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PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION

An Examination of the Interface Between BTEC National Diploma and Higher Education Course Provision

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Submission for the degree Master of Education

University of Durham: School of Education

1997



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Performing Arts Education: An Examination of the Interface Between BTEC

National Diploma and Higher Education Course Provision

Timothy John Stephenson

ABSTRACT

The 1990s have witnessed a period of rapid change and development for everyone participating within the Further and Higher Education sectors. Traditional demarcations have been eroded and the number of students entering courses has rapidly increased. This study examines some of the principal debates that have been raised during this period through an analysis of the work of two further education colleges in the North East of England. The focus of the research is on BTEC National Diploma courses in performing arts, and the way in which they interface with courses in higher education.

The two colleges provide case studies through which the primary debate of access is examined. Subsidiary issues regarding course content, vocational training, academic standards, resource issues and the expectations of staff and students are also examined. The entire study is located within a contextual framework which examines the broader effects of policy changes with regards to the arts and education, the development of vocational courses and statistical evidence pertaining to the interface of BTEC courses and degree programmes. Opinions have been gathered from a number of staff engaged in education and training in both sectors. These have been supplemented by the views of students on BTEC National Diploma courses and illuminated through exploration of the regional context in which the courses operate.

The scope of this research project has required the adoption of an appropriately flexible research technique. I have chosen to employ a number of differing, yet complementary, research techniques within a framework of multi-method analysis. This was deemed to be the most effective manner in which meaningful conclusions could be reached due to the subjective nature of much of the information to be examined.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Further and Higher Education Courses in the Performing Arts in the North East of England	175
Appendix 2	People Interviewed in the Process of Research	178
Appendix 3	Colleges Running BTEC National Performing Arts Courses in England: 1992	180
Appendix 4	Courses Offered By BTEC	183
Appendix 5	FE Surveys: Staff and Student Questionnaires	
	5A Student Questionnaire	188
	5B Staff Questionnaire	192
	5C Statistical Return. (Newcastle College)	196
	5D Statistical Return.(Monkwearmouth College)	208
	5E Statistical Return. (Islington Sixth Form Centre) ...	220
	5F Statistical Return. Summary of all three Colleges ...	232
	5G Statistical Return. BTEC National Diploma staff ...	244
	5H Structured Interview Questions (FE)	256
Appendix 6	Courses in the Performing Arts: Bretton Hall	257
Appendix 7	7A Structured Interview Questions (HE)	259
	7B Structured Interviews (HE): Summary of Responses.	261

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained herein is the original work of the author and has not previously been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation examines the interface between National Diploma (ND) courses offered by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and degree courses with particular focus on the subject area of performing arts. My interest in this subject emanates from many years of personal involvement in the recruitment of performing arts students into higher education. From this I have gained the impression that there is a significant difference between the number of students who are successful in gaining admission to university and college courses with A'levels rather than with BTEC qualifications. Entry statistics appear to show that A'levels are preferred to BTEC qualifications by the majority of higher education institutions. However, despite the apparent statistical evidence, there remain many questions that need exploration pertaining to definitions of quality, the suitability of BTEC courses for higher education, entry procedures, access, who it is that defines a student's suitability for higher education and student and staff attitudes and expectations about BTEC courses.

The context in which further and higher education courses have developed over the past few years is also highly complex. Expansion in the performing arts at both further and higher education levels has been rapid. Issues surrounding vocational training have had to be addressed across the sector, and access policies of most higher education providers proclaim a commitment to non-standard methods of entrance that is not borne out by the statistical evidence. However, current data appears to

demonstrate that despite the rapid growth of BTEC and other forms of vocational education, students with A'levels continue to occupy the majority of higher education places. This poses a key question, namely,

Are students with A'levels more likely to be given places in higher education than well-qualified BTEC students?

This thesis will examine the specific factors behind this statement in an attempt to divorce opinion from fact and provide realistic analysis capable of informing future policy development within the sector.

As with any generalisation there are numerous factors that may or may not affect the outcomes, and as far as possible these variables all need examination and /or elimination. Factors such as course suitability, student expectations, staff expectations, government policies towards higher education, etc. will all inform the discussion. As so many of these factors are constantly changing it will therefore be apparent that I consider the subject highly complex, and not one that can be readily viewed from a wholly objective stance. Certain factors are very difficult to control, and others remain in the realm of emotion and supposition. Nevertheless, this study will endeavour to examine the broad issues through raising, researching and answering a series of key questions that inform the overall debate.

The broad context that informs this study is the rapidly changing face of further and higher education that has been taking place over the past few years. There are also apparent contradictions between BTEC, university, government and funding council aims and policies on this matter. Initial exploration into this area has demonstrated that fact is sometimes hard to separate from opinion, and contextual influences have the capability of distorting reality. Thus, it is important to examine the wide range of influences that have a bearing on this issue to identify the precise questions that need to be addressed through the research methodology adopted.

In terms of educational policy the over-arching factors which have influenced the sector have been the collapse of the binary line, increased student numbers in both further and higher education, the rapid growth of BTEC and other vocationally oriented courses and changes in funding policies from Local Management of Schools (LMS) in the primary and secondary sector through to the major changes in student funding and

research funding in universities. Many of these are inter-related and all are in turn influenced by the changing social and political environment evidenced in Britain at the beginning of the 1990s. Nevertheless, to come to some real conclusions regarding the interface of BTEC and degree courses in the performing arts it is necessary to examine certain key issues affecting education provision as a whole before moving into the subject specific concerns detailed in the following chapter.

The context for increasing student numbers into higher education was established in a government White Paper published in the spring of 1991.

“ In our White Paper, we set out our commitment to continued expansion of higher education to meet the growing demand from all those able to benefit from it.institutions have responded very well to the changing demands of students for more courses, delivered in different ways to suit the more diverse nature of the modern student population. There is still scope for yet more such innovation.....” (1)

There has been general agreement regarding the desire to increase access to education at all levels. In particular the government has sought to increase the percentage of students entering higher education. For a variety of reasons we are seeing increasing numbers of students in the post-16 age group remaining in education. This inevitably increases the demand on further and higher education course provision. In higher education a period of rapid expansion has been followed by a moratorium on additional funded places until 1997. Whilst government may well applaud the increasing significance of 'market forces' on higher education, this has to be balanced against major concerns over the maintenance of standards and the maintenance of quality. Student staff ratios have been rising across the sector and concern over the suitability and availability of physical resources is widespread.

One of the primary changes in the secondary and tertiary sectors of education has been the increasing numbers of students moving away from established A'level courses towards the more vocationally oriented BTEC National Diploma courses. Closely allied to this has been the closure of some sixth form departments within secondary schools in favour of large centralised sixth form, tertiary or further education colleges. Ironically, this process is starting to be reversed since the introduction of Local Management of Schools. This changing pattern of 16-plus education is not entirely

due to changes in education policy. Falling roles, increased student choice, reductions in grant assistance to students and numerous other influences may have contributed to this change. Furthermore, there are some distorting factors, such as that in some parts of the country students may have little choice over which courses are available, and clear evidence that the development of BTEC courses has increased the percentage of students in this age-group wishing to be educated in certain subjects. Accepting all of these factors it still needs to be asked,

Why have so many students interested in the performing arts apparently chosen to take BTEC courses rather than A'levels?

During the past decade BTEC courses have flourished and expanded, and the success of the National Diploma programmes has led directly to the development of a wide range of Higher National Diploma programmes (deemed graduate equivalent) being established within the further education sector. These courses naturally have a very different focus to university education and are seen by some as being in opposition to the established university courses. Since the introduction of Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers (MASN) allocations for higher education places in further education colleges, it could be argued that the resources allocated to these courses would otherwise have remained within the higher education sector. Others view these developments as more reflective of market forces and student demand driving the sector, with the natural consequence being the changing higher education demands by students evidenced in the move towards more vocationally oriented courses. BTEC state that one of the aims of their National Diploma courses is to provide students with access into further study at higher education level.

Is the claim that BTEC National Diploma courses provide access into higher education justified or not?

BTEC can point to the use of many advisors from higher education when establishing their courses, but the stated outcomes of BTEC courses are many and varied and progress into higher education is only one of the possible outcomes. Thus, whether BTEC offers appropriate 16-plus education with respect to future university application is hugely debatable. If it could be shown that National Diploma and higher education courses are incompatible then no amount of consultation, communication or re-writing of access policies can alter that fact.

BTEC students who want to continue their studies are faced with a variety of options. Higher National Diploma courses demonstrate a very high level of recruitment from National Diploma students, but university and college courses show the opposite. It could be that the university admissions process is (or is perceived as) intimidating to candidates. National Diploma and Higher National Diploma courses are likely to be taught within the same college, and familiar tutors can provide more immediate responses about Higher National Diploma access than can universities which are bound to the Universities and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS) and its consequent deadlines. Other factors such as familiarity with the local environment, local versus national recruitment and the lack of student mobility may also contribute to this pattern.

So whilst it is my impression that Higher National Diploma courses can easily demonstrate that the majority of their intakes come direct from National Diploma students, to what extent National Diploma qualifications have been accepted by the universities as appropriate for matriculation and admission purposes remains unclear. Naturally, the answer will vary across the sector and statistics demonstrate marked differences according to subject area and the reputation of the host university.

To further complicate the issue universities and colleges are now faced with a wide range of qualifications deemed appropriate for matriculation purposes, and given the increasing number of students who enter courses through the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), access or mature student routes it is no wonder that an *element of confusion* can result with the BTEC/degree programme interface. University admissions processes largely operate from the basis that certain qualifications are deemed to be A'level equivalent. However, even A'levels are difficult to quantify as subject and examination board differences are marked in some cases.

Perhaps no alternative qualification can ever truly be 'equivalent' as all courses vary and operate with differing aims and philosophies. Thus, the 'equivalence' represented must pertain to the fact that a student is considered of a standard sufficient to undertake that particular type of degree course. Unfortunately this state of affairs often leads to different qualifications being viewed as holding differing status. We therefore come to the next question that needs to be posed,

Do BTEC National Diploma courses provide students with the necessary skills and understandings required for undergraduate study in the performing arts?

Recently institutions across the sector have been engaged in reviewing and changing their access policies. The majority of colleges and universities providing undergraduate courses have reviewed their policies concerning access, and this has resulted in many overt statements on the acceptability of non-standard entries, ethnic minorities, adult learners, etc. within all available literature. University entrance has become a reality to many students through more accessible course structures, the development of modular degrees and the increasing availability of Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS). These developments are applauded although limited data is available regarding the extent to which universities and colleges put their access policies into practice. It will also be interesting to see how recent restrictions on growth will affect 'non-standard' applicants.

Nevertheless, registrars and university prospectuses throughout the country continue to proclaim the policy of opening access to increased numbers of "non-standard" students. 'Non-standard' is used to refer to mature entrants as well as students from BTEC National Diploma courses. It is interesting that both are considered to be outside the traditional entrance profile of many universities. At the same time factors such as financial constraints or the restrictions on student places in some subject areas may have militated against the success of access policies. Bearing this in mind it will be interesting to ascertain,

To what extent have the implementation of new access policies affected the recruitment profile in the performing arts?

Again it is likely that the answer will be a complex mixture of inter-related factors. Access policies, course suitability, changing education structures may simply be masking internal attitudes of staff and students on both sides of the further and higher education divide. It could be that attitudes and opinions inherent within BTEC courses prevent students progressing in this way. It is important to find out whether staff or student attitudes effect the further and higher education interface and thus the whole area of staff and student expectation needs to be explored.

To what extent do BTEC staff and student attitudes militate against successful progress onto undergraduate courses?

However, it might also be that university departments, faced with increasing numbers of applicants each year, can afford to be more selective, and are therefore inclined to choose better qualified A'level students in preference to National Diploma students. It is my opinion that, although university admissions statistics for National Diploma are relatively low, it is unlikely that there is any overt discrimination. The disparity is more likely to stem from ill-informed staff or the pressure created by the huge increase in applications. For the purpose of this study it will be important to ask,

Is there any evidence of discrimination against National Diploma students within university and college departments?

Returning to the question of compatibility if one examines the mission statements of various further education colleges in comparison with those of universities it is immediately apparent that the vocational focus so implicit in the emphasis on BTEC and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) development is not mirrored in the university sector. In general terms universities take a far broader view of 'education', and whilst it is possible that aspects of 'training' may be implicit within the courses, this is seldom the primary aim. Once again there are wide variations perceptible in the sector both between 'old' and 'new' universities as well as between the subject areas.

In the field of performing arts the universities have for many years presented a wide range of courses from the largely theoretical and analytical through to the highly practical and vocationally-oriented. The provision is also very uneven in relation to the art forms represented. Music departments are present in the majority of 'old' universities, whereas drama and dance facilities have always been limited. The 'new' universities were more likely to provide balanced programmes across the arts including the full range of performing arts. Since the collapse of the binary line the art form imbalance persists although the number of dance and drama courses has increased significantly in the sector as a whole.

Does BTEC'S vocational focus militate against access into undergraduate courses?

There is also another aspect to this question namely, if the vocational focus of BTEC courses results in many students proceeding directly into employment it may be that the actual percentage of students wishing to continue their studies at higher education level is relatively low.

As universities and other higher education providers have such differing expectations it could also be argued that the generalisation and standardisation of performing arts education brought about by the common syllabus guidelines for all BTEC National Diploma students in performing arts will never be able to satisfy the differing needs of a wide range of single and combined honours degree programmes across dance, drama and music. (Naturally the same could be argued for A'level courses, but in most instances these are subject specific.)

Can any generalised qualification in the performing arts serve the varied needs of the higher education sector?

In examining all the questions that need to be addressed it is clear that changing further and higher education policies, and the socio-political environment in which they operate will affect the broad context within which this study takes place. Key to this debate are the philosophical differences between what it is that the various educators believe their role to be. Opinions are bound to vary widely on this subject, and yet all those within the further and higher education sectors, whether as employee or student, are controlled, to a greater or lesser extent, by government policies. Government, either through centrally regulated inspection or through the devolved responsibilities for self regulation afforded to much of higher education, is responsible for the approval, support and recognition of the sector charged to interpret and develop education policies. It is also primarily responsible for fiscal support of all of the parties concerned with this debate.

It is easy to highlight apparent contradictions in the policies emerging from government or allied departments. For example, how does one continue to maintain quality in the light of falling resources? How does one promote research if increased student numbers and more thinly spread research funding works against it? If policies on this macro scale are perceived as contradictory then there will surely be contradictions and anachronisms in evidence at more detailed levels. Thus, it is not surprising that the interface between new and old, vocational and academic, theory and

practice reveals such contradictions. Finally, it should be remembered that all the factors referred to previously have both objective and subjective interpretations. It is also difficult to be totally objective when actively engaged in the sector, and for this reason I have endeavoured to view the various questions from a number of different standpoints as evidenced in the research methodologies adopted.

I have chosen to employ a range of research methodologies that I consider best suited to specific aspects of the problem. It is important to gain research data not only from documentary and statistical evidence but also through practical involvement with students engaged in the interface between further and higher education. The sheer number of students engaged in the performing arts makes any comprehensive survey impractical. I have therefore chosen to focus the majority of the fieldwork in one particular geographical area by concentrating on case studies of two BTEC National Diploma courses based in the North East of England. These will be informed by data gleaned from across the country and from further and higher education staff.

Contextual studies are required to try and elucidate the main motivating factors (social and economic) which may lead to students and staff holding particular views. This contextualisation has to be both regional and national as it is unlikely that data produced from the targeted research area alone will be representative of the national picture. Thus, data is required from a broad range of sources for comparison.

The research programme therefore approaches the problem from a variety of standpoints: a detailed examination of admission statistics provided by the various admissions systems; analysis of BTEC philosophy, development and documentation; analysis of the context in which performing arts education operates in the North East; case studies of students; case studies of staff; a nation-wide survey of further education staff teaching the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts; selected interviews with key staff in the field. Through employing such a broad approach to the problem I hope to be able to eliminate as many variables as possible and provide an informed and perceptive analysis of the matter under discussion.

Chapter One: Notes

1. Government White Paper on Higher Education. 1991. p5

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology

Introduction

The area under investigation has been defined as a study of the interface between the further and higher education sectors in the performing arts, informed by questions relating to access, the vocational focus of BTEC training, the attitudes of staff and students involved in BTEC education and the attitudes of staff responsible for admissions in universities. All of this has been informed by rapid changes in government policy towards higher education.

In defining a relevant research methodology it became apparent that the breadth of the subject matter under discussion made it unlikely that any single method would be either satisfactory or complete. Enormous quantities of subjective and objective data were available for examination and the boundaries of the subject area were both far reaching and fluid. Given this fact it was therefore important to place clear parameters of location and time-scale on the research project to try and ensure that findings were informed and accurate. It was also important to approach the different aspects of the project utilising the most helpful research methodology. This made it inevitable that some form of 'multi-method' analysis would be employed, utilising the most appropriate methodologies for particular issues and combining all the various constituents to provide a single informed viewpoint at the end of the project.

“ Many social scientists will recognise multi-method research as an approach they have followed all along. However, the multi-method approach has far wider uses and implications. Theorising and theory testing, problem formulation and data collection, sampling and generalisation, hypothesis testing and casual analysis, social problem and policy analysis, and even the writing and publication of results may benefit from bringing a multi-method perspective to bear upon social research.” J. Brewer and A. Hunter (1)

The 'multi-method' approach adopted gathers data from a number of different sources, namely:

- A. Contextual studies into performing arts in the North of England.
(Documentary evidence, previous regional research into the arts and selected personal interviews)
- B. Contextual studies into BTEC documentation to provide an insight into the way in which the written course interfaces with higher education. (Examination of BTEC documentation, philosophy, validation, assessment, access and specific course syllabi)
- C. Attitudes and opinions of students involved with the BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts course. (Questionnaire and selected personal interviews)
- D. Attitudes and opinions of staff involved with the BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts course. (Questionnaire and selected personal interviews)
- E. University and college admissions data for degrees in the performing arts.
(Statistical analysis and interpretation)
- F. Attitudes of university staff engaged in admissions from BTEC qualifications in the performing arts (informed by regulation and statute). (Selected documentation and personal interviews)
- G. Contextual studies into university admissions and access documentation.
(Selected general and specific documentation)

In combination these research areas should provide answers to all the key questions, and yet the majority of answers will be derived by cross-referencing data obtained from contrasting sources. Thus, in answering the second question posed,

Why have so many students interested in the performing arts apparently chosen to take BTEC courses rather than A'levels?

It is likely that the main source of data will emanate from student questionnaires completed by the two colleges in the North East of England. This evidence will be informed by documentary and statistical information on course availability in the region at further and higher education levels, and social and economic factors pertaining to performing arts activity in that area. The other questions raised will similarly draw upon data from a variety of sources.

Is the claim that BTEC National Diploma courses provide access into higher education justified or not?

(Questionnaires, admissions statistics, informed by BTEC documentation)

Do alternative qualifications, and BTEC National Diploma in particular, provide the skills and understandings necessary for undergraduate study in the performing arts?

(BTEC course documentation, BTEC staff questionnaires, selected interviews with university admissions staff, admissions statistics, university access policies)

To what extent has the implementation of new access policies affected the recruitment profile in the performing arts?

(University access policies, selected interviews with staff, admissions statistics, informed by broader contextual studies)

To what extent do BTEC staff and student attitudes militate against successful progress onto undergraduate courses?

(Student/staff questionnaires, BTEC documentation)

Is there any evidence of discrimination against National Diploma students within university and college departments?

(Selected student and staff interviews, admissions statistics)

Does BTEC's vocational focus militate against access into undergraduate courses?

(BTEC documentation, selected staff interviews)

Can any generalised qualification in the performing arts serve the varied needs of the higher education sector?

(Selected staff interviews, admissions statistics, access policies)

Any methodology must therefore be capable of examining the interface between further and higher education in the performing arts from a variety of different perspectives.

Research Parameters

The breadth of the context, and the large number of institutions involved in this interface makes any comprehensive survey impracticable. The following parameters have therefore been placed upon the investigation.

