for asking me.

[End of interview.]