1. Primary contextual focus on the North East of England.
2. Case Studies of two further education colleges delivering the BTEC National Diploma course in the performing arts, namely Newcastle College and Monkwearmouth College, Sunderland. (Triangulation provided through comparison with a college from outside the region - Islington Sixth Form Centre, London.)
3. Selective examination of northern universities and colleges offering Degree courses in the performing arts (Newcastle, Northumbria, Durham, York, Leeds, Bretton).

4. Statistical data to be relevant to the period 1993 - 94.
5. Documentary analysis relevant to the period 1993 - 94.

Defining a Methodology

There are obviously a wide range of research methodologies and approaches available to tackle the questions outlined above. Quantitative methods are more suitable for some, qualitative methods for others. The field of qualitative research is undergoing a period of rapid development. Whilst the broad categories that are generally identified within this heading have not altered significantly, the manner in which individual methodologies have been refined and applied is constantly changing. The sheer quantity of literature now available in the field, and much of it written within the past three years, is indicative of this increased interest in qualitative methodologies in the area of social sciences and the humanities.

This can make it almost impossible to define a single methodology that is not open to criticism from one quarter or another. To ensure validity and accuracy I have adopted a 'multi-method' approach based loosely on the work of Brewer and Hunter (2) whereby a variety of methods are employed to examine a particular issue and in which the various findings can, with care, be combined to provide a subjective evaluation that has its basis in both objective and empirical research methodologies.

The 'multi-method' was considered appropriate as it does not detail the precise techniques that may be incorporated within the overall methodology, but rather outlines a framework in which cross-referencing or triangulation can take place. Thus, the methodology can draw on the expertise of other research methodologies such as A. Strauss's 'Basics of Qualitative Research' (London: Sage, 1990), W.B. Schariff's 'Experiencing Fieldwork' (London: Sage, 1990) or A.N. Oppenheim's 'Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement' (London: Pinter, 1992) and be informed by texts such as P. Reason's 'Human Enquiry in Action' (London: Sage, 1988) and C. Marshall's 'Designing Qualitative Research' (London: Sage, 1989).

This is not the place to enter into a detailed examination of the merits of each of the different research methodologies. Suffice to say that in response to each aspect of the problem I have endeavoured to employ the most suitable method to extract the data required in the most appropriate format for analysis.

“ Social research today is highly diverse in nearly every respect, including methodology. Researchers now study a myriad of research problems not only from a number of different theoretical perspectives but also with several different types of research methods. The diversity of methods implies rich opportunities for cross-validating and cross-fertilising research procedures, findings and theories. To exploit these opportunities, we must develop more cosmopolitan research strategies.” (3)

Naturally, when all the data have been collected it then follows that my choice of methodology stands or falls on the meanings ascribed and the conclusions reached.

The Multi-method Approach

The multi-method approach outlined by Brewer and Hunter provides the opportunity to combine fieldwork, surveys, experimentation and non-reactive research methodologies. The methodologies adopted should provide the intended or hoped for outcomes that will support my initial thesis. However this has to be viewed flexibly, for as Brewer and Hunter note,

“ Because different methods of enquiry involve different patterns of thought and behaviour, they may generate very different patterns of research results. A great benefit of the multi-method perspective is that it teaches both humility and confidence. One must openly admit to the chance of error and mis-interpretation, but one can also assert that there is a chance of truth, because there are multi-method procedures for determining how close to the truth we have come.” (4)

To further understand the methodology it is important to examine the broad categories identified by Brewer and Hunter that are relevant to this particular project, namely fieldwork, surveys and non-reactive research, and the manner in which they

can be applied to specific aspects of the debate. Only then will the individualised style of multi-method analysis relevant to the question in hand be generated.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork clearly forms one of the main areas of the research to be undertaken. To examine this topic there was little alternative but to get into the field and observe and question those engaged in this work from both the further and higher education perspectives.

" Fieldwork gives access to variables and hypotheses that pertain to relatively confined natural social settings, such as communities and organisations." (5)

New developments in the methodological approach to fieldwork have moved away from field research that is purely descriptive of the methods and techniques employed towards a more flexible approach in which the emotions and involvement of the person undertaking the research are also a valid part of such research. As I have been closely involved in the sector at a variety of levels it would have been impossible not to have taken the later stance.

" Fieldwork must certainly rank with the more disagreeable activities that humanity has fashioned for itself..... Field researchers have in common the tendency to immerse themselves in situations that all but a tiny minority of humankind goes to great lengths to avoid." W.Shaffir and R.Stebbins. (6)

Despite these warnings I decided that my fieldwork would need to consist of a variety of structured interviews and observation of performing arts education in specific contexts.

The interviews fell into a number of distinct categories, from mainly contextual interviews to the specific work undertaken in Newcastle and Monkwearmouth colleges. I also decided that as far as possible I would interview a variety of different types of people considered representative of certain areas that feed into the debate. Whilst 16-plus education in the performing arts remains small in relation to science and engineering there are still well more than one hundred institutions engaged in this work

making any comprehensive survey impractical. I therefore chose to seek the opinions of people with established reputations in the field alongside those who are generally considered to have a more objective overview of the sector. To this end I approached course leaders and heads of department from a variety of further and higher education institutions involved with the performing arts as well as inspectors, educationalists, validating bodies, arts practitioners with employment responsibilities and current and ex-students (See Appendix 2). The interviews with these people were structured to ensure the data collected could be collated and evaluated, whilst allowing for individual comments and opinions.

The specific fieldwork in the two colleges in the North East comprised staff interviews, talks with groups of students and talks with individual students. The interviews were carefully structured to provide data that was comparable wherever possible. Both of the colleges were visited on a number of occasions and these visits were designed to coincide with key stages in the BTEC year. Students were seen just after enrolment, in a variety of practical projects and towards the end of the courses. Staff interviews were also held at these key stages.

I also decided upon some observational work to examine the relationship of the work witnessed to the prescribed course content, the relative success of the sessions in themselves and the function of the session in relation to future vocational or higher education access needs. Whilst the vast majority of this work was undertaken in the two colleges in the North East I did also attend sessions in other similar institutions who taught the BTEC Performing Arts course (7).

Surveys

Surveys (through questionnaires) were considered the best method by which to collect data that could be focused to the matter in hand. Whilst there are deficiencies in this methodology such as incomplete returns, inaccurate answers, etc. these were recognised, anticipated (and therefore guarded against) and manageable within the broader context of the multi-method approach.

" Surveys can provide information about populations but only about topics on which respondents are able and willing to report verbally." (8)

At an early stage of my investigations I had decided to include a questionnaire to be distributed to students at Newcastle and Monkwearmouth colleges. The scale on which this had to cross-reference with other methodologies and the complexity of focusing questions to extract meaningful answers whilst remaining "user friendly" had not been anticipated. Having devised the student questionnaire it was decided for comparative reasons to also utilise it in at least one other institution running similar courses to provide an external point of reference to verify the results. The significance of this form of data collection grew as my research progressed.

The questionnaire was decided upon as one of the research tools within the multi-method approach due to its ability to focus responses (providing the questions were carefully structured) and the ability to elicit accurate responses due to the impersonal nature of the form and the anonymity of the data collected. Thus, my initial ideas for a student questionnaire alone were quickly extended to encompass a questionnaire for course leaders to be distributed throughout the country. This staff questionnaire was created largely from questions that had been the focus of my initial informal contacts with the staff at both Monkwearmouth and Newcastle colleges. This contact is difficult to define within the precise research parameters outlined but clearly had an influence on both the contextual studies and the questionnaire design.

It was recognised that the response to the staff questionnaires nationally was likely to be patchy, however the scale of the survey meant that even with a low percentage response rate I would still be in the position of having significant data to analyse.

Non-Reactive Research.

One of the categories defined by Brewer and Hunter within their multi-method approach is that of non-reactive research. This category proves hard to define but includes,

" naturally occurring data and opportunities for unobtrusive observation (and) promises freedom from the reactive sources of error that threaten other styles." (9)

It also includes contextual material, statistical and factual research data informing the qualitative debate. This includes documents pertaining to the performing arts in the North East of England as well as examination of a wide range of BTEC documentation ranging from the overall aims and objectives, through precise course documentation through to external examiners' reports and the Annual Report. Statistical information has been obtained where possible from the national higher education admissions systems and various registrars' departments.

Multi-method Analysis

By limiting the parameters of the various forms of research outlined above I hope to obtain comprehensive, yet manageable data which explores the hypotheses which underpin this investigation. These will be clarified and explored through the more detailed analytical chapters of this dissertation.

Multi-method analysis allows factors that arise through a single technique to retain importance, but emphasises the fundamental significance of similar factors that emerge through more than one technique. The imprecise nature of the parameters which surround this investigation, when allied to the ever shifting national context of further and higher education, make the adoption of the broad multi-method approach desirable, for, as Brewer and Hunter explain,

" The possibility of employing not just one type of method per study but a strategically selected set of methods has a number of advantages for theoretically oriented research. First, theories do not respect conventional boundaries, nor should they be required to do so. The strongest confirmation of theory comes, after all, from research that studies numerous and varied hypotheses and employs multiple measures of the theoretical concepts involved. Second, almost any theoretical problem of importance is the subject of repeated investigations. Third, realism, generalizability, accurate casual inference, and freedom from reactive error are all desirable research objectives. Fourth, although each type of method is relatively stronger than the others in certain respects, none of the methods is so perfect even in its area of greatest strength that it cannot benefit from corroboration by other methods' findings. Finally,

employing different types of methods helps to guard against and to correct for inherent methodological biases." (10)

Tackling the Problem

Having identified the individual research methods their application needs clarification within the overall focus of the research to ensure the desired information is gleaned to inform the key questions. For example, questionnaires can be designed in many different ways to extract different responses from the recipients. Whilst questions will be asked which require a combination of subjective and objective answers the primary focus will be placed upon attitudes and opinions of the staff and students actively engaged with BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts course. To this end the student questionnaires have been targeted as follows:

Questionnaires issued in the two colleges in the North East to all students on the course

Questionnaires issued to students in one southern college. (Islington Sixth Form Centre)

The student questionnaires have been designed to explore students' motivations and expectations on embarking on the course, during the course and when they leave the course. It also explores questions of resourcing and attitudes towards higher education. The student questionnaire is carefully designed to cross-reference with the staff questionnaires and tackles the key issues of access, quality and the interface with the higher education sector. It tests hypotheses regarding variable standards, the manner in which students are advised in future career options and whether students believe themselves to be disadvantaged or not in relation to students undertaking other types of qualification. In so doing I hope to prove whether the context, or the expectations instilled within students militate against better performance when applying for higher education courses.

Similar issues have been tackled through the questionnaires targeted at examining the attitudes and opinions of staff involved with BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts course. Here the methodology has been expanded to include structured interviews

that will provide more in-depth understandings than can be gleaned by questionnaire alone. Thus, BTEC staff attitudes and opinions are researched through:

Questionnaires issued to all other colleges known to be teaching BTEC National Diploma courses in the performing arts.

Structured interviews with contracted specialist staff in the targeted colleges designed to expand, extend and personalise the findings of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires have been designed to cross-reference with the student questionnaires. The questions posed require the staff perspective on the same issues, and are supplemented with questions designed to explore academic standards and quality control mechanisms. In addition there are questions designed to provide information on the size, type, recruitment profile, application procedures, etc. pertaining to each particular course.

Contextual work into the North East emanated from a variety of sources. Certain key reports were utilised in combination with information gleaned from staff interviews. My own involvement in the professional performing arts, both on the club circuit and within the orchestral world, also informed this study.

The contextual studies into BTEC documentation needed to be focused, as the range and scope of generalised papers on philosophy, assessment, examination procedures, etc. is extensive. Ironically the performing arts course documentation remains relatively brief having never passed beyond the status of a draft document despite being in wide scale use across the country. My exploration of BTEC documents therefore concentrated on five main areas of study:

Examination of general documents on BTEC origins, aims and philosophy.

Examination of BTEC assessment, moderation and validation procedures.

Examination of miscellaneous BTEC documentation on the further education/ higher education interface.

Examination of BTEC course documentation in related subject areas to the performing arts.

Examination of BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts draft guidelines.

At the same time university and college admissions statistics for degrees in the performing arts were identified and these concentrated on two main areas,

Statistical analysis of admissions statistics for performing arts for the period 1992 - 1994. (National picture)

Statistical analysis of admissions statistics for University College Bretton Hall for the period 1992 - 94.

The national admissions systems all provide generalised statistics pertaining to the subject area, and are capable of providing information on modes of entry. The more detailed interpretation of national statistics will be explored through utilising Bretton Hall's admissions data, and revealing the effect of national policies at a local level.

Attitudes of university staff engaged in admissions from BTEC qualifications in the performing arts were primarily obtained through selected interviews. Questions were carefully identified to ensure that they correlated with the BTEC staff interviews and questionnaires. The interviews had to be cross-referenced with access/admissions documentation from the various institutions involved. To this end university staff attitudes were deduced from:

Structured interviews with selected staff in the sector.

Examination of appropriate university regulations (where relevant).

Additional contextual studies into university admissions/access documentation were undertaken to inform the staff interviews and the statistical analysis. This comprised:

Collation and comparison of admissions documentation with regards to the universities and colleges identified in the North East of England.

Collation and comparison of access documentation with regards to the universities and colleges identified in the North East of England.

From the above it will be apparent that the research will therefore entail a variety of different methodologies but will primarily focus on questionnaire, interview and documentary evidence. Each of the questions raised cannot stand alone. Each informs the other, and only when viewed in combination with one another will an accurate picture emerge. Obviously the fieldwork aspect of the research is important, but equally the contextual studies are essential to locate any findings within an appropriate framework and to inform the focus of the fieldwork. Statistical information also provides one of the key “known” factors within the debate, and this is elucidated by access and admissions policies. Thus, by examining the subject from a variety of different standpoints it is hoped to eliminate purely subjective observations whilst retaining the importance of informed opinion and empirical data.

Through these means I consider it possible to examine in full the issues detailed at the start of Chapter One that inform the apparent statistical evidence that students with A'levels are more likely to be given places in higher education than suitably qualified BTEC students.

Chapter Two: Notes

1. John Brewer and Albert Hunter. Multi-method Research (1990) p11
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p13
4. Ibid. p27
5. Ibid. p44
6. William Shaffir and Robert Stebbins. Experiencing Fieldwork (1990) p1
7. Islington Sixth Form Centre and Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts.
8. Brewer and Hunter. Op cit. p45
9. Ibid. p47
10. Ibid. p48

CHAPTER THREE

The Context for Performing Arts Education in the Nineties

The Role of the Arts

The provision of performing arts education needs to be viewed in the context of changing sociological and cultural trends in Britain. Whilst the parameters are wide ranging, implicit within the discussion of performing arts education is the extent to which the sector is seen to be reactive or proactive to change. Societal and cultural change will naturally inform the development of courses and therefore remains important in the broad contextualisation of the subject under discussion.

The past decade has seen enormous social and political upheaval throughout the world. Whilst the magnitude of events on the world stage has tended to overshadow change within British society, this has also altered and adapted with a rapidity previously unseen this century. Although the national political situation has remained relatively static the relationships and infrastructures within British society have been redefined many times. It is from within this context that changing definitions of culture, and society's attitude to the arts should be viewed, for these factors that have informed changes in education and are implicit in the new courses that have been developed (i.e. the increasing popularisation of culture, the vocational focus of much arts training as reflected in BTEC courses).

Attitudes to the arts are moulded both directly and indirectly through the decisions of government and others in positions of authority. It has long been assumed that the ever improving efficiency of industry, increased mechanisation, the introduction of new technologies, etc. would produce a significant change in working patterns throughout the western world. The resultant shorter working week would lead to an increase in leisure time and this in turn would place a heavier demand on our existing cultural industries, acting as the stimulus for new cultural industries. Cultural industries need employees and therefore the education systems should train students to fulfil these tasks.

It is questionable whether there has been any significant change in modes of work in the past decade. Certainly patterns of attendance at cultural activities have changed, but whether there is any real evidence of significant increases in demand or participation is questionable. It could be that the recession in the early nineties has held back this development, but equally it could be because other factors such as changing funding structures for the arts, and changing patterns of cultural consumption have mitigated against it.

Whilst discussions of this nature remain highly subjective it is easier to identify change as brought about through direct intervention in the arts by both external and internal agencies. The funding structures for the arts have changed significantly. Cultural production is increasingly dependent on corporate sponsorship and public sector finance for the arts has been cut in direct terms, with enormous emphasis being placed upon the National Lottery as the 'panacea' for all funding ills. The Arts Council and the Regional Arts Authorities have had to respond to differing demands in a variety of ways, but the majority have had to cut certain areas of their programmes.

The Arts Council remains optimistic about the future for the arts and sees the social significance of the arts being redefined within society.

" Today, the arts can no longer be described as an elitist minority interest something has changed in Britain. The arts are being pushed up the political agenda by the sheer weight of public demand for the joy and exhilaration the arts can provide." (1)

Whilst it is important to view this statement considering the Arts Council's demands

for increased funding it is significant in recognising a seed change in arts involvement by the general public both in a passive and participatory manner.

The significance of the arts was recognised within the political arena with the bold statement made by Prime Minister John Major in the Conservative Party Manifesto prepared for the 1992 election.

" The arts have flourished in recent years, with growing attendance at theatre, opera, dance and arts festivals.....our aim is to make the performing arts, museums and our heritage available to all." (2)

This was supported by the creation of a ministerial position for the Arts and Heritage, at cabinet level, announced in the re-organisation that occurred immediately after the 1992 election. The Foundation for Sports and the Arts has also made significant inroads in its funding allocations to the performing arts and plays a key role in the distribution of National Lottery funds.

It could therefore seem that the immediate future for the arts in Britain is 'rosy'. However, statements such as those by Prime Minister Major beg the question as to which definition of 'the arts' is being promoted and taught through our education systems. Changes in the National Curriculum in Schools have altered the manner in which the arts are taught in schools. It would be fair to say that all the arts have taken on broader definitions but nevertheless the accepted definitions of the various art forms have always been far broader than those that are supported through public subsidy or commercial forces.

" Value becomes a scholarly commodity, an academic aesthetic. It is no coincidence that the high arts are taught and studied at colleges and universities as academic subjects this not only gives these forms credibility, it reinforces that credibility by the creation of critical traditions." (3)

The debate over differing definitions and values in the arts has been going on for some considerable time, and has often been categorised into the 'cultural democracy' versus the 'democratisation of culture' (4) debate. These positions also manifest themselves in the structure and content of courses offered in the performing arts. (Note

the contrast between courses in the 'conservatoire' tradition as opposed to community arts courses established in many of the 'new' universities.) Whilst the situation has never been as polarised as may be suggested by these opposing stances it is interesting that the arguments for 'cultural democracy' and the broadening of artistic definitions seem to be gaining increasing support.

" The arts which receive support from public funds are part of the broader picture of our cultural life. Distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture, between 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' arts, between professional and amateur, do not reflect the way that most people experience the arts: high quality and cultural significance are what matter." (5)

If one accepts a broader definition of 'the arts' then it immediately becomes apparent that large areas of arts activity, especially those centred in youth cultures, are essentially ignored by public sector funding. The discussion can become circular in that young people are often categorised as having little or no interest in the arts, but as Rachel Feldman points out,

" The real problem isn't that young people aren't interested in the arts - many are, with a knowledge and commitment which puts adults to shame it's just that traditional arts provision has failed to engage their input, enthusiasm and creativity." (6)

Thus, the popular arts have always had enormous economic and social significance and are now gaining increasing academic respectability. Courses are being established which break down the barriers between 'high' and 'popular' art forms right across the educational sector in schools, colleges and universities. The BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts course can be seen to be reflective of this gradual redefinition.

Why do we need Arts Education?

As our cultural industries change and develop new courses will inevitably arise across the education sector. Arts education has always developed with a rapidity not seen elsewhere in the curriculum due to the ever changing forms and definitions on which arts practice is based. It is within this context that the development of courses of

education for students in the performing arts should be seen.

As previously stated the early nineties saw the Government declare an interest in increasing the number of students who entered higher education. Government is able to control not only the total of funded student numbers (through MASN and TTA allocations) but also the subject areas in which students can register through the manner in which institutions are funded (banding and allocation of numbers to specific ASCs). Differential funding for certain types of course, allied to the increasing reluctance of Local Education Authorities to finance students on arts courses, all serve to constrain the arts provision in higher education. The performing arts are an area where a huge expansion in student numbers could easily be achieved. Those involved with recruitment to such courses know that most courses could be filled many times over.

Unfortunately, funded places in the performing arts at higher education level are severely limited and the sector cannot meet the demands of students leaving schools and colleges of further education. This poses the question whether the Government really wants the arts to flourish and expand or whether broader economic development takes precedence. It also returns us to the differing ways in which 'culture' and the 'arts' are defined within our society. It can be argued that the conservative view at present is that the arts represent the supposed 'wealth' of society. If a country has a good economic base then the arts become a barometer of its success. However, the majority of sociological thought takes a broader definition of 'culture' as being integral to our 'whole way of life'.

" The arts and culture are at the core of citizenship; they are central to the individual in society and to community and national life. The challenge is to ensure that the arts thrive, that artists, producers, participants, audiences and the study of the arts flourish." (7)

If this is indeed the case, then there is an essential contradiction concerning the current lowly status of the arts in the economy, the lack of investment in the arts, and the manner in which the arts are generally perceived by the public. Government funding of university places for arts students reflects this stance. Thus, policy decisions enacted at a 'macro' level can have direct effects on education and training provision in the arts and they therefore become central to understanding the evolution of the philosophical stance that underpins the BTEC National Diploma in Performing

Arts and higher education course provision around which this dissertation is focused.

Changes in Further and Higher Education

There has never been a period of such rapid change in the further and higher education sector in Britain as the early nineties. The vast majority of these changes will be all too familiar to those reading this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is important to outline the main developments in this area to emphasise the sheer scale of the changes required of both the further and higher education sectors at this time. Obviously there are many factors that have contributed to the changes within both sectors. Some are the result of Government policy and others have been adopted voluntarily. Some have been enforced, some are welcomed.

The most significant of these legislated changes have been the collapse of the binary line and the advent of incorporation and independence for the old PCFC institutions and the further education sector. This has been paralleled by changing attitudes with regard to access policies, equal opportunities and the desire to increase the numbers of students entering higher education.

Financial independence for many of the former polytechnics and colleges has provided both opportunities and problems. Clearly many institutions (old and new) are carrying crippling maintenance and repair bills that can only be funded by driving down costs and adversely affecting student provision. Student/staff ratios are rising and capital and research funding have both been reduced significantly. The major debate is therefore how to maintain the quality of course provision whilst the unit of resource is being driven down.

As Minister for Education during the late 1980s and early 1990s Kenneth Clarke stated on numerous occasions that he wanted to see a major increase in student numbers within the higher education sector before the year 2000. Whilst his statements added impetus to the access debate the majority of the old polytechnics and universities were already well advanced with regard to increasing student numbers and widening student access to non-traditional entrants.

" For the last three years the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and the Standing Conference on University Entrance have with increasing urgency brought to the attention of the universities the importance of widening access and taking into account the developments taking place within the secondary curriculum. They have stressed that the universities must however seek not simply to adjust to the fundamental changes taking place in this country, but to be part of them." (8)

In 1989, in an attempt to speed up the process, all institutions under the remit of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) were forced into a situation of competitive bidding. The 'old' universities initially resisted changes in their funding, but the promised university status for the polytechnics was destined to send the whole of the higher education sector into a situation of open competition and rapid expansion.

Whilst it may appear to many working in the sector that higher education is 'bearing the brunt' of these changes this is far from the case. Incorporation for the further education sector, which took place in April 1993, has caused almost identical problems and opportunities to those created within the higher education sector. Resource issues remain key and the sheer number of students wishing to enter courses, and particularly vocational courses during a time of recession, pose enormous problems to the majority of colleges in the sector. In addition, the structure of many courses has been fundamentally challenged by the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) which are currently being introduced throughout further education. When coupled to changes in BTEC courses, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) training established through various industry lead bodies for people already in employment, altered A'level provision, etc. it can be seen that a period of consolidation is much in need.

The whole of the further education sector has therefore undergone radical change, and is still in the process of coming to terms with incorporation and all that it implies. Many institutions are recognising that they can widen the profile and level of their course provision, and many have expanded rapidly into the field of higher education through BTEC Higher National Diploma developments.

The possibilities now available for those willing and able to grasp the opportunities are enormous, as well as being the cause of major concern for many in the higher

education sector who see traditional demarcations breaking down. Further education colleges are increasingly offering both independently validated and franchised degree programmes ensuring that the question of academic standards and the potential devaluation of degrees remains at the top of the agenda.

Such developments could, and should have been anticipated. The further education sector has had to respond to change time and time again over the past decade. For example, there has been a rapid development of the further education sector when the whole concept of tertiary education was introduced. Tertiary colleges not only complemented existing school and further education provision but more significantly opened out the whole concept of vocational training as evidenced in the rapid growth of BTEC and other job related courses throughout the country. The further and higher education sectors are both now having to ask questions about their responsibility to the student in vocational as well as academic terms. This has resulted in a number of new courses in response to perceived student needs.

Naturally there are both positive and negative aspects to the changes occurring within both further and higher education. However, it appears that Government policy has been to coerce the sector into rapid expansion, to require the radical reappraisal of course provision and to force institutions to improve their efficiency and cut their unit costs. It is therefore somewhat ironic that, having given many colleges and universities clear signs that they were supportive of growth, the 1993 funding round changed this focus significantly and pulled back from previous promises of funded expansion. The result of this is that much of the sector has growth built into the system and is now facing further cuts, or the unpalatable choice of reducing numbers in certain poorly funded areas, such as the Humanities.

The 1994 funding round took this a step further with restrictions being placed upon continued expansion and strict quotas introduced allied to severe financial penalties for anyone who exceeds their allotted numbers. There has also been a great deal of direct intervention into particular areas of study, and specifically in the field of education. The most obvious example of this has been in post graduate secondary teacher training where courses have been required to become increasingly focused within schools and removed from the specialist colleges and universities (9). It could be argued that government intervention of this type has been undertaken with the best intentions. In his speech to the North of England Education Conference Kenneth Clarke noted,

"the importance of education to the development and preservation of a free society and of liberal and democratic values." (10)

However, to many of those working within the sector the manner of the intervention, the perceived threat to academic standards and the perceived difference between Government policy and the funding available to enact that policy remains an intractable problem.

Clearly one of the underlying themes driving these policy changes has been the desire to increase access into education. Although the majority of further education establishments can demonstrate that they have taken larger numbers of non-standard entrants than higher education, it can be argued that this is inevitable given the range of courses they offer, and the proliferation of skill-based training. With the collapse of the binary line the 'old' universities found themselves challenged with regard to access by the more liberal policies of the 'new' universities. The result has been that most institutions now within the university sector have made significant steps forward in this direction, but it is still the case that some parts of the sector hide behind self imposed barriers of matriculation and academic standards. This has been despite the advice offered by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP).

" Two factors have combined to make a review of university course structures, teaching methods and admissions policies a matter of urgency. (Firstly)... developments in the secondary curriculum..... affecting the nature and structure of pre-university education in a fundamental way. (Secondly)... the growing belief that there should be wider access to higher education, on the one hand by the acceptability of other standard entrance qualifications and on the other hand by the improving of access for mature students, especially for those without formal qualifications." (11)

Widening higher education access has caused many institutions to re-examine their interface with schools and further education. The past few years have seen the rapid development of franchised courses and the acceptance of wide ranging Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS). Both of these require universities to re-appraise the qualifications considered for matriculation purposes. Thus, we return again to the key question of why it is, given all the changes apparent across the sector, that students with A'levels are more likely to be given places in higher education than

BTEC students?

Government policy can therefore control access, funding, attitudes to the arts and even the subject areas in which education will be promoted or restricted. For example, within a balanced curriculum in schools the performing arts are treated very differently. Music has individual subject recognition within the National Curriculum, but in contrast Drama is considered as part of English and Dance part of Physical Education. These differences must feed through into further and higher education course provision, and so why are drama courses so over-subscribed whereas music degrees traditionally attract less than half the number of applicants per place in comparison with other courses in the performing arts.

The Case for Education in the Performing Arts

" Education through the arts fosters creativity in areas beyond the arts, cultivates the imagination and develops manipulative skills and critical judgement." (12)

It can be argued that there has been training in the performing arts for as long as the profession has existed. Many universities have traditions going back into the 19th century and beyond. Traditionally the specialist colleges and academies where music, drama and dance training took place fell outside the mainstream of further and higher education. This was largely due to the concentration on skills-based work, the 'conservatoire' mentality. The awards offered by such institutions differed from the university sector, and the courses were highly specialised in their skills training, but not necessarily in academic content. This debate continues as evidenced in new degree programmes such as those operating at the London School of Contemporary Dance, the Royal Academy of Music or the Royal College of Music who have developed their existing awards into degree schemes thus ensuring mandatory awards for their students.

The university sector also has a long history of practical and academic involvement in performing arts education, especially in the field of music, offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The development of new modes of access, the response to the changing culture of education and the desire to improve

access has led to a plethora of new courses emerging over the past few years. During the 1980s many Polytechnics established degrees in creative and performing arts which significantly changed the graduate profile of students in the performing arts.

" The courses represent a significant development of arts provision at degree level and the experiences gained during their relatively short period of operation could, with profit, be shared more widely with other parts of the educational system." (13)

More recently there have arisen a number of courses that are both specialist and responsive to the changing needs of society, with degrees in community dance, community theatre, recording techniques, popular music performance, etc. all emerging from within departments alongside their existing provision. Higher degrees have also undergone radical expansion and change with the range of acceptable research topics ever widening and specialist MA courses emerging across the sector. This development has been mirrored by the development of a wide range of general and specialist courses within the further education sector.

Within schools the traditional A'level provision has been supplemented by new courses such as 'Expressive Arts' which provides a generalised performing arts education in contrast to the more focused courses offered by established Theatre Studies or Music A'levels. Most significant of all has been the development of courses within further education colleges where all manner of generalised and specialised courses in the performing arts are available. The range of BTEC courses in the performing arts have been at the core of this development being designed for,

" young people already with a performance company or those who want to work in drama, dance, stage management or arts administration. The courses develop the professional and personal skills needed for a range of careers either in or related to the performing arts." (14)

For the purpose of this dissertation it is necessary to understand that whilst the focus of the research is on the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts course there are also numerous other related BTEC qualifications available in, for example, ND in Popular Music, ND in Music Production and Performance, HND in Community Theatre and HND in Arts Management all of which have been spawned from the initial

interest in the BTEC Performing Arts course. Such development has been exponential, based on the reality that institutions can fill courses of this nature many times over. Applications normally far outstrip course provision and students are thrust into competitive career choices as early as the age of sixteen.

Another important factor is that the generalised BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts course outlined in the draft guidelines has been developed by many centres into highly specialised routes in Dance, Drama, Music and Stagecraft. It is the BTEC capability for focus and specialism within a single scheme that is considered by many staff to be most at threat through the enforced introduction of GNVQs.

The range of courses now available within the further education sector poses problems of understanding and fulfilling student expectations for providers of higher education. Expansion has been considerable and in some cases this has been mirrored by developments in higher education courses. Nevertheless, there remains a huge shortfall between applications received and the places available for students on higher level courses in the performing arts regardless of whether they are applying with A'levels, BTEC, non-standard or alternative qualifications. Accepting that these general factors have affected the development of courses in the performing arts across the sector it is important to examine the context and provision available in this area in relation to the specific case studies located in the North of England.

Performing Arts in the North East of England

As both of the colleges to be studied are situated in the North East of England it is necessary to examine the broader over-view of the arts in the region before moving towards a more detailed examination of the colleges themselves.

The North East has a very specific cultural heritage and much of its current arts activities derive from this background, relating to patterns of work and the predominant industries of the previous decades. There is an extensive 'Working Men's Club' tradition which supports large numbers of professional performers, and the live music tradition is prevalent throughout the region. Performers who operate within the 'popular' field are therefore well represented, but this sector is in decline as the supporting industries and localised communities who traditionally provided support for

the clubs are eroded. The region is also well represented in terms of the 'high' arts, with a large number of specialist museums, galleries, theatres, 'art cinemas' and even its own resident orchestra which has a major international reputation, yet many of these areas are under similar threat.

" The arts play a significant role in the economy of Tyne and Wear. They also have the potential to make a much greater contribution to the economic well being of the people of the area than they have done hitherto." (15)

Support for the 'high arts' is far below the national average in many areas. Attendance at theatres and other attractions is significantly lower pro rata than in other regions.

" National surveys show that the proportion of the local population attending performing arts events and art galleries is lower in the North East than the national average." (16)

It is interesting that, whilst recognising the significance of the broad-based economy to the region, surveys often fail to present a truly accurate picture in that the 'popular art' forms are generally ignored. 'High art' attendance and statistics are readily available. This is to be expected in that the Theatres, Museums, Concert Halls, etc. depend on accurate information to support their requests for funding. However, the region has a predominance of social classes C2, D and E and as expected the support for popular art forms remains strong. This factor is at last being publicly recognised by those traditionally thought of as responsible for national arts funding. In addition it is being recognised that support for the arts comes from a wide variety of sources as varied as arts related industries, established cultural providers such as the B.B.C. as well as areas that normally fall outside one's immediate terms of reference such as the National Health Service or the Prison Education Service.

" We - the Arts Council, British Film Institute, Crafts Council and Regional Arts Boards - are significant but relatively small players in a big game. We are responsible for only a minority of central government funding on the arts and cultural activities - and a relatively small minority of total government expenditure, central and local, in this area." (17)

In 1991 the report 'The Economic Impact of the Arts in Tyne and Wear' was prepared which mapped many of the cultural activities in the region in relation to their economic impact. It highlighted many areas of weakness as well as suggesting many positive ways in which the arts could be both linked and integral to the economic redevelopment of the region. Its main findings were significant in identifying that,

" Despite the significant size of the local arts-related economy there is evidence to suggest that the area is under-investing in the arts, and that this is undermining efforts to regenerate the Tyne and Wear economy." (18)

The report detailed four main areas that it considered needed to be addressed (19):

1. The need to improve the quality, scale and breadth of arts facilities.
2. The need to increase the scale and profile of arts events, and to extend and broaden arts audiences.
3. The need to develop indigenous arts production, the creative base, and cultural industries.
4. The need to improve structures for supporting and developing the arts.

Whilst the report outlines a rather grim picture for the arts in Tyne and Wear this is somewhat contradicted by both the provision for education and training in the arts, and the range of performing arts activities available. Whilst there is always scope for development and improvement I believe that the performing arts in Tyne and Wear operate within a strong tradition and demonstrate a good range of activities given the size of the city and the acknowledged problems in public funding.

Thus, this examination of performing arts courses in the region needs to be understood within the following context. Firstly, there are numerous further and higher education institutions in the region and the vast majority of these offer courses in the performing arts and related subjects (See Appendix 1). Indeed some of the courses offered are considered pioneering, and have led developments in this field throughout the country. For example, the first BTEC in Music Technology was offered at Newcastle College in 1988 and the BA (Hons) Performing Arts at Northumbria

University has a strong reputation for operating in a range of community contexts.

All the region's universities offer courses in one or all of the performing arts (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland) and this higher education provision is supplemented by a wide range of BTEC Higher National Diploma courses and franchised degree programmes within a number of the region's colleges within further education colleges. Foremost of these colleges in the region is Newcastle College.

Many other colleges have well-developed BTEC National Diploma programmes and a whole range of related activities ensuring the vibrancy of student provision in the region. Thus, North Tyneside College, South Tyneside College, Gateshead College, New College Durham and Monkwearmouth College are all actively engaged in training students in the performing arts.

Given this concentration of education and training opportunities it is not surprising that at certain levels the cultural activity of the region is considered to be highly active. Whilst mainstream theatre could be further developed there is a plethora of good local theatre companies working into a wide variety of fields from Theatre in Education (TIE) to installation work and Theatre of Issue. Newcastle also hosts the only season by The Royal Shakespeare Company outside Stratford and London and is home to a number of professional theatre venues and companies of good reputation. Dance is represented with seasons by the Royal Ballet and the important initiative of 'Dance City' ensuring the profile for contemporary dance remains high.

Musically the region supports a professional orchestra of international renown and a number of 'pro/am' orchestras of good standard (e.g. Durham Sinfonia). It also has a highly developed tradition in the field of popular music. The region supplies a steady stream of major artists in the field of popular music with some, like Sting or Mark Knopfler gaining international reputations that belie the ephemeral nature of much of the work in that area. There are numerous recording studios in Newcastle and the club circuit that has so long been under threat continues to provide an entrance into the profession for a large number of bands, musical and comedy acts.

The film and TV industries have also taken increasing interest in the region of late providing a large number of employment opportunities for local talent, and elevating certain regional actors (e.g. Jimmy Nail and Robson Green) and performers to

superstar status. Thus, it is hardly surprising that interest in education and training in the performing arts remains buoyant despite the uncertain nature of the vocational outcome offered by such courses.

Chapter Three: Notes

1. Lou Ritner Annual Report Arts Council of Britain (1986) p1
2. John Major The Best Future for Britain Conservative Party Manifesto (1992)
3. Anthony Smith What are the Arts For? Discussion Document 1. Towards a National Strategy for the Arts and Media. (1991) p 4
4. As outlined in Owen Kelly, Community Arts and the State (1984)
5. Arts & Media Towards a National Arts and Media Strategy (1992) p 5
6. Rachel Feldberg Youth Arts. Discussion Document 12. Towards a National Strategy for the Arts and Media. (1991)
7. Arts & Media Op. cit p i
8. CVCP Universities' Review of Degree Courses and of Entrance Policies in Response to Secondary Curriculum Change and Wider Access (1988) p3
9. It should be noted that the transference of two thirds of all course delivery into schools for PGCE courses has now left many of the colleges and universities reviewing their long term future in relation to ITT. Financially the courses are barely viable and many institutions are now reviewing their status (E.g. Charlotte Mason)
10. K. Clarke Speech delivered to North of England Education Conference (1991)
11. CVCP Op. cit p4
12. Arts & Media Op. cit p 75
13. DES Survey of Creative and Performing Arts Degree Courses(1990) p1
14. BTEC Fact Sheet - National Courses in Performing Arts (1990)
15. EEDS The Economic Impact of the Arts in Tyne and Wear (1991) p 1
16. EEDS Op. cit p 3
17. Arts & Media Op. cit p 137
18. EEDS Op. cit p 3
19. EEDS Op. cit p 2

CHAPTER FOUR

BTEC Performing Arts Documentation

Whilst BTEC National Diploma courses in the performing arts vary, they all operate within the same basic parameters, namely the guidelines and course content prescribed by the Business and Technology Education Council. Individual interpretations and the development of particular areas of specialism are encouraged but nevertheless all of the institutions contacted through this research, operating programmes at National Diploma level, work to the same set of guidelines. In order to understand the rationale for the creation of the staff and student questionnaires and the structured interview questions it is important to examine the prescribed course content in detail, and then to take a view on the degree to which it fulfils its stated aims.

This examination is necessary to help contextualise and interpret the various forms of data collected, and to provide an insight into the way in which the course shapes the student and staff expectations of higher education. It should be noted that course content is now rapidly changing due to the necessity to integrate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) into the main curriculum. Nevertheless, the draft guidelines remain in place in all of the institutions surveyed, none of which have yet embarked on any wholesale course changes due to the GNVQ developments.

Central to both the BTEC and GNVQ philosophy is the importance of providing students with education and training for a specific vocation. The course documents, course advertising, external examiners' reports, government policy, etc. all make great

play on the necessity of providing students with an appropriate vocation. It is therefore interesting that this perception is challenged by the student data collected through the questionnaires, whilst the policy is clearly having an ever widening influence on the further and higher education sectors.

Vocational Training

The shift towards vocationally-oriented course provision has been apparent over the past decade. This change of emphasis has directly affected further education courses where a more overtly vocational focus is apparent than in higher education. The late 1980s saw an explosion of BTEC course provision at both National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels. Higher education has also been effected. The significant expansion of the sector has largely been achieved as a result of the development of new courses (many of a directly vocational nature) evident in the large number of degree programmes that appear each year within the UCAS handbook provided for prospective undergraduates across the country. Nevertheless, university courses are less likely to have vocational concerns at the forefront, although the vast majority accept the responsibility to make their students employable.

" Training and education in the arts underpins the future development and continued success of the arts by helping to create skilled and imaginative artists and administrators. It should fit each individual to make the best of the employment prospects offered." (1)

This shift of emphasis is both reflective of, and responsive to the changes in course provision exemplified by BTEC developments. The interface with higher education is bound to be affected by changes in tertiary and further education, and as this dissertation is focused on an examination of this interface, informed by macro-economic and political factors driving this change, a thorough examination of BTEC documentation is considered essential to the research project. Through the analysis of documentary materials the specific questions that become the focus of the fieldwork will be identified.

The need for vocational training has become increasingly apparent during this period of recession. Whether this is a genuine attempt to re-skill the work force, or the political manipulation of unemployment figures is debatable. Nevertheless, in addition to the successes of validating bodies such as Business and Technology Education Council (primarily pre-employment training), the past few years has seen the government investing heavily in establishing criteria for a whole range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to provide career structures and graded training for those already in employment. Industry Lead Bodies (ILBs) have been established across a wide range of industries charged with establishing criteria and guidelines for NVQs which provide a structured training and accreditation programme rising to Masters degree equivalent.

Further education courses are also in the process of introducing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) as a means of accrediting many existing areas of course provision. Current legislation now requires all 16-year-olds to undertake a vocational training course if they are not continuing with full-time education. Naturally this is motivated by the belief that the country needs to develop a more highly skilled work-force if it is to maintain its status within the developed world.

The distinction between education and training has always been somewhat of a circular argument. The Government and the European Community are now taking this relationship seriously and see access to education and/or training as a basic right that may become enshrined within European law.

" There has always been an overlap between vocational training and education. We have now agreed to make the position clear by adopting new texts on education and training which give the Community a clear role in promoting education co-operation between Member States. It is part of what Eurocrats quaintly call the Social Dimension which we enthusiastically supported." (2)

It is interesting that this discussion is now coming to the forefront, and in such a public manner. The distinction between education and training has long been debated within the further and higher education sectors, and numerous courses have been developed over the past twenty years that have a vocational outcome at their core. For example, in the early 1970s the University of Surrey had sandwich honours degrees in

Music Recording (Tonmeister), Modern Languages, Hotel and Catering, etc. and they were by no means unique.

Naturally there are major differences between degree courses in that some have always had a direct vocational relevance and others have centred more on philosophical matters and pure research. Courses in the arts have tended to fall into the latter categories and have only recently started to encompass the vocational needs of students. Thus, some twenty years after the introduction of overtly vocational degree courses the same debates are still being rehearsed. The matter is further confused by the constant references to training in relation to student teachers (Initial Teacher Training) despite moves to establish the more politically correct Initial Teacher Education.

" Educational policy is developing rapidly, with a welcome emphasis from Ministers on the need to provide young people with the education that will be seen by them as being relevant to life and employment." (3)

The Business and Technology Education Council was established in the early 1980s to provide a standard and structure for a range of vocationally-oriented courses. Whilst vocational training has long been established through apprenticeships, and nationally recognised qualifications such as City and Guilds, the formation of the Council (BTEC) marked a significant step forward in integrating education and training, and in bringing to the forefront the need for further and higher education (particularly evidenced in HND courses) to have direct vocational responsibility within its programmes. BTEC is therefore both a validating and accrediting body offering a nationally recognised structure for vocational qualifications, as well as a being a catalyst for course development.

" BTEC has been established to advance the quality and availability of a wide range of employment-related education to the mutual benefit of the students, their current and future employers, and the national interest." (4)

The range of courses accredited by the Council has increased rapidly, and has moved away from the traditional science and engineering areas to encompass such fields of study as the caring professions, art, design and the performing arts. Despite this expansion the same philosophy underpins all BTEC courses, namely to develop the

'whole' person. Thus, all BTEC courses integrate skills development, theoretical studies, work-based activities and interpersonal skills. The Council clearly states that its aims are to,

" Promote the provision of education and training which meets the changing needs of industry, commerce and the public services, and which provides students with an intellectual challenge. To prepare students for their working lives by developing skills and personal qualities of general importance and applicability to all aspects of working life." (5)

Whilst BTEC maintain a commitment to vocational training across a wide spectrum their courses are not generally applicable to those already in employment. In 1986 the government produced a 'Review of Vocational Qualifications' and in 1987 this developed into a White Paper entitled 'Working Together - Education and Training'. In 1986 the National Council for Vocational Qualifications was established which in turn established a number of Industry Lead Bodies (ILBs) right across the country charged to develop criteria for a range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) focused within specific industries.

The main aims of the lead bodies are:

1. To establish standards for all occupational competencies and make sure vocational qualifications are based upon them.
2. To create a coherent national framework for vocational qualifications.
3. To approve bodies awarding national vocational qualifications.
4. To obtain comprehensive coverage of all occupational sectors.
5. To establish a national database for vocational qualifications.

Currently the lead bodies are all at differing stages in implementing NVQs, and not surprisingly they are meeting with some opposition in certain areas. Many of the established cultural industries are inherently hierarchical (Theatre's, Museums, Music

Business, etc.) and the supposition that someone could 'rise through the ranks' through the acquisition of ever increasing NVQs has not always met with whole-hearted support.

The lead bodies have no mandate to actually deliver the training, only to outline its development. Thus, having identified competencies at five different levels the lead bodies encourage the establishment of specific courses of training designed to meet these areas. As many vocational competencies are already validated through the BTEC system it is now increasingly common to find courses available that are jointly validated. BTEC also makes its desire to co-operate with others involved in vocational training absolutely clear.

" In the interests of the students at all levels of industry and commerce, BTEC will be ready to develop co-operative enterprises with educational bodies, professional and regulatory organisations and, in particular, with the City and Guilds of London Institute." (6)

It would appear that the further education sector has demonstrated the ability to encompass the lower NVQ levels with relative ease, whilst the advanced level training (Level 4 being purporting to be equitable with first degree work and level 5 with postgraduate work) has proved far more difficult to quantify and has therefore only been entered into by a few higher education establishments. As NVQs become more established in our cultural industries it will be interesting to examine how existing course provision is adapted. Whilst the CVCP identified the need to respond to change in the school curriculum they have not yet issued guidance as to how vocational training for employees on this scale may affect modes of attendance and recruitment patterns.

More recent developments have focused on the establishment of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) which seem set to radically alter the system of qualifications available in the further education sector in England and Wales. The qualifications are designed to interface with NVQs but will be aimed at students who are in the education system and not in employment. Qualifications were piloted during 1992 with the intention of full implementation from September 1993. However, the implementation of this has been far from consistent across the country.

" GNVQs will provide a broad-based vocational education. In addition to acquiring the basic skills and an understanding of the underlying principles in a vocational area, all students gaining a GNVQ will have achieved a range of core skills. (This) ... will provide a foundation for students to progress either to further and higher education or into employment and further training." (7)

Whilst many people applaud the concept of trying to unify standards and structures within post-16 education, it currently remains unclear as to whether the introduction of GNVQs will actually rationalise existing qualifications or whether they will simply become yet another qualification available to students in the already cluttered and confused area of tertiary education. Certainly the intent is that BTEC, City and Guilds and Royal Society for the Arts (RSA) qualifications will all be encompassed within this system, and if this is realised it will mark a significant step forward. However, this has caused programmes of study to be re-appraised, and major concerns are now being raised in some areas of the curriculum over the conformity required to bring such a diverse sector together, and the effect this may have on quality and the range of course provision.

BTEC: Background and Philosophy

The history of the development of BTEC courses stems back to the merger of the Business Education Council and the Technician Education Council in 1983. The process of drafting new guidelines for a wide range of courses served to formalise work-related education across a wide range of disciplines. All of the course outlines that have been drafted since the creation of the merged Business and Technician Education Council start from the same initial philosophy,

" BTEC exists to advance the quality and availability of work-related education for those in, or preparing for, employment. The Council's fundamental aim is that students on BTEC courses should develop the necessary competence in their careers in their own, employers' and the national interest." (8)

The range of courses validated by BTEC has been growing rapidly since the origin of the Council. Courses were initially adapted from the previous separate training councils and covered a wide range of subjects such as science, engineering, construction, business and finance. This has been progressively expanded over the past decade and now incorporates a far broader spectrum of vocationally-based training with the introduction of subject areas such as leisure services, caring, computing and information systems, design and performing arts to name but a few (See Appendix 4). The range of qualifications offered has also developed and the degree of specialism has similarly developed as evidenced by courses such as nautical science, spatial design or technical illustration. The performing arts courses have similarly expanded to encompass music technology, theatre design and dance, etc.. Thus, the development of BTEC courses has therefore been swift and impressive, and the ability of the Council to respond quickly to newly identified needs is one of their most impressive characteristics.

BTEC Qualifications

BTEC offers a wide range of qualifications which span both further and higher education. The courses are designed to encompass a wide range of subject specialisms and are targeted at prospective students from a variety of educational backgrounds.

Prospective students for BTEC courses must normally have completed secondary education (grades are not specified) and must be a minimum of sixteen years of age. Providing they meet these requirements students are then allowed access to BTEC First Certificate (1 year part-time), First Diploma (1 year full-time or 2 years part-time), National Certificate (2 years part-time) or BTEC National Diploma courses (2 years full-time). The vast majority of these courses are operated by colleges within the further education sector, although recently a number of the larger schools have started to operate certain BTEC courses at this level within their sixth forms.

On completion of a BTEC National Diploma Course or, more rarely, on the completion of A'levels, students are accepted onto BTEC Higher National Diploma courses. These are higher education courses, although many still operate in institutions traditionally considered to be within the further education sector. The Council

provides the following guidelines which specify the entry requirements, duration and the age requirement for these programmes (see overleaf).

The gradual expansion of higher level courses, allied to the progressive opening of access by the university sector has led to an increasingly complex interface between BTEC and degree. The statistics that are discussed in later chapters appear to show that in subjects where recruitment has traditionally been difficult BTEC qualifications are widely accepted for matriculation purposes, but in others where recruitment is buoyant far fewer BTEC applicants are successful. Thus, in general terms engineering and science BTEC students are more likely to be accepted onto degree courses than their colleagues in the arts or social sciences, and the converse is found in relation to A 'level qualified applicants.

The access debate is further complicated by the wide-spread move towards modular schemes which allow Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS) to be implemented. In 1990 the Council issued guidelines which formalised this relationship in the document 'Credit Transfer Between BTEC and CNAAs Awards'. Ironically it became outmoded shortly after its implementation due to the demise of CNAAs in the summer of 1992. Further policy statements have appeared on an annual basis. Advice from UCCA and UCAS has been received during this period across the higher education sector but such statements are capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways so policy does not necessarily equate with action. However, the interface between degree work, BTEC higher level work, Dip (HE) qualifications, etc. continues to be discussed in the majority of institutions in the sector.

With this in mind it seems somewhat ironic that the university sector validates BTEC Higher National Diplomas as equivalent to anything between nought, one or two years of a degree programme, and often such variations exist within the same institution but differentiated according to subject area. Policy therefore varies from institution to institution, and students are left confused as to precisely what a Higher National Diploma equates to within the higher education sector, and precisely what a National Diploma means with respect to higher education access.

AWARD	ENTRY LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	AGE	DURATION
First Certificate.	No formal examination passes.	Initial vocational qualification for those who have chosen their areas	14-16	1yr pt.
First Diploma.	No formal examination passes.	of work. Students develop essential skills which provide a foundation for work or further study.	14-16	1yr ft/ 2yr pt.
National Certificate.	BTEC First or 4 GCSEs at Grade C or equivalent.	Nationally recognised qualification for technicians and junior management.	16+	2yr pt
National Diploma.	BTEC First or 4 GCSEs at equivalent.	Nationally recognised qualification for junior management.	16+	2yr ft/ 3yr pt.
Higher National Certificate.	BTEC National or suitable 'A' level pass or equivalent.	Nationally recognised qualification for higher technician, managerial and supervisory posts.	18+	2yr pt.
Higher National Diploma.	BTEC National or suitable 'A' level pass or equivalent.	Nationally recognised qualification for higher technician, managerial and supervisory posts.	18+	2yr ft/ 3yr pt.

BTEC's interface with Higher Education

When examining the interface between BTEC and other work at both further and higher education levels it is noticeable that various institutions and the differing validating bodies now in existence hold differing views on the merits or otherwise of BTEC training. (This becomes clear within the structured staff interviews.) If this is true then it perhaps signifies more about the traditions of the rest of the sector than it does about the courses that BTEC itself offers.

The relationship between BTEC and degree level work needs to be viewed from both sides of the interface. When interpreted from the university perspective, it is often built around the assumption that academia is something to which many BTEC students aspire. But within the performing arts this can be far from the truth. The plethora of courses available for students wishing to work in the field, as represented by the large number of specialist colleges that are able to survive, despite problems of their status in terms of central funding or the inability of students to claim mandatory grant status, belies this statement. Obviously the needs of the industry are many and varied, and the criteria from which they work are equally diverse.

We also need to examine to what extent the higher education sector was consulted over the suitability of the courses for matriculation purposes prior to BTEC overtly claiming that higher education access was one of their primary aims. (This will be explored later with regards to the BTEC Performing Arts course.) BTEC's quality assurance mechanisms require the input from external assessors, and new courses have been developed by panels of people representing a wide range of expertise across the board from commerce and industry, trainers and educators. Staff from the higher education sector have been represented but whilst individual opinions can obviously have an effect on course development none of the representatives have the mandate to speak for the whole of the sector. This means that however good the advice was in the first instance, the interpretation will always be at the discretion of those interfacing with BTEC (standards and structures) and BTEC students.

On the other side of the interface BTEC students are increasingly attempting (and variably succeeding) in gaining entrance to degree programmes. However, it should not be forgotten that many students have no desire whatsoever to transfer onto such

programmes as they will have already achieved their vocational aim by completing the course. The understandings of BTEC National Diploma work within the higher education sector are many and varied. Arguments can be made regarding the suitability of BTEC qualifications for matriculation purposes but it is difficult to ensure whether these are ill-informed or based on opinion rather than fact.

The interface at Higher National Diploma level becomes even more confused. It was previously mentioned that the advent of Credit Accumulation Transfer Schemes (CATS) is now widespread across the higher education sector and in Europe. Nevertheless the schemes that have been implemented are far from uniform in credit terms, and the policies governing the various schemes differ greatly from institution to institution. Thus, a student with a Higher National Diploma negotiating within the CATS scheme may be offered a direct transfer into year three by one institution, refused by another and told that second year access only is available at another. It is obvious that there remains a lack of clarity regarding the system, and BTEC is faced with the problem of trying to interface with dozens of differing validating bodies.

Whilst it can be argued that this represents differences in internal standards or differences in the popularity of certain courses it can only serve to confuse students attempting to gain access to continuing education through this route. In many cases we are therefore presented with an apparent contradiction between the policy expressed through access statements and the reality of student experience. As we now operate in a system whereby the vast majority of universities are self-validating (and the apparent uniformity offered by CNAAB has gone) it is likely that this state of confusion will continue for some years. What seems more likely is that the laws of supply and demand will govern the different ways in which the interface is interpreted. Shortage subjects and courses that are under-recruited are more likely to offer high weightings in terms of credit transfer whereas courses that are traditionally over-subscribed or rely to a large extent on long term skills development are far less likely to offer high credit weightings.

Courses in the performing arts fall into the later category and within these areas it is common to find anything from five to twenty students applying for each available place (9). Thus, whilst recognising the necessity to formalise the arrangements for credit transfer and matriculation between BTEC and degree programmes there is little

incentive to do so in certain subject areas from the perspective of the degree course admissions tutor unless they recognise the value of a diverse student entry profile.

Finally, the picture is further complicated by BTEC's interface with the various national lead bodies charged with establishing NVQ training across the country. These will continue to develop and expand, establishing relationships with a wide range of further and higher education institutions independently and yet on another level they will be operating through BTEC, RSA, etc. Given all of these facts it is easy to see how differing standards can apply and students actively engaged in trying to move from sector to sector are dissuaded or misinformed.

BTEC Qualifications in the Performing Arts

BTEC qualifications in the performing arts are many and varied. It is somewhat ironic that whilst the Certificate and National Diploma course is now offered at over one hundred institutions throughout the country the guidelines on which all of these courses are based remain in draft. Within the guidelines the accredited centres are encouraged to pursue and develop additional specialist routes through the course and to spawn new courses in related areas.

" Centres are encouraged to devise other option units to meet any special student need which is not already met by a BTEC standard unit, particularly when a centre is already well established in developing knowledge and skills in that area of the performed arts." (10)

Under these auspices certain centres have gained a reputation for work in specialist fields. For example, the College Street Centre in Nottingham focuses on drama work in the community and the Coventry's Centre for the Performing Arts is known for its work in dance. Newcastle College has developed numerous specialist routes including Theatre Design, Music Technology and Popular Music each of which have recently been acknowledged by Further Education Funding Council England (FEFCE) as being excellent (11).

The past few years have seen the development of a number of Higher National Diploma courses in the performing arts which have built on the success of the National Diploma courses and the reputation of the centres involved. Higher level courses are now offered in a range of disciplines but as yet the provision of these courses is somewhat limited. All National Diploma courses are based on an agreed core study common for all students and a wide range of options (subject specialisms) which are also subject to national guidelines but which can be developed and extended by the individual centres. This accounts for the variety in courses across the country despite the national guidelines.

The perceived specialisation of students leaving BTEC courses has made the students increasingly attractive for parts of the higher education sector and for direct employment. It is a common misconception that students on BTEC Performing Arts course are provided with a generalised training. Whilst it is possible to combine aspects of dance, drama and music it is far from the norm, and is discouraged by the BTEC guidelines.

" Students may take any options from the list offered by the centre, although it is expected that most students will concentrate on one area of performance." (12)

The BTEC guidelines therefore allow the development of increasing areas of specialism but it seems somewhat incongruous that the core of all of the courses remains identical and unable to evolve in a similarly progressive way. Whilst the core does allow for a variety of interpretations it still appears to contradict the flexibility advocated elsewhere in the document. This is particularly significant when bearing in mind the fact that for Diploma students the Core represents 56%, and for Certificate students some 83% of their course.

BTEC Performing Arts Aims and Guidelines

The national guidelines served to bring together and categorise many concerns regarding training in the performing arts and as such could be applied to a wide range of course at varying levels. Despite the variety of ways in which the guidelines have

been interpreted all BTEC Performing Arts courses operate from the same principles. It is interesting to note that, whilst not directly stated, the underlying philosophy of the group responsible for drafting the course is absolutely clear, namely to educate the 'whole' person, to provide a basis for on-going personal development, to develop a high level of skill and to recognise the responsibility for educators to examine the exit profiles of students in vocational terms.

In one sense it may be seen as contradictory to develop vocational training in an area of the economy where employment is traditionally sporadic, non-permanent and fragile. On the other hand the whole of the cultural and leisure industry is expanding and therefore requiring more, and better trained and qualified employees. BTEC rationalise this through the following statement,

" For many years the arts and entertainment sector of the leisure industry has been a difficult one for regular employment. Performers may need to travel widely in pursuit of their profession and accept contracts which are shorter term than in most other employment. These and the other unusual features of the industry must be reflected in any course for performers." (13)

Courses must therefore be able to contain a number of elements that may fall outside more traditional training in the sector and these are identified within the guidelines as the main requirements of developing a course of study for the performing arts, namely that it should be,

" Broad-based and provide the student with a range of transferable performance skills.... (and) that it should allow the student to develop from this broad base by specialising in one or more of the areas of performance." (14)

From this philosophical stance the following aims were devised (15):

1. To provide an educational foundation for a range of careers in the performing arts.

2. To develop the ability to inter-relate and use knowledge, skills and understanding gained from the course.
3. To assist students to be responsive to the changing demands of the performing arts.
4. To develop the students' ability to perform competently.
5. To provide the opportunities for the development of personal qualities and competencies which may be used in many activities, including employment.
6. To provide a basis for continuing education and career development.

BTEC Performing Arts Course Structure

All courses are devised around a unit-based structure and comprise core studies and options. Within the two-year full-time Diploma course students undertake the ten core studies units and eight specialist option units, whereas within the two-year part-time Certificate course students take the same ten core units but only need to supplement this with two option units.

The structure in itself establishes some important points of principle that would still sit uncomfortably in certain parts of the performing arts sector. Namely, that there are large areas of common experience for all practitioners in the performing arts regardless of the field in which they choose to practise. Whilst this may be the case, and is emerging even within higher education through the advent of increased modularisation, personal experience reveals it to be fraught with difficulties due to the way in which the different disciplines interpret their art form and the context in which it operates.

It is also interesting to note that some of these units have their origins within other BTEC arts-based practical courses which similarly recognise the importance of broad-based skills development alongside focused arts practice and informed by cultural and economic understandings of contemporary society (See overleaf).

 BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN PERFORMING ARTS

 OUTLINE COURSE STRUCTURE

<u>YEAR ONE</u>	Certificate	Diploma
<i>Core Units</i>	<i>Option Units</i>	<i>Option Units</i>
Arts in Society	1.0	
Production Techniques	1.0	options to a
Performance Workshop	2.0	unit value of 1.0
Common Skills A	1.0	options to a
		unit value of 4.0
Unit value Year One	5.0	plus 1.0 or 4.0

<u>YEAR TWO</u>	Certificate	Diploma
<i>Core Units</i>	<i>Option Units</i>	<i>Option Units</i>
Arts Administration	1.0	
Performance Workshop	1.0	options to a
Production Project	2.0	unit value of 1.0
Common Skills B	1.0	options to a
		unit value of 4.0
Unit Value Year Two	5.0	plus 1.0 or 4.0
Total Unit Value Core	10.0	Options 2.0 or 8.0

The total unit value for a Certificate Course is 12 units
and the total unit value for a Diploma Course is 18 units.

The Core Units are designed to provide students with,

" a broad understanding of the knowledge, skills and techniques required in the performance of music, dance, drama and stage-craft." (16)

and this is achieved by identifying certain core skills relevant to the broad-based development of the student and incorporating and applying them in the rest of the course content through the application of a number of statements of principle. These are called the core themes.

The Option Units comprise a mixture of skills-based learning with theoretical perspectives and these are all contained within a framework that is meant to provide specific and focused support and encouragement for personal creative artistic development through individual and group practical work.

The core themes recognise the necessity to be able to control and develop oneself within the professional performing arts community. To achieve this BTEC consider it necessary for students to gain understandings in four key areas (the themes that should pervade all course content). The themes naturally overlap and interact, and in one sense may seem rather obvious, yet despite the practical nature of so many other further and higher education courses available within the performing arts I am unaware that any of them have similar statements of principle designed to govern course content.

The themes are as follows:

" Theme 1. People: understanding that the success, even survival, of any performing arts organisation depends on people working together as a team and offering a satisfying experience to an audience." (17)

This recognises the simple truth that the vast majority of performing arts work is about communication with an audience and working properly within a team. The creation of work is nearly always dependent on the interaction of the team members, and often (if not always) the performance work created collectively is greater than the sum of its constituent parts. The other aspect of 'understanding people' is the

recognition that much work in this field requires students to apply interpersonal skills in a careful and considered manner as it is inevitable that all production work requires negotiation and co-operation with numerous external groups and organisations.

" Theme 2. Resources: understanding that nearly all decisions have consequences for financial, material and human resources; that the organisation, control and availability of resources are central to the activities of any organisation." (18)

This theme relates closely to the previous and following themes. Once again it is a realistic recognition that art cannot be created within a vacuum, and that all creative production requires the consumption of some form of resources. Therefore, it is essential that the practitioner in the performing arts is both aware of this fact and able to control it to his/her mutual advantage.

" Theme 3. Technology: understanding the impact of technological processes and their development on individuals, communities and society as a whole." (19)

Technology has become increasingly central to all forms of artistic creativity within the performing arts. It is therefore essential that students understand the impact of technology on their particular art form, and are able to apply and control technology in the correct context. New technologies are also having an impact on the forms and manner of production, creating new interpretations and even new forms. Thus, as the whole field of performing arts is one which constantly evolves and develops, it is vital that all students understand the impact of new technologies as they have become so central to the creative processes and the means by which performing arts work is communicated to its audience.

" Theme 4. Change: understanding that organisations develop and alter objectives in response to changes in the economy, the population, social values and availability of resources and that the ability to adapt is essential to any career." (20)

The final theme 'change' serves to bring together the concerns expressed in the previous three statements. Any practitioner in the performing arts is constantly involved in having to cope with change. The creative work in this field is subject to change whether it be the radical change of developing new work or the arguably less challenging change required when recreating an established work. In addition all production is inevitably affected by numerous external factors, and this statement recognises that these can be widespread, from economic factors through to the complex interaction of art forms, with individuals and with society in general.

The Option Units comprise a mixture of skills-based learning with theoretical perspectives and these are all contained within a framework meant to provide support and encouragement for personal creative artistic development through individual and group practical work.

Performing Arts Core Units

The eight core units are central to all courses of study and are credit weighted at between 1.0 and 2.0 units. The core units combine creative opportunities (Performance Workshop and Production Project), contextual studies (Arts in Society) a range of relevant core skills (Common Skills A and B) and understandings of the support structures for the performing arts (Arts Administration/Production Techniques). The Arts in Society unit is designed to make the student aware of the historical and social context within which their work will take place. This is informed by economic understandings and an awareness of aesthetic considerations.

" Any student of the performed arts needs to understand the influence that society has had on the role and development of the arts and the way in which the arts have influenced society. This understanding provides a base from which the specialised areas of performance are developed." (21)

The Arts Administration unit provides a broad-based understanding of the industry from the perspective of the arts administrator as well as teaching students many of the basic administrative skills necessary to support their work. Students examine funding, marketing and legal and industrial relations both in a theoretical and applied manner.

All centres are encouraged to develop their facilities as venues for professional performance alongside student performance to provide students with the requisite experience of interacting with professional practitioners and to gain experience of organising and administering for others. The unit is based on the rationale that,

" There is a need for all students of the performed arts to be able to assist with the business aspects of performance, including the financial, legal, and administrative implications." (22)

Production Techniques concentrates on providing students with understandings of the possibilities and constraints on production within particular venues. It is considered essential that all students, regardless of their specialisation, understand the working processes of a venue (from front-of-house through to basic lighting design, sound preparation, etc.). Once again this may seem to be an obvious requirement but still falls outside the remit of many of the more specialist courses in the sector.

Within the Performance Workshop unit students engage with each of the four specialist areas regardless of the focus of their option choices. Thus, students who may focus their studies in music are required to develop basic competencies in all areas of performance (music, dance, drama and stage-craft). The unit, which has a high weighting and operates in both years of the course, is fundamentally practical and is considered to be flexibly applied so as to enable the student,

" to experiment with ideas and to develop the performance skills and knowledge introduced in other units." (23)

The necessity for this unit to be viewed flexibly means that the indicative content is not specified. However, the criteria for implementation make it clear that the unit must both incorporate the various art forms and blend experimental and traditional approaches.

The Production Project recognises the need to make all students work together as part of a group in the execution of a major production. The aim is to provide a 'proto-professional' experience for students in which they each have clearly defined roles and are required to work together and apply previously learned skills to realise the work.

For this reason the Production Project only occurs in Year Two of the course. It is interesting to note that whilst the emphasis in much of the rest of the course is on process, within this unit the product comes to the fore. Because of the potential for inequality of role between individual group members a clear directive is given to centres that,

" Assessment of this unit should concentrate more on the ability of the student to work as a member of a production team than on the assessment of an individual contribution." (24)

The final part of the defined Core are the Common Skills units. Initially it may appear unusual in that the precise content and teaching of these units, which occur in both years of the course, is not prescribed. Rather, a wide range of skills are defined within a comprehensive document but the manner of teaching these skills is left unclear. The only guidance offered is as follows,

" The skills are developed and assessed through a programme of integrative assignments mainly across the core units." (25)

The reason for this is that the skills statement is common to all BTEC mainstream courses, and once again the concept that common skills can be defined for students training in a wide range of courses (sciences, engineering, business studies, caring professions, performing arts, etc.) is one that has not been generally accepted elsewhere within the sector.

The Common Skills areas are defined as follows: communicating, learning and studying, self development, self management and organisation, working with others, practical skills, identifying and tackling problems, numeracy, information seeking and analysis, using information technology and design awareness. Each area is described in some detail in objective terms. Whilst acknowledging the fact that the document is only a draft guideline it seems strange that having put considerable effort into the definition of the skills areas that other areas that one might consider central to a course document are almost ignored. Hence, the definition of aspiration in terms of skills-development is clear,

" work-related and personal skills of a general, transferable character that are necessary for success at work. They are skills used by anyone working in the performing arts and are of equal use should employment be sought outside the performing arts." (26)

However, the guidelines do not contain any advice on teaching methodologies, how certain units should be implemented, on the interpretation placed on key concepts or on matters of basic resourcing.

Given the rationale that BTEC wish to encourage centres to develop their own interpretation of the guidelines it now seems unlikely that the draft guidelines will ever be formalised. Some of these centres providing performing arts courses are long established providers of BTEC education and others are relatively new to the field. New courses do not have the ability to fall back on understandings gained in the execution of similar courses. Furthermore, reliance on the draft document alone could prove problematic as the detail on some of the skills guidelines within the BTEC Performing Arts document have been transcribed from other BTEC documents without being adapted for the arts. Thus, whilst skills in communicating, learning and studying, etc. may remain unaltered it does no credit to the BTEC organisation to have the content and assessment of the practical skills element copied from another course document and still defined in terms of the use of fabrics, textiles and food preparation!

Performing Arts Option Units

The option units provide the focused specialisms for all students engaged on the course. The guidelines indicate a number of units in each of the four main areas of study and centres are clearly encouraged to develop further units according to need. The process of describing each of the units would contribute little towards the contextualisation of this dissertation, but the philosophy that underlies their construction is both significant and identical between the various specialisms.

It is apparent that each subject area places great significance on the learning of specific skills to enable the student to achieve and produce. The skills are detailed in terms of understanding the context in which established skills have developed and

recognising that the skills base is constantly changing and evolving as new technologies manifest themselves and new understandings and new forms develop.

Central to each specialism are units examining the 'language' in question (the language of music, the language of dance, etc.). These are supplemented with units that seem to be quite traditional in their construct and some units that may be considered more radical and progressive. Thus, within the Music specialism there are units in composition, arrangement and performance and these are supplemented by music technology and recording techniques.

Assessment

Course assessment requirements are carefully defined within supporting documentation provided by the Council. The fundamental principles are well suited to the nature of the course in that they combine 'in-course' assessment with examination of the 'final assignment'. All individual units are assessed on a scale which is simply categorised as distinction, merit, pass, referred or fail. There is no overall classification awarded to a student and the course team, in conjunction with the moderator, are responsible for determining the students' achievement in line with the defined objectives of each unit. (There is also a requirement for a formalised assessment of the common skills despite the lack of any proper guidelines.)

The manner in which the various units are assessed is also left to the course team to decide. The only advice for this is that,

" Course teams should develop one overall strategy for the assessment of each unit and should not regard in-course and final assignments in two halves. The final assignment is the terminal component of a planned programme of assessments and as such it should generally confirm the level of performance demonstrated by the student throughout the course." (27)

It seems somewhat incongruous that a course document in which the philosophy, aims and objectives are presented in such a focused manner should leave the

assessment guidelines in such a 'woolly' state. It would surely have been possible to prescribe criteria for continuous assessment, for it appears that this is what they are talking about, as many institutions have highly developed criteria for this form of assessment. Once again it appears that BTEC assume that people are conversant with establishing and enacting assessment schemes and criteria which may or may not actually be the case.

The final aspect of the assessment over-view is that the failure to award clearly defined grades, whilst concurring with the course philosophy, makes it difficult for students who wish to progress into degree programmes. Often the staff who interview prospective students in what is a very competitive field have little understanding of the BTEC systems. Whilst this can and will be gradually overcome as increasing numbers of students progress through the system the reality is that the degree sector need methods by which to determine the able student, however they wish to define 'ability'.

Whilst one could argue that able students will have a higher number of merits and distinctions the reality is that, even if understood, it may tell little about the real capabilities of the student in coping with higher level work. It would probably be more beneficial if a prospective student had distinctions in 'acting' or 'performance' if embarking on a practically-based drama degree whereas high grades in Arts and Society and/or the Language units may be better for a more theoretical course.

Admissions tutors could obviously be educated to understand the defined course units, but as all centres are encouraged to generate new units it is unreasonable to expect university staff to understand and evaluate the wide range of unit assessments with which they are now being presented.

University admissions tutors now require not only a high level of understanding of BTEC philosophy but also a full understanding of the course structures and how individual course units vary one from another. Whilst personal statements and references can help it seems inevitable that BTEC students are disadvantaged when placed alongside students entering through the more traditional 'A' level route. In addition, BTEC assessment procedures, although laudable in themselves, are

problematic in their presentation when utilised for HE access. Bearing this in mind along with the fact that BTEC identify one of their principle aims to be to,

" provide a suitable education and training for entry to higher education." (28)

we must question whether staff and students on either side of the further education/ higher education interface are capable of making properly informed decisions on access, admissions and standards.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Moderation

BTEC recognised the importance of maintaining the quality of its course provision. It is proud to announce,

" The Council gives a high priority to monitoring and moderating course provision, student assessment and grading. It does so with the conviction that the quality and credibility of its programmes of study and qualifications are as dependent on monitoring and moderation as on curriculum development, validation and review." (29)

Within a course that allows both individual staff and the centres power to control the course content, the assessment procedures, the methods of teaching, etc. it is obviously important to establish proper and credible systems for monitoring and evaluating the work. This is achieved through a team of more than 1300 moderators employed by the Council.

" Our moderators make sure not only that centres teach, provide learning support and assess students to the specifications agreed with us in validation, but also that students meet nationally acceptable standards of achievement. The knowledge, skills and professionalism of our moderators are crucial to our quality strategy." (30)

The moderators are part of a broader Quality Assurance and Control scheme (QAC) that BTEC operates. This also incorporates targeted national moderating, quin-quennial

reviews and national assessment panels. Precise criteria have been produced for all of the bodies and reports are produced by them which are published nationally.

BTEC specify detailed procedures for the accreditation of centre and individual courses. They also provide a detailed criteria to assist staff in grading work (BTEC Circular 17: Defining and Determining Grades) and require the appointment of a moderator by the council for each course of study. The moderator's powers are wide ranging and are similar in definition to those of an external examiner or moderator within the higher education sector.

" Moderators will ensure that appropriate and consistent standards are applied and maintained. They will be responsible for moderating all aspects of assessment and agreeing with the centre the final results of students. The moderator will visit the centre during the year in order to discuss teaching, learning and assessment strategies with members of the course team." (31)

It therefore appears that BTEC has a highly developed quality control mechanism and yet the accusation most frequently levelled against the performing arts courses by academics and employers concerns the inconsistency of standards. It is possible that the performing arts are in some ways the exception within the Quality Assurance and Control (QAC) process, as most other programme areas have been operating for longer periods of time and are likely to be more stable. Nevertheless, some BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts courses have been running for many years and it is interesting to note that the centrally produced reports by the Assessment Panels have yet to look at courses in the this area.

My concern regarding the inconsistency of standards in this area provided the initial stimulus for this dissertation and yet it can be shown that the Quality Assurance and Control mechanisms and the documentation are extensive. What therefore requires examination is the potential gap between the theory and practice of the QAC mechanism with regards to BTEC Performing Arts courses. Are the appropriate staff employed to deliver the course? Are there sufficient resources to deliver the course?

Resourcing

Concern is often expressed over the matter of resourcing. Naturally this matter is closely allied to the academic standards and moderation within the courses. Whilst this chapter has detailed much of the laudable philosophy and content of the courses it is my conjecture that the interpretation and delivery of this content varies widely across the country. For example, the indicative content for many of the units is remarkably detailed. Whilst I recognise that this is only provided as advice for centres, and therefore should represent best working practice, it does in many cases seem somewhat optimistic given both the physical and time constraints within which most centres operate. For example, within the Production Techniques unit students should,

" Use a range of lanterns, stands, lighting bars, placing of cable systems, use of dimmer racks, operation of simple board, focusing to space and performers... (understand) source of sound, microphone, tape or record deck, mixing desk, amplifier, loudspeaker, knowledge of feedback. Treatment of sound-equalisation, foldback, electronic reverberation and delay." (32)

This list of indicative content assumes a great deal about the resourcing of each of the centres and the range of skills held by the staff. If these subjects are to be given more than 'lip service' then one could argue that understandings of these elements alone would occupy the entire teaching time of the course. Yet these are only two elements out of a list of twelve that are meant to be covered within the unit. It is also my opinion that, whilst many centres can physically demonstrate the provision of the required resources during the validation process, the actual student access to the resources is often severely limited. It should also be remembered that staffing is required to cover such a broad range of topics within the overall syllabus and this poses the question as to whether centres can deliver the whole of the syllabus given the apparent ever diminishing unit of resource.

In my opinion it seems that the reality of many centres is that even quite large courses may depend largely on only two or three full-time members of staff supplemented by a variety of part-time staff. In some cases the reality is worse than this. When acting as a higher education admissions tutor I became aware from the

comments of candidates of certain BTEC courses which operated out of one or two small non-specialist classroom spaces, supported primarily by a single staff member and part-time provision, that resourcing varied considerably between centres. How does the student experience in a poorly resourced college compare with those operating within purpose-built and well-staffed facilities, such as those examined in the two case studies that follow?

The questionnaires and structured interviews will need to address these issues for if it is true that resourcing in some colleges is as poor as stated by the candidates then it must raise questions regarding the BTEC validation process. Staffing can appear to be highly qualified but within larger course provisions there is no guarantee which members of staff actually deliver the various programmes. Also, I am aware of instances where visiting members have been shown around perfectly adequate facilities without realising the impact on the resources that other courses make or the sheer quantity of students who access specialist facilities (especially new technologies). Thus, in isolation things may appear adequate but in reality they may be inadequate, and still the issue remains concerning ever growing student numbers and the finite level of resources which often have to support a wide range of courses in the performing arts in addition to the National Diploma course.

Conclusion

The creation of a number of nationally recognised and nationally validated qualifications in the performing arts provides both opportunities and challenges for the more established providers of education in the sector. There seems little doubt that much of the philosophy that underpins these courses is progressive and clearly thought through. There is much that can be learnt from these courses and yet, at present, there remain problems in the way these courses are perceived by parts of the industry and by some higher education providers.

The debate revolves around two principle areas of concern, firstly that of standards and secondly that of course content. The questions within the fieldwork will focus on these issues as well as examining perceptions of the further education/higher education interface, resourcing and the suitability and interpretation of course content.

Whereas 'new' universities have traditionally had to submit to varying degrees of internal and external scrutiny of their courses this has normally concentrated on examination of the parity of academic standards, course quality and resourcing (with the latter rapidly becoming the crux of audit). Whilst this did not generally apply in the 'old' universities prior to incorporation, the fact remains that the higher education sector can be considered to be 'self-policing' within a framework dominated by bodies established by the sector, namely the HEFCE Quality Assessment Division and the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). Central to all forms of audit has always been the maintenance of academic standards which are seen as central to a university's continuing existence. BTEC has established similar mechanisms, relying on central approval of training centres and external moderation to maintain standards within the courses.

Therefore, the fieldwork will need to examine differing perceptions of the effectiveness of these systems, for whatever the case it cannot be denied that concern has been expressed from a number of differing sources. These were somewhat curtly summarised by the Senior HMI, R. Williams (then Senior HMI for Performing Arts at a meeting of CNAA Specialist Advisors in 1990) who stated,

" The fundamental problem with BTEC is one of academic standards and moderation." (33)

Chapter Four: Notes

1. Arts & Media Towards a National Arts and Media Strategy (1992) p 130
2. Arts & Media Education and the Arts, Discussion document 19. National Strategy for Arts and Media, CoRAA (1991) p3
3. BTEC Policies and Priorities Into the 1990s, (1984) p1.
4. BTEC Op. cit p3
5. BTEC Op. cit p3 - 4
6. BTEC Op. cit p1
7. BTEC Implementing BTEC GNVQs: A Guide for Centres, (1993) p6
8. BTEC Draft Guidelines for National Diploma in Performing Arts (1988) p1

9. The 1994 UCAS statistics state the national average for the performing arts was 13.8 applications per place.
10. BTEC Draft Guidelines in P.A. p10
11. Quality rating awarded by FEFCE following an inspection in 1995.
12. BTEC Draft Guidelines in P.A. p10
13. Op. cit p6
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Op. cit p 9
17. Op. cit p 17
18. Ibid
19. Op. cit p 20
20. Ibid
21. Op. cit p 26
22. Op. cit p 28
23. Op. cit p 32
24. Op. cit p 33
25. Op. cit p 23
26. Op. cit p 17
27. Op. cit p 21
28. Op. cit p 6
29. BTEC Policies and Priorities into the 1990s (1984) p 7
30. BTEC Annual Report 1988/89, (1990) p 15
31. BTEC Draft Guidelines for P.A. p 24
32. Op. cit p 31
33. Roger Williams. Senior H.M.I. for Performing Arts in 1990, stated at a meeting of C.N.A.A. Specialist Advisors in March 1990.

CHAPTER FIVE

Newcastle and Monkwearmouth Colleges

Newcastle College

Newcastle College is one of the largest institutions of its type in the country. In 1995 its total number of student enrolments approached 26,000 and students are offered courses across a wide range of disciplines. In common with many other institutions the College has undergone rapid growth and expansion during the past five years. Since 1993 it has increased its further education provision by almost 50% and its higher education provision by 68%. Whilst the higher education courses are now subject to capping by Government the College now contains the fourth largest higher education cohort in a further education college with nearly 1400 MASN students studying at the College, and an additional 100 students on franchised degree courses. The arts areas have been at the forefront of the development of this higher education provision.

The College delivers its programme through four faculties: Business and Community Services; Engineering and the Built Environment; Humanities, Hospitality and Science; Visual and Performing Arts. Whilst it is acknowledged that certain of these programmes (particularly at HND level) are gaining a national reputation the College remains committed to its local and regional role as is evident by its mission statement.

" To provide programmes of education and training to the highest quality for the benefit of the widest possible range of clients and, in so doing, to support the

economic and social development of the City of Newcastle and the North Eastern region of England." (1)

Quality is a key issue for the College, as one would expect given the increasingly overt linkage between quality ratings and funding, and the College is justifiably proud of its examination record and its gradings from the Further Education Funding Council England (FEFCE) inspections. Music and the Dance and Drama Departments are both graded by FEFCE as excellent.

In the performing arts there are a large number of courses on offer from G.S.C.E.s and A'levels through to degree level work. The work of the Faculty is grouped around the major BTEC qualifications both at National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels. Although GNVQs have been introduced into many other areas such as art and design, science and information technology, they have not yet directly affected the courses in the performing arts disciplines.

The College offers:

- BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts
- NCFE Pre-Access in Music, Dance and Drama
- NCFE Access to Music, Dance and Drama
- NCFE Certificate in Instrumental Studies
- G.C.S.E. Music
- G.C.S.E. Drama
- G.C.E. A'level Music
- G.C.E. A'level Theatre Studies

- BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology
- BTEC National Diploma in Musical Instrument Technology
- BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music
- BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Dance)
- BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Drama)

- BTEC Higher National Diploma in Music Technology
- BTEC Higher National Diploma in Music Technology (Production)
- BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Applied Music)
- BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Dance)

BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Drama)
BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Jazz, Popular and
Commercial Music)
BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Theatre and Media
Production)
BTEC Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts (Music Theatre)
Graduate Diploma in Music

The number of students on the courses varies considerably, for example in 1995 only two full and two part-time students completed the Music A'level course whereas the Higher National Diploma course in Performing Arts (Drama) had more than 70 full-time student enrolments.

The human and physical resources required to support these courses is considerable. A large number of specialist staff have been engaged providing a range of complementary expertise and facilitating specialisms such as Theatre Design (1.5 staff), Music Technology (2 staff), etc. Naturally many of the staff have multi-faceted roles within the institution and key strengths in the areas of Drama (performance), Music (technology and popular music) and Dance have gained recognition throughout the country. The physical resource development has been equally impressive with an initial base for all courses on the Rye Hill campus now massively extended through the acquisition of buildings behind the Tyne Theatre, a partnership arrangement with the Tyne Theatre itself, the incorporation of the impressive accommodation of 'Dance City' and the recent completion of the £5 million John Marley Centre for Music.

The result of all of this development has been to focus the specialist areas, and whilst this is most evident on the Higher National Diploma courses it also holds true for the National Diploma courses. Hence, the National Diploma in Performing Arts no longer includes the music option but only advertises pathways in Dance, Drama and Stagecraft as the plethora of more specialist courses in music have drawn students away from the generalised course.

The reputation of the courses is therefore extremely good in the region and is rapidly developing outside of the region and abroad. For example, a production of Romeo and Juliet was performed in Anzio, Italy to wide critical acclaim and a jazz ensemble 'Small Feet, Large Ears' performed in Taiwan (and has subsequently been asked back for a residency). Students also performed two musicals at the Tyne

Theatre, provided actors for the BBC TV children's programme 'Byker Grove' and worked on productions at Newcastle Playhouse. These examples demonstrate the level of activity and the quality of course provision available to students across the performing arts at Newcastle College, a focus that I consider unmatched in the further education sector in the North of England. And yet, College statistics demonstrate only 16% of students on the National Diploma courses gain access to higher education courses. As many of these will progress onto the College's own Higher National Diploma programmes it provides a somewhat startling perspective on the interface with the universities which will be explored further through the survey material analysed in the following chapter.

Monkwearmouth College

The College is a large organisation spread over three sites based in and around Sunderland. The different sites provide a focus for certain clusters of disciplines and all of the performing arts work is currently based at the Shiney Row Centre, Houghton-le-Spring. In 1995 the College formed a formal partnership with Wearside College and whilst the separate identities have been maintained at a local level they now promote their courses together under the title of Sunderland City Colleges. In combination they offer over 500 different courses to 20,000 students (many of whom are part-time) and these are primarily concentrated in the traditional further education field of A'levels, AS'levels, G.C.S.E.s, B.T.E.C.s and G.N.V.Q.s. They also offer a range of leisure courses and specific vocational training for industry.

From 1997 they will become managerially and academically integrated forming one large organisation under the leadership of a new Principal, who ironically left his position as Deputy Principal at Newcastle College to take up this role. The College has undergone rapid expansion and this has been supported by additional investment throughout the various sites. For example, a major new development to centralise aspects of Library and Learning Resources to the Shiny Row site is currently being completed. The College(s) are clear about their aims,

" Sunderland City Colleges meet the needs of thousands of students in the city of Sunderland and in the northern region who successfully progress to higher education and employment nationally and internationally." (2)

and this push towards employment or further study is reinforced through an overt equal opportunities policy and great emphasis being placed upon their access provision.

" If you are over 19 without academic qualifications and wish to progress to higher education we offer Access Courses to prepare you for this challenge. You can even start your higher education with us." (3)

Courses have been designed to fit in with the needs of the local community and the success of this policy was clear from the high percentage of mature students found to be studying on the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts. Courses for adults range from English and Maths 'Return to Learn' courses through to a 'Higher Education Access' course enabling students to progress onto the first year of a range of BA(Hons) and B Sc.(Hons) degrees franchised from the University of Sunderland.

The College(s) offers courses across the whole range of disciplines: business management, caring professions, construction, creative arts, design, engineering, leisure, maths and computing, modern languages, office administration, tourism, performing arts and these are delivered through a number of relatively small departments. In the performing arts it offers courses from G.C.S.E. through to an access course and its provision is geared to enable access for students almost irrespective of previous qualifications. The courses interlock and provide variable access points through which both full and part-time, school-leavers and mature students progress.

" Whatever your previous qualifications or practice, our specialist staff, with their industrial and educational background, can help guide you towards what suits you best among the wide range of available courses." (4)

From my visits I was aware that there was a very close working relationship between staff and students in the performing arts area. This ethos is supported at an institutional level through the emphasis placed upon the role of Personal Tutor and the extensive Counselling service available to students. Whilst one can be sceptical and state that all institutions have such services for students it certainly appeared to me that institutional support was strong for this approach and rather than bland policy statements there was a noticeable commitment to a co-operative partnership between staff and students. Naturally, it is difficult to extrapolate whether this was applicable outside of the performing arts area, and to what degree it was dependent on the staff

personalities involved. Nevertheless, the high rates of student satisfaction with the National Diploma course, analysed in the following chapter, must surely arise in part from this policy.

The performing arts area was staffed by five full-time and a whole range of part-time staff. Although the student/staff ratios varied between courses they were generally in the low teens, and in some specialist areas below ten. Part-time staff were brought in to provide instrumental tuition and a whole range of workshop and associated skills. The College also promotes some professional and semi-professional work from outside of the institution giving students access to performances that they would not normally have the opportunity to see. The performing arts area has established a significant local presence for its performance work both in the College, the local community and, on occasion, nationally and abroad.

Teaching resources are concentrated in one wing of the Shiny Row site. Students have access to a well equipped theatre space (traditional school hall), a large specialist dance studio, two music rooms, a recording studio and various small practice, rehearsal and seminar spaces. The collective office for all of the performing arts staff is based in the middle of this complex. Technical support is provided through a dedicated specialist technician who has control of a wide range of portable and fixed equipment in support of the various courses.

This resource base supports approximately 100 fte students studying one or more of the following courses:

G.C.S.E. Music

G.C.S.E. Drama

G.C.E. A'level Music

G.C.E. A'level Theatre Studies

BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Dance)

BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Drama)

BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Music)

BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music

Theatre and the Community: Access to higher education

It was interesting to note that a considerable number of the National Diploma students were also studying an A'level in their specialist subject. This was possible

within the course structure, and advised by staff for their more capable students. It was clear that this had been the instinctive response to the apparent poor acceptance rate of their National Diploma students onto higher education courses. Also, students are encouraged to take a number of additional qualifications within the College even if registered full-time on the BTEC National Diploma course. Thus, music students are assisted in taking the graded practical exams of the Associated Board and many also take the accepted 'benchmark' exam of Grade V Theory. Similarly, drama students are encouraged towards LAMDA qualifications whilst on the course. These external assessments of students' practical skills were encouraged to try and build the case for entry to higher education courses.

The majority of students were anxious to continue their studies elsewhere, many rating the Higher National Diploma courses at Newcastle College as their primary aim and others insistent on the necessity to leave the region. Students were optimistic about their chances of gaining access to higher education although many of the students only thought this would be possible by progressing onto one of the franchised first-year degree programmes from the University of Sunderland. (This pathway will be activated for students from the start of the 1997 academic year.) Unfortunately, this course was seen very much as their fall-back position for students assuming they were unsuccessful in their applications to other institutions.

Conclusion

Although the two colleges (taking Monkwearmouth in its 'new' role as part of Sunderland College) are similar in size they differ considerably in ethos, resourcing and structure. Newcastle College has an impressive infrastructure based upon a university style academic management structure. Monkwearmouth, in contrast, feels far more collegiate in nature with a large number of small departments each having primary responsibility for course delivery. Both colleges have invested heavily in growth and both are well resourced in support of their courses in the performing arts.

Both organisations operate from a number of sites. In Sunderland these cover some considerable geographical area but in Newcastle they are clustered around the centre of the city. The size of the operation at Newcastle, combined with the physical separation of the disciplines has led to independent and specialist interpretations of the National Diploma guidelines. At Monkwearmouth, the much smaller department has

similarly developed its specialisms but within an overall ethos of co-operation and interaction.

Staff in both institutions are highly dedicated and approachable by students, but I suspect that the institutional policies pertaining to access, equal opportunities and personal tutoring have been realised to a higher degree at Monkwearmouth College. There is no criticism inferred of staff at Newcastle - and it is interesting to note that they generally have to deal with far more students, working far more frenetically and at far higher student/staff ratios than do staff at Monkwearmouth. The reputation of the Newcastle courses is certainly high within the region and yet, ironically, it may appear that students at Monkwearmouth College are more likely to progress into higher education courses (due to the franchise arrangement with Sunderland University) than their contemporaries at Newcastle College. The Higher National Diploma programmes at Newcastle College (particularly the HND in Performing Arts, Drama) are heavily over-subscribed and only the very best of the National Diploma students are successful at the open and competitive interview process.

These and other issues will be explored in the following chapter through student and staff questionnaires and structured staff interviews. However, it is important to understand the differing contexts from which this data arises given the apparent similarities of the institutions in statistical terms.

Chapter Five: Notes

1. Newcastle College: Strategic Plan 1995. Mission Statement p1.
2. Sunderland City Colleges: Prospectus 1995. p1.
3. Ibid.
4. Op. cit. p2.

CHAPTER SIX

The BTEC Interface: The Further Education Perspective

Introduction

The views of the further education sector were gathered through a combination of student questionnaires, staff questionnaires and structured interviews. Data collection took place during 1993 and 1994 and involved responses from one hundred and eighteen students, thirty seven course leaders and five staff within the three targeted institutions.

Contact with the two named institutions (Monkwearmouth and Newcastle Colleges in the North East) was personal ensuring a very high response rate from the students involved. Students were also surveyed in Islington Sixth Form Centre to provide an external point of reference to ensure the results were representative and to boost the aggregate student numbers for overall statistical analysis. Students were asked to provide detailed answers to a range of specific questions designed to tackle the issues of access, quality, realisation of course aims and progression. The students represented a wide cross-section of disciplines (dance, drama and music) and both year groups on the course (1st and 2nd year students). The statistical and qualitative data was collated to produce individual college returns, including analysis by year group and gender, and a series of overview statistics .

The student questionnaire was adapted and expanded for use with staff in the further education sector. Questions were carefully adapted to ensure that the same issues were being addressed from the staff perspective. This postal survey was sent to

all institutions identified by BTEC as running the National Diploma Performing Arts course in 1994. The exercise was repeated twice with institutions that did not respond to the first mailing, and this produced an acceptable and representative response with some 36% of known courses replying. Some provided additional qualitative data and were prepared to enter into an extended dialogue. Finally, data was also collected from selected staff in the three Colleges whose students were surveyed. Five full-time academic staff engaged in structured interviews, and their views and responses are summarised later in this chapter. For reasons of confidentiality they have asked not to be identified by name within this study.

Student Questionnaire Design and Focus

The questionnaires were designed to be relevant, understandable and 'user-friendly'. They purposely addressed a range of issues and required both qualitative and quantitative responses from students. To aid the speed of completion, and to facilitate data analysis, it was decided that a series of focused questions would be asked eliciting multiple choice answers. The majority of questions only required a simple tick response, others required the ranking of course components (1 - 5) and a few of the questions allowed respondents to utilise a 'get out' response of 'other' and then to write a sentence of explanation. Great care was taken over the selection of the descriptors for each question to ensure clarity of response and for this reason a very high response rate was received from the students engaged in the process. Subsequent analysis revealed very few questions that had not been answered properly (less than 0.5%) and these spoilt answers were excluded from the data analysis (1).

The student questionnaire concentrated on four main areas: access, quality, realisation of course aims and progression. However, all of the questions were structured to inform the debate regarding access to higher education, examining student's opinions, understandings and expectations. In addition, although the questionnaires were anonymous, students were asked to provide statistical data on their age, sex and entry qualifications. The subtlety of some of the response descriptors belies the simplicity of the questions asked and enabled some questions to inform more than one of the areas outlined above (See Appendix 5A).

The following simple questions explored the access debate supported by the student statistics on entry qualifications, age and gender balance.

What was the main reason that led you to choose to undertake the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

The quality debate is a complicated and sensitive issue. It was not considered appropriate to ask students their view on the quality of staff engaged in their teaching, especially considering the co-operation that had been afforded in providing access to the student groups. Thus, the quality debate was focused towards the interpretation of BTEC aims and matters of resourcing upon which the delivery of course aims is largely dependent. The following questions were posed:

Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled your expectations?

Do you consider the teaching accommodation available to you on the course to be .. Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Totally Inadequate.

Do you consider the equipment/technical facilities available to you on the course to be Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Totally Inadequate.

Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most?

The realisation of the course in relation to its stated aims (See Chapter 4) was addressed by:

BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course?

Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most?

Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment?

When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

Finally the issues of progression, bias and student expectation were explored through:

When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose to attend?

When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

It should be noted that although the questionnaires were given to students personally, great care was taken to ensure that no dialogue was undertaken other than a general briefing on the nature of the research project to minimise my influence on their responses. Students did express a great deal of interest in the research especially in relation to their knowledge of my role within the higher education sector. It was noticeable that the majority of second year students were actively engaged in the process of trying to obtain a place at the time they were completing their returns. Nevertheless, all dialogue was restricted to after the questionnaires had been returned to avoid the problem of my responses corrupting the data.

Staff Questionnaire Design and Focus

The staff questionnaire is an extended version of the student questionnaire. It was designed to cross-reference with the student questionnaire and at the same time to offer the opportunity for more personal views and opinions to be forwarded relating to staff's understandings of the strategic developments facing BTEC and both the further and higher education sectors. The forms were sent to Course Leaders of all known BTEC National Diploma courses in Performing Arts in England, and to known centres in Wales and Northern Ireland. Anonymity of response was promised and for this reason individuals have not been identified except where permission has been granted. Thus, the only listing of the colleges is in the statistical data pertaining to student numbers and staffing figures (See Appendix 5 G).

The forms initially mirrored the student questionnaires in asking for factual data on the number of staff, students, and the age and gender balance of the student body. The questioning then followed the same key areas of student access, quality, realisation of course aims and progression.

The issue of access was addressed through the following questions:

What are your normal entry requirements?

How do you select your students?

Does your College offer any other BTEC courses in the performing arts?

In your opinion what is the main reason why do students choose to take the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Where do most of your students gain information about the course prior to enrolment?

In a similar vein to the student questionnaire, the quality debate was focused on issues of quality in relation to the deliverance of course aims as stated in the BTEC documentation. Staff were not asked to make qualitative judgements on standards of teaching but were asked to provide their opinions on the quality assurance mechanisms and the way in which students perceived the course.

The following questions were asked:

What are the main strengths of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Does the course structure outlined by BTEC have any major areas of weakness?

How appropriate are the moderation and examination procedures prescribed by BTEC to the type of work undertaken by the students?

Does the course fulfil the expectations of the students?

Does the BTEC "prepare people for employment"?

Which of the course units do students most enjoy?

Is the teaching/tutorial accommodation available to you for the course.....

Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Totally Inadequate

Is the technical facilities/equipment available to you for the course.....

Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Poor, Totally Inadequate

In your view how appropriate are the moderation and examination procedures prescribed by BTEC to the type of work undertaken by the students?

How much of your performance work is open to the public?

How much of your performance work takes place outside of the college/
institution?

The realisation of the course in relation to its stated aims was examined through:

BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area students gain during the course?

Which of the course units do you consider best prepare students for future employment?

How appropriate are the moderation and examination procedures prescribed by BTEC to the type of work undertaken by the students?

How much of your performance work is open to the public?

How much of your performance work takes place outside of the college/institution?

Progression was explored through the following questions:

In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?

Students wishing to go on to further study will normally be required to attend an interview/audition. How do you prepare students for this?

Degree courses in the performing arts are normally greatly over subscribed. Most courses offer anticipated A' level entry grades required for entry. Are you aware of the normal BTEC profile that is required for students to gain admission?

When students finish the course, what do you anticipate they will do?

Students who choose to continue their studies can opt for a variety of different courses. Which type of courses do they choose to attend?

On completion of the BTEC National Diploma course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken A'levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

In addition the staff questionnaire included questions designed to explore areas of strategic development and concern that were clear from informal contact with the sector prior to the survey being undertaken. At the time of gathering data I was fully aware that the issue of the effect of GNVQs on BTEC courses was of paramount importance.

What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?

What impact will the introduction of GNVQs have on the courses you run?

BTEC is also keen for Colleges to develop and interpret the course guidelines according to local need. Some Colleges have utilised this flexibility to develop a wide range of specialist courses in the performing arts, and thus it was interesting to probe the extent to which this philosophy has been adopted nation-wide.

Does your College offer any other BTEC courses in the performing arts?

Student Questionnaire Results

The overview statistics created through combining the data from Newcastle College, Monkwearmouth College and Islington Sixth Form Centre provides a representative and accurate set of data capable of comparison and triangulation. It also provides the basis for detailed analysis and comparison with the cross-referenced staff questionnaires. The number of students surveyed (one hundred and eighteen) helps to minimise the distorting effect of maverick responses and ensures the quality of the responses, the seriousness with which the student groups undertook the work, and the very small percentage of spoilt answers all point to the accuracy of the data provided.

In many ways the results detailed in Appendix 5 are self explanatory and the following paragraphs highlight points of interest and areas for future comparative

analysis rather than providing a comprehensive commentary on the data.

The students on the course were older than I had expected when one considers the fact that the course is primarily aimed at the 16 - 18 year group. The average age of 19.7 demonstrates the high percentage of mature students taken onto the course and the large number of school-leavers who had taken a year out before returning to study. The gender balance of the student groups is weighted marginally in favour of male students (53.4%) despite the emphasis on dance and drama at Monkwearmouth College and drama at Newcastle College, fields where one might traditionally expect to find a higher percentage of female students.

Students exceeded the guideline entry requirements laid down by BTEC of four G.C.S.E. passes, averaging 4.6 G.C.S.E. passes (at grade C or above) but interestingly falling short of the accepted norm of the 5 G.C.S.E. passes required for A'level studies. Female students were generally better qualified than male students (average of 4.9 passes to 4.2 passes) and there were a large number of well qualified students at each of the Colleges who could clearly have taken A'level courses but who had chosen the BTEC course in preference. All of the Colleges have high percentages of mature students (on average between 20% and 40%) and at Monkwearmouth College this access policy was exemplified by one student on the music course who was in her late forties and another who was taking the course even though she already had a degree in another subject.

Student Access

Students chose the course because of its emphasis on the development of performance skills and the practical nature of the training. The concentration on these areas (71.2%) contrasts markedly with the low percentage (16.1%) who chose the course for more analytical or theoretical reasons. Female students were far more likely to consider the "understanding and creation" of performing arts work important and male students were more interested in skills development.

Although just over thirty percent of students had learnt about the course from a careers advisor or a teacher the vast majority said they had found out about the course themselves. Again the percentage of female students taking the initiative with respect to finding out about the course was higher than for male students (54.5% to 39.7%).

The analysis of statistics by year group shows no major differences between the colleges, demonstrating that the reasons which influenced students to join the course and the sources through which they sought advice had not significantly changed year by year.

Quality

Student satisfaction with the course was generally high. More than two thirds of students agreed that the course had fulfilled their expectation "completely" or "most of the time" (66.9%). The level of satisfaction was consistent between year groups and gender. Similar views were held with respect to the technical resources available to students with 86.4% stating equipment levels were satisfactory, good or excellent and 77.1% agreeing the teaching accommodation was at least satisfactory for the course. The analysis by gender did not indicate any major differences, but it should be noted that the levels of satisfaction with regards to resource levels were generally higher in second year students than in the first year groups. This is to be expected given the priority that all of the Colleges give to second year work and the importance placed upon the culminating practical assessments.

Although it is always easy to complain about lack of resources the responses were very supportive. Given my knowledge of the institutions I do not find this at all surprising as each College has invested heavily in establishing and maintaining their course provision. Each of the Colleges have resources that are the envy of many of their competitors, with recording studios, computer lighting in the theatres, properly equipped dance studios and a range of other specialist resources. This reflects the necessity to keep pace with technological developments within vocationally-based courses and the high degree of competition that has entered the sector since open competition for students became the norm in the post-incorporation further education sector.

Students were also asked their opinions on the popularity of the course content. I was interested to see whether the inevitable differences in response would reveal clear distinctions between the colleges. If they did one could assume that an important factor was the quality of the teaching. However, if there were few differences between the Colleges one might assume that the course syllabus was the primary factor that shaped the students' response. In fact the results from all three Colleges were remarkably similar. In all cases the most popular course units with students were the

Performance Workshops, the least popular was Arts in Society. The practical emphasis on the former contrasts markedly with the theoretical and analytical requirements of the latter, and further reinforces the rationale outlined above by the access data (i.e. students do this course because they want to perform). There were no significant variances when analysed by year group or gender.

Realisation of Course Aims

The responses on course realisation were less convincing in terms of their support for the course. Opinion was divided as to how well the course performed in relation to the important aim of "preparing people for employment". Approximately one third (35.5%) considered it did fulfil this aim but conversely one third (32.2%) said it either partially delivered or completely failed in this respect. Female students were more critical than male students of the ability of the course to achieve this aim. As expected, the criticism was heightened in second year students who, in most cases, were already facing the challenge of needing to find employment or further study.

Given the vocational focus of the course it was surprising to find so little emphasis being placed upon the importance of developing interpersonal skills. All students considered the practical and technical skills to be of primary importance. Academic and interpersonal skills (stated as major aims of the course) were not considered to be important at all by the students. These responses were confirmed by the view that students consider the performance units best prepare them for future employment whereas the more academic units in Arts in Society were not considered to be at all helpful in this respect.

Thus, in combination the answers give an interesting perspective into the views of students in relation to performance - and one that I know is not uniformly shared by the profession. All would acknowledge the importance of mastery of basic skills, indeed the majority of performing arts employers take this for granted. What enables an individual to rise above the crowd in the majority of cases is their ability to analyse, create and interpret. These qualities are dependent upon the integration of theory and practice and yet the persistent theme throughout the student questionnaires is the importance of skills acquisition alone. Despite this students remained buoyant concerning their futures with 75.4% wanting to go onto further study and a further 16.9% anticipating immediate employment in their chosen field. Some second year students already had jobs waiting for them and one group of students at Islington Sixth

Form Centre had already been signed to a major record label.

Progression

On the whole students were very positive concerning their chances of going on to further study. Both first and second-year students were actively engaged in consideration of opportunities for further study. First-year students were fully aware that current entry procedures require them to make decisions at the start of their second year of the course. The majority of second year students were about to enter into the round of auditions and interviews required by most colleges and universities within the UCAS system (2). Practically all of the students considered they would have few problems with gaining acceptance onto a Higher National Diploma course (95.8% rating their chances between fair and excellent). Students were fully aware that the National Diploma course was designed to lead on to Higher National Diploma courses and felt they had appropriate skills and expertise for study of this nature. The figure is all the more remarkable when one considers that neither Monkwearmouth or Islington actually run higher programmes. One might have expected such optimism in institutions where students could see direct progression by their peers, but this figure has been derived largely from students who know they are going to have to submit themselves to an external audition and interview process.

Student expectation in relation to degree course access showed a reduction in relation to Higher National Diplomas, but was still very high. 87.2% thought their chances were between fair and excellent, although the majority of responses were now in the "fair" category, whereas with the Higher National Diploma response the majority fell into the "good" category. The question concerning access to specialist schools/academies showed a further erosion of student confidence but nevertheless more than half the cohort (53.4%) still considered they had a fair chance of gaining entry.

Whilst the statistics show the expected decline in student expectation as one moves from BTEC courses through degree programmes to specialist schools, it is interesting to reflect on the obvious differences between reality and student expectation. The following chapter will provide evidence of actual acceptance rates which indicate that the gap between expectation and reality is huge. In part this can be accounted for by 'the optimism of youth' but it certainly poses questions about student expectation - and where this high level of student optimism is generated.

The responses to the questions concerning the chances of A'level students were largely as expected. Access to Higher National Diploma programmes was almost considered a formality (96.6% rating their chances between fair and excellent, with the majority bracketed in the category "good".) They considered A'level qualified students had an even better chance of gaining acceptance onto degree courses (98.3% between fair and excellent with the majority in the category "good") and this result was almost exactly mirrored when posed in relation to entry to specialist colleges. Thus, from the student perspective the divergence of expectation is exponential with A'level and National Diploma students having an equal chance of Higher National Diploma acceptance, A'level students being twice as likely (46.6% good as opposed to 22.0% "good") of gaining entrance to a degree course, and A'level students being four times more likely (46.6% "good" as opposed to 10.2% "good") to gain access to a specialist school or academy.

Student expectation of progression does not vary between the sexes but a significant difference can be identified between year groups brought about by the direct engagement in the process of applying to higher education of most second year students. Their responses to all of the areas outlined above are generally more cautious and their expectations are lower.

One final interesting point to consider is that BTEC's stated aim of "preparing people for employment" does not seem to be shared by the majority of students on their course. When asked which type of higher level course best equips students for a profession in the performing arts only 28.0% supported Higher National Diplomas as opposed to 44.1% in favour of degree programmes.

Comparative Analysis of Student Questionnaires

In general terms the questionnaire results from the three different institutions were remarkably similar in the understandings and expectations of students. The statistics are largely self explanatory (see Appendix 5C, 5D and 5E) and the following paragraphs highlight points of consonance and dissonance between the institutions.

The main findings in terms of access, student satisfaction, realisation of course aims were that there was a distinct priority order which emerged time and again throughout all of the questionnaires placing the Colleges in a priority order of

Monkwearmouth, Newcastle and Islington. This is not meant to imply any criticisms of the staff teams, but simply to state that student perception of the course was noticeably more positive in Monkwearmouth College than Newcastle College or Islington Sixth Form Centre. This can be accounted for by numerous factors (some of which have already been discussed in Chapter Five) in terms of size, facilities, competition from other courses in the same field within the same institution, single-site versus multi-site working, staff/student ratios and so on, but without undertaking extensive further analysis one cannot draw any definitive conclusions from this fact.

Monkwearmouth College does have a distinctive entry profile in that it has a higher percentage of mature students. Its location and its high profile within the local community encourages this, and yet its level of entry qualification was still maintained. The additional commitment to the course manifest in the majority of mature students is likely to account in part for the high degree of student satisfaction evident (79.5% stating the course had fulfilled their expectations "completely" or "most of the time" in contrast with 68.4% at Newcastle College and 50.0% at Islington Sixth Form Centre). Other factors contribute to the perceived high quality of course provision and students' support for the realisation of course aims. Monkwearmouth may be part of a large institution but in ethos and size it is a relatively small course, with a great deal of personal contact and close co-operative working between staff and students. Furthermore, the facilities are of a good standard, the staff are dedicated to the course and student/staff ratios are low. The College does not run higher programmes in this area and one might assume that the National Diploma students feel supported and confident in their abilities as they are not challenged by other students. They also have a good profile within the College and local community. Thus, it is not surprising to find that a high percentage consider the teaching accommodation to be good or excellent (60.2% as opposed to 42.1% at Newcastle College and 5.6% at Islington College) or that they consider the course to be well equipped (65.9% as compared with 52.6% at Newcastle College and 50.1% at Islington Sixth Form Centre).

Similar distinctions were made in relation to the ability of the course to "prepare people for employment" with students at Monkwearmouth College being highly satisfied in this respect and students at the other institutions far more sceptical (63.6% at Monkwearmouth considering the course achieved this aim "fully" or "well" in comparison with 21% at Newcastle College and 16.6% at Islington Sixth Form Centre.)

Students in all of the institutions considered the acquisition of technical skills as being the most important area of skill development on the course. They also all identified academic skills as being the least important. This was mirrored in all cases by the responses to which units they had enjoyed most. The performance workshops were the clear favourite and the Arts and Society units were disliked by the majority of students.

Students' views on progression revealed some interesting similarities and some major differences between the institutions. These can be explained by the context in which the courses operate. For example, in each of the colleges the majority of students wanted to go on to further study (between 68.4% and 79.5%) and similar percentages of students anticipated they would be employed within the performing arts immediately on leaving the course (15.8% to 18.2%). Yet the percentage of students who wanted to go onto Higher National Diploma courses as opposed to degree courses was markedly different. In Islington two thirds of the students opted for degree courses whilst in Newcastle it was the opposite with two thirds preferring Higher National Diploma courses. This is almost certainly due to local factors, with Islington Sixth Form Centre having a close working relationship with the University of North London which runs degree programmes in the performing arts and is situated right on its doorstep. At Newcastle however, the College has a very high profile of specialist Higher National Diploma courses which somewhat overshadow the provision in the two local universities (certainly in variety and size if not necessarily in quality).

Levels of student expectation were high and remarkably consistent across the institutions. The vast majority of students considered themselves to have at least a "fair" chance of gaining access to a degree course (83.3% to 89.6%). Their opinions were similarly consistent with regards to A'level students' chances of gaining acceptance into the various forms of higher study being consistently rated between 15% and 20% higher than students with National Diploma qualifications. One interesting local difference emerged in relation to the students' perception of entry into specialist colleges. Whilst students at the two north eastern colleges remained optimistic the students at Islington Sixth Form Centre were far more realistic in this respect. It should be noted that the majority of these specialist institutions are based in London, and therefore the local knowledge of Islington students was bound to inform this response(3). There are no such institutions in Newcastle and it was clear from informal comment that many students did not have a realistic view on what these Colleges and Schools did, let alone the challenges they may have to confront when seeking entry. It

should also be noted that the staff who were actively engaged in helping students seek places in higher education informed me that no students had applied for specialist courses that year. This may reflect a number of other issues, such as funding difficulties, but still contrasts significantly with the high opinion students had of their abilities in relation to this form of further study.

Conclusion

Students within all three Colleges were generally well motivated and satisfied with the course. Students were appropriately qualified and considered the resource levels and the realisation of course aims to be at least satisfactory. The use of Islington Sixth Form Centre was designed to contextualise the results from the two colleges in the North East and, with one or two notable exceptions that have been explained above, the results were consonant between the institutions showing that there were no maverick factors at large which had distorted the results.

Three points of particular interest arise from the data: firstly, the very high level of student expectation in terms of gaining a place of further study - in my view an expectation that cannot be met by the higher education sector nor is it based in reality if students were to consider the success rates of previous cohorts from the same institution; secondly, there appears to be a conflict between student's lack of interest in developing the academic side of the course and their desire for degree level further study; thirdly, the overtly vocational focus of the BTEC course is recognised by students but not necessarily endorsed in the fact that they consider degree courses far better at preparing students for employment than those offered by BTEC.

Staff Questionnaire Results

The survey of further education colleges was undertaken towards the end of 1994. The thirty seven colleges who responded provided a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data and revealed a high level of agreement on key issues. The following paragraphs outline some the major points of interest in relation to the key issues of access, quality, realisation of course aims and progression. (The comprehensive data is contained in Appendix 5G)

Statistically the responses from the colleges showed them to be responsible for

almost 1600 students on the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts. From this one might deduce that between four and five thousand students would be taking this course nationally. The student statistics revealed 61.5% of students were female and 38.5% were male. Of these students 14.2% were mature, a significant percentage when one considers that these courses are largely aimed at the 16 to 18 age-group. On average the colleges had 4 full-time staff and contracted 5.1 additional part-time staff. The average student/ staff ratio was commendably low at 13.7 to 1.

Student Access

Student access was focused primarily on the 16-plus age group. Only one college mentioned that it ran the lower level BTEC First course as a means of access, and only one made reference to the arrangements for mature student entry. All of the colleges, with one exception (4), adhered to the BTEC guidelines of the minimum entry requirements of 4 G.C.S.E. passes at Grade C or above. All of the colleges required students to attend for audition, interview or workshop before being accepted onto the course.

The majority (59.5%) of colleges ran the BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts course as part of a broader portfolio of BTEC courses. One third of these ran a variety of specialist HND courses in areas such as Community Theatre, Theatre in Education, Theatre, Dance, Music, Popular Music and Dance. Four colleges also ran the more generalist BTEC HND Performing Arts course. Some of the larger colleges have clearly adopted the BTEC philosophy of developing additional courses from the general guidelines, and have introduced specialist and complementary National Diploma courses. These included Design (Theatre Studies) and even Performing Arts (Circus). It should be noted that one of the difficulties raised by staff with the structure of the course related directly to this type of development. Three colleges complained that it was difficult to get musicians on the BTEC Performing Arts National Diploma course as they were increasingly being attracted to the more specialist courses in Popular Music that have recently been introduced by BTEC. This was having the effect of unbalancing the course and skewing the emphasis within the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts towards drama.

Staff considered students gained information on the course from three main areas: careers advisors (24.3%); teachers (27.0%); students on the course (27.0%). In addition, the importance of local public performances and targeted college publicity was

evident. The staff considered students undertook the course for three primary reasons: its vocational focus (32.4%); the emphasis on practical training (24.3%); to develop their performance skills (29.8%). Only 5.4% thought students undertook courses for analytical or academic reasons and one college stated that students took the course because there was nothing else available to them in the region. One respondent was particularly blunt in stating that students took the course because they were not good enough to take A'levels.

Quality

Staff generally had a lot of good things to say regarding the strengths of the course. The primary strength was seen as being the breadth of the programme offered (35%) - an interesting debate in the light of proposals to broaden the scope of A'levels which is currently being considered. Many (54%) highlighted strengths which reinforced the course's principal objectives : the focus on performance opportunities; the practical approach to learning; the ability to develop technical skills; the vocational focus.

A number of responses praised the quality assurance and assessment methodologies (10.8%) as bringing out the best in the student body. It is interesting to note that four times as many colleges (40.5%) indicated that this same aspect of the quality debate was a major area of weakness in the course. One college even pursued this argument vociferously in claiming that a major concern was that the national grading levels were not equitable. BTEC place great store on the strength of their examining and moderation processes and therefore it was interesting to note that such a high percentage of colleges identified weaknesses in this area.

Colleges were critical of the course when asked to name the main area of weakness. The majority provided three or four responses (one even supplied answers on a separate sheet). A persistent area of complaint was the lack of definition in the course guidelines and content. This manifests itself in numerous ways: inappropriate objectives; haphazard indicative content; inappropriate music units; a lack of integration concerning the Arts and Society units. Furthermore, a number of colleges (10.8%) extended this argument to the fact the course was now out of date. One college complained the course was too prescriptive for mature students and one that the course was too bureaucratic. However, these complaints regarding the course need to be seen in the light of the staff's views that the vast majority (94.6%) of students found the course fulfilled their expectation "most of the time" and that more than 60% of colleges

considered their teaching accommodation and technical equipment to be good, or even excellent.

Realisation of Course Aims

The course was generally supported by staff, achieving the majority of its aims in relation to the documentation, whilst still leaving some considerable scope for improvement. It was thought to deliver its vocational concerns well with only 27% of staff considering that it failed to meet this aim at a reasonable level.

The course puts great store on the development of skills and their realisation through various forms of performance. References were made in many responses to the good standards of performance, the good reputation of the college in the area and the ability to attract students to the course through the public performance profile. On average nearly 80% of performance work was open to the public and a surprisingly high percentage, 42.6%, took place outside of the institution. Given this emphasis the answers to questions concerning the various course components naturally reflected the practical nature of the training. The staff considered the most important area of the course was its practical skills work and the development of students' interpersonal skills. The development of academic skills had a very low priority and the Arts in Society units were considered to have little relevance in the preparation of students for employment. It also emerged that the majority of colleges had now fully integrated the Core Skills work into the practical project work. Core Skills remained separate in terms of assessment but were totally integrated in the delivery of the course.

In response to the specific question on the appropriateness of the moderation and examination procedures there was widespread support, with 73% of colleges considering the procedures to be largely good. This would appear to be in conflict with the 40.5% who indicated assessment and quality assurance procedures to be a major area of weakness. The difference lies in the phraseology of the question. Whilst the majority of staff were happy that continuous assessment had been adopted, the concerns expressed were not with the methodology but with the criteria for assessment.

Progression

It was acknowledged that the majority of students (61%) would undertake further

study in the performing arts. Of these students nearly 60% would prefer to go on to a degree course and only 35% would chose to undertake an Higher National Diploma course. Staff expectations of students' ability to go onto further study was surprisingly high with 94.6% considered to have good or excellent chance of acceptance onto an Higher National Diploma course and 64.9% having a good chance of acceptance onto a degree course. Despite the major emphasis placed on skills development only 21.6% considered their students had a good chance of acceptance into a specialist school or academy. This contrasted with their view of A'level students having "good" or "excellent" progression chances onto Higher National Diploma courses at 45.9%, degree courses at 81% and specialist school or academy at 24.3%. It is interesting to note that staff believed A'level students had a lower chance of acceptance onto Higher National Diploma courses, a significantly higher chance of acceptance onto a degree course and that both had a similar chance, albeit not particularly high, of acceptance into a specialist school or academy.

Staff also had a high opinion of the course in relation to its preparation for degree level education. The majority (78.4%) considered the course did adequately prepare students for degree courses, although some specified that it was only good in relation to degree courses with a high degree of practical and performance activity. Many of the colleges indicated that the preparation of students was very much dependent on the National Diploma course being delivered in an appropriate manner and at an appropriate level. It was suggested that it was possible for a college to sublimate the importance of the academic content and if this happened then students' chances of accessing a degree course would be diminished. It should also be noted that one college was so supportive of the course that it had abandoned its A'level courses in favour of the National Diploma course. This is in contrast with much of the rest of the sector where students often take A'level courses in parallel with the BTEC National Diploma to give them a greater chance of access to further study at degree level.

Given the emphasis on further study it is not surprising that practically all (97.2%) of the colleges said they prepared students for the interview and audition process, and this was informed by the fact that the majority (78.4%) were fully aware of the requirements stipulated for degree course entry. Nevertheless, the possible answers demonstrated a wide range of understandings from "all units at distinction" to "three units at distinction, the rest merits". This variety of response was to be expected given the different expectations which arise from the various degree courses across the sector. Clearly standards, reputations, course profiles and popularity vary

considerably, and many of the FE staff were clearly aware of these variances and were advising students accordingly. Of the 21.6% who said they were not aware of degree level entry requirements their anticipated responses were remarkably consonant with the above.

Conclusion

It should be noted that the timing of the distribution of the survey coincided with a period of great uncertainty for all staff teaching on the range of BTEC courses in the performing arts. Circulars on the development of GNVQs had clearly unsettled staff who felt that they had invested heavily, both academically and in terms of resources, in making these courses a success. Many had established significant roles within the community and saw the potential implementation of an inflexible GNVQ system as destroying much of what they had achieved. Whilst it is outside the scope of this dissertation to comment on the future impact of GNVQs, it is clear that they remain at the forefront of staff's concerns even though many assurances have been given concerning the continuation of BTEC programmes.

Certain anomalies emerged, such as the large number of colleges who identified assessment as being a major weakness of the scheme due to inappropriate descriptors and guidelines, whilst at the same time being prepared to respond that the methods employed were largely good, and appropriate for the course.

The staff questionnaires also provide an interesting insight into the interface between the National Diploma course and staff and student expectations for progression. It was acknowledged that the majority of students would wish to progress on to a degree course. It was stated that practically all colleges prepared students for this process. Staff recognised the importance of a balanced portfolio of practical and academic skills if students were to be successful, and yet the majority of staff considered the academic units had little status and were disliked by the students.

Finally, it is interesting to note that staff believe in the vocational focus of the National Diploma Performing Arts course, they acknowledge that more than double the number of students who want to go on to further study would prefer a degree course, and yet only 13.5% consider degree courses best equip students for a profession in the performing arts.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews were held with five staff in the three named institutions (Monkwearmouth College, Newcastle College and Islington Sixth Form Centre). The responses were largely consistent with the data received from other colleges through the staff questionnaire. Naturally there were local differences and elaboration on some themes based on institutional policy development, plans for growth, the problems of independence and the problems of status. Where relevant to the overall discussion these points will be exemplified below. (For reasons of confidentiality staff have not been identified).

All of the staff held degrees and two held masters degrees. They all had personal and recent knowledge of parts of the higher education system and felt well qualified to give their views on the further education/higher education interface from their personal involvement with both sides of the debate.

In Newcastle College the interpretation of answers was influenced by the broader picture of performing arts education in the College. The National Diploma was only one of a large suite of courses seen as developing students seamlessly through from further into higher education. In this field the percentage of higher education courses was extremely high and there was considerable frustration evident that their many attempts at developing degree level programmes had failed to materialise. Numerous approaches had been made to the University of Northumbria but from their perception these had not been reciprocated (5). Newcastle College has developed the portfolio of National Diploma and Higher National Diploma courses to a very high degree of specialism. The survey only included students studying dance and drama as all music students had now moved to other programmes. The dance and drama disciplines were largely independent of one another and this had enabled high standards of performance to be achieved and for quality specialisations to be realised within the course framework (e.g. its Theatre Design work is nationally recognised).

Concern was expressed over resourcing, the familiar problem of ever increasing student numbers and static levels of resource, and it was acknowledged that despite the major investment that had been made in developing the Tyneside Theatre site things were now reaching a critical stage and quality would inevitably start to be affected.

At Monkwearmouth there was uncertainty within the College due to the difficulty in filling a vacant full-time staff position. It was also clear that the discussions surrounding the proposed merger of colleges in the Sunderland was causing concern. The course philosophy emphasised the various specialisms within a more unified approach. This was aided by the physical accommodation that placed theatre spaces, music studios and dance studios all within a wing of the College.

It was clear that staff in all of the institutions worked closely, and had a good rapport, with students. My instinctive view was that this was most evident at Monkwearmouth College which may account for the higher levels of satisfaction and support indicated through the student questionnaires.

Islington Sixth Form Centre was somewhat constrained through split-site working which tended to separate the cohorts in Drama from those in Music. The level of interaction and support appeared to be quite low but this may have been distorted by the fact that staffing responsibilities had been disrupted at the time of the interviews by the long term absence of the Head of Department, and that other agenda were operating to alleviate the problems of her absence.

Despite all of these factors the staff views were remarkably consistent. All firmly believed in the course's ability to generate high quality students capable of undertaking further study at degree level. Many gave examples of the way in which they felt their students had been treated inappropriately or unfairly by individual universities. There was considerable frustration with the university sector whom they felt did not yet understand what the BTEC National Diploma course was trying to achieve, its content, its aims or the standards that they required of students. There was a major complaint about the lack of consistency between the responses given by various higher education institutions, and even concerning responses from different parts of the same institution. Two staff gave examples of good students who had been rejected through the UCAS system, and of poor students who had been accepted. All staff said they helped to prepare students for audition/interview and advised them strongly as to which institutions they should apply. This advice was based upon their individual knowledge of the student (i.e. taking account of personality, family and even financial concerns) and their knowledge of the higher education sector. Many had direct involvement with higher education institutions and it was understood that a certain degree of influence could be brought to bear on the system through use of the personal contacts.

It was acknowledged that student expectations of progression into higher education were not always fulfilled. It was interesting to note that a number of staff gave examples of good students who entered the National Diploma course with a clearly identified aim of university entrance. In these cases they had advised the students to undertake A'levels at the same time as completing the National Course due to the uncertainty of response on behalf of the university sector.

The staff interviewed through the structured interviews were far more realistic concerning students' expectations of entry to higher education. In this respect they differed considerably from the results obtained through the staff questionnaires. All acknowledged that many of their students who applied were not really of an appropriate standard for further study, whether at Higher National Diploma or degree level. Equally, all showed an immense frustration with the apparent inconsistency of the higher education sector that was turning away students who, in their opinion, should be at universities and would deliver well. They considered student expectation high because of peer group pressure, the nature of the subject (which requires a high degree of confidence and self esteem) and the possible desire of students to respond favourably to an external known to have come from the higher education sector.

Comparative Analysis of Questionnaires and Structured Interviews

The comparison between student and staff questionnaires reveal a number of interesting anomalies in relation to the interface between further and higher education courses. It also provides interesting perspectives on the issues to do with access, quality and the realisation of course aims. Statistically the three colleges surveyed are fairly typical of courses in the sector in size, numbers of staff, the student/staff ratio and the percentage of mature students taken onto the course. They only differed in respect to gender balance, having a far higher percentage of male students (53.4%) than the norm represented through the staff questionnaires (38.5%). (This may be explained by the emphasis on popular music in both Monkwearmouth College and Islington Sixth Form Centre where the music groups were almost exclusively male.)

Access

It also appears that views on why students undertook the course and who advised them to take the course differed considerably. Staff felt that the vocational focus was



the main attraction for students (32.4%) whereas students considered this to be the least important reason (6.8%). Similarly, staff considered the role of careers advisors (24.3%) and teachers (27.0%) as being the main sources by which students gained information on the course, whereas the students clearly agreed that the advice of teachers was important (21.1%) but far outweighed by the number of students who had taken the initiative (47.5%) and accessed the course themselves.

Quality

Students were generally more critical of the course than staff. The vast majority of staff considered the course fulfilled student expectations most of the time (94.6%) the student view was somewhat lower (66.9%). Nevertheless, this still represents a high degree of satisfaction with the course on behalf of students. Resourcing was not really an issue. In the majority of colleges both staff and students considered the courses well equipped, although some concern was expressed on the stress being placed upon finite (and good quality) resources by increasing student numbers.

There was agreement as to the differing degree of importance of the various course units, with the practical skills as realised through the Performance Workshops the most popular and important skills area, and the academic skills which predominate in the Arts and Society units the least popular and least important.

Realisation of Course Aims

Students were less convinced of the ability of the course to prepare them for employment than were staff (36.1% of students considered the course achieved this "well" or "fully" as compared with 51.4% of staff). Staff recognised the importance of developing interpersonal skills (rating it the second most important skills area) and yet students ranked it alongside the development of academic skills as being of only marginal importance. Both staff and students agreed that academic skills were relatively unimportant in relation to future employment prospects which provides an interesting and uniform opinion in relation to the needs of students if they are to be successful in gaining access to degree level courses.

Progression

In the area of student progression there were marked differences between the

responses given by staff and students. Students were extremely optimistic about their future prospects, staff tended to be more realistic. Only 1.7% of students thought they would be employed outside of the performing arts compared with 21.3% of staff. Very few students thought they would be unemployed (0.8%) whereas staff considered a more realistic percentage to be appropriate (8.5%). There was also an interesting difference in the perception of which type of higher education courses student would choose. Whilst acknowledging the strength of Higher National Diploma courses in the North East could be a distorting factor, it is significant that students marginally preferred these courses to degree courses (45.7% to 44.9%) whereas staff clearly thought their aspirations would be biased towards degree courses (56.5% to 30.5%). This could be explained by the fact that the vast majority of staff on these courses are degree trained. It will be interesting to see whether the next decade actually sees any change in this profile - will colleges really start to take on board staff qualified solely through BTEC and GNVQs?

It is also significant to note that staff had a far higher opinion of students' chances of gaining access to both Higher National Diploma and degree courses. In this instance the student views were far more realistic than staff, and in my opinion both were still seriously inflated. For example, 64.9% of staff considered students had a good chance of being accepted onto a degree course but only 26.2% of students thought this to be the case. This level of optimism was further reflected in the responses concerning A'level student chances of acceptance to higher education courses, with a similar inflation of the results evident in the staff questionnaires.

Finally, although less marked, this difference of opinion continues in respect to views on which type of course best prepares students for employment in the performing arts. Staff were very supportive of Higher National Diploma programmes (40.6%) whereas students favoured degree courses (44.1%)

Conclusion

It would be unwise to reach definitive conclusions from the various forms of data collected due to the qualitative nature of much of the material, the inability to provide a direct comparison between student and staff survey results and the relatively small size of the sample involved. Nevertheless, some key points of interest emerge which are critical to the debate on the further education/higher education interface.

Firstly, students are not convinced that HND courses are better than degree courses in providing vocational education. Further Education staff are generally more supportive of the capability of Higher National Diplomas to deliver in vocational terms but prospective higher education students prefer degree courses. Secondly, there would appear to be a major contradiction between the importance placed upon academic skills in terms of gaining access to degree courses (as will be demonstrated in the following chapter) and the fact that both staff and students in the further education sector see the academic parts of the BTEC ND course as relatively unimportant and low profile. Thirdly, students are very optimistic about their futures in the performing arts. Very few consider they will end up working outside of the sector and yet one must ask questions concerning the capability of our cultural industries to absorb the vast numbers of students that have been attracted into this area during this recent period of rapid growth and expansion. Fourthly, students' expectations of their ability to gain access to higher education courses is extremely high. Staff could be seen to be over-inflating student expectations which must surely lead to disappointment in many cases. Furthermore, it fuels the argument concerning universities' poor records of acceptance with regards to BTEC National Diploma students whereas, in reality, there could be quite logical explanations centred on the lack of relevant skills (interpersonal and academic credibility) and the raising of student expectation far beyond what can be delivered by the sector. Nevertheless, the university sector has to take acknowledge the confusion it is creating within further education colleges through a lack of consistency, conflicting standards and inappropriate entry procedures as viewed from the further education perspective. (These will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven).

Chapter Six: Notes

1. The primary cause of spoilt answers involved students failing to prioritise their answers when requested. Instead of using the 1 - 5 scale they simply ticked their favourite or preferred answer. As no priority order had been given to the other components of the question these answers were excluded from the data analysis.
2. In each college I found student interest in HE to be extremely high. However, their knowledge of the level of competition was woefully inadequate. In each case I was asked to deliver seminars to students on the HE sector and was careful to ensure that no dialogue was entered into prior to completion of the survey. Once

the questionnaires had been returned considerable time was spent briefing students on the criteria by which they would be assessed, the conduct of the interview, etc. Informal evidence indicates that student acceptance rates have improved slightly as a result of this advice - some students have even come to Bretton Hall!

3. I was also surprised at the parochial views expressed by many students at Islington Sixth Form Centre. Whereas students in the North East were very happy to travel to take up an HE place the majority of students in Islington (regardless of age and commitments) said they would not be prepared to take a course outside of Greater London.
4. One of the colleges had deliberately lowered its entry requirements to 3 G.C.S.E. passes.
5. From personal knowledge of one of these attempts when employed by the University of Northumbria I know that the primary concern was the Newcastle College's desire for complete autonomy and the then Polytechnic's insistence on maintaining control over degree level courses.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The BTEC Interface: The Higher Education Perspective

Introduction

The data presented in the following chapter have been collated from a variety of sources: documentary evidence, publicity materials, prospectuses and through a series of structured interviews (1). It is clear that the collapse of the binary line, allied to the rapid and often uncontrolled expansion of student numbers at the start of the nineties, has led to a marked change in attitude by the higher education sector towards non-standard undergraduate student entry. Although the issues surrounding the rapid growth in student numbers are highly complex, the reality is that any higher education institution wishing to avail itself of the opportunity for funded growth at the start of the decade (and that included literally every participant in the sector) had to make rapid decisions as to where growth could be best sustained without adversely affecting quality.

" The ending of the binary line has been welcomed by trade unions for eliminating an element of class distinction within education. It will only be meaningful if it improves access and the quality of education for students themselves. " (2)

The arts were one of the prime areas for targeted growth given a history of continuous over-subscription for courses. At that time the performing arts were particularly successful given common application rates within the sector ranging between five and twenty applications for each available place.

Government policy made it almost inevitable that initial rapid expansion would have to be followed by a period in which growth would be restricted or stopped, as the ability to fund growth could not possibly match increased student demand. In 1994 the introduction of formal Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers(MASN) allocations to all higher education institutions, allied to the development of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) with executive powers over funding and recruitment in education, has effectively contained the 35% growth that had manifest itself in the previous three years. However, contrary to common belief, MASN allocations have not stopped the growth of places in the arts. For example, Bretton Hall can be seen to be representative of a number of institutions which operated very successfully within the initial 1994 MASN allocation and was consequently rewarded with an additional 5% of funded growth for the 1995 - 96 academic year.

Thus, the number of available places in the performing arts grew rapidly at the start of the nineteen nineties and is now being partially contained by Government policy. Nevertheless, if the experience of Bretton Hall is representative, the expansion in student numbers allied to the unification of the UCCA and PCAS admissions systems in 1993, led to a commensurate expansion in the number of applications received. Demand seems to have risen at the same rate as the growth allowed in the sector, and the percentage of unsuccessful students therefore remains as high as ever, even though entry targets may have doubled. For example, the three distinct drama courses at Bretton Hall had a combined intake in 1991 of just over fifty students. For these places it received approximately four hundred applications. In 1994 the student intake rose to one hundred and twenty students and yet the number of applications was well in excess of two and a half thousand.

The growth in the total number of applications can be partially explained by changes in the admissions systems (See Chapter Eight). UCCA and PCAS have merged to create the still evolving UCAS system, but nevertheless the fact remains that the growth of students seeking university places means that courses such as those in the performing arts at Bretton could continue to expand at a rapid rate without any marked dropping of the entry requirements in terms of examination results. Thus, in common with many other providers in the sector, Bretton Hall is consistently faced with having to give students almost punitive entry requirements to ensure entry targets are met, and is invariably faced with highly qualified students trying to gain access through

the clearing system or through private application, without having any places to offer.

This pattern is common across the established providers of performing arts degree courses, and it is only in those institutions which have recently ventured into the performing arts where different patterns of student acceptance need be considered. Therefore, the issue of BTEC access remains a policy matter rather than a requirement forced by the need to fill empty student places. It is my belief that this accounts for the variable attitudes towards the qualification with respect to matriculation across the sector.

University Policies

All of the universities examined have well defined access policies. The majority speak in very positive terms regarding their commitment to non-standard student entry and their willingness to accept a wide range of qualifications for the purposes of matriculation. Statements such as the following are common,

" The College welcomes applications and enquiries from people regardless of ethnic origin, colour, gender, disability, marital status or sexual orientation."
(3)

Some universities are even trying to address their traditional and exclusive image through overt statements such as the following equal opportunities policy published within the prospectus for Oxford University,

" The University of Oxford and its colleges seeks to admit students of high academic ability and potential. Except in respect of the colleges admitting women only, all selection for admission takes place irrespective of sex. All colleges select students for admission without regard to marital status, race, ethnic origins, colour, religion or social background. Decisions on admissions are based solely on the individual merits of each candidate and the application of selection criteria appropriate to the course of study. Admissions procedures will be kept under review to ensure compliance with this policy." (4)

Guidance is normally provided in university prospectuses and publicity materials designed to attract students into applying, but also raising expectations in some areas that may not be able to be fulfilled. Thus, a general statement on entry requirements may be extremely broad in one institution and quite specific in another. The University of Derby provides the following generic definition of the minimum entry requirements,

" Entry requirements for admission to a first degree are one of the following:

- i. Passes in five different and acceptable G.C.E./G.C.S.E. subjects, one of which must be English Language. Two of the five passes must be at A level.
- ii. A BTEC ND at a good standard together with English Language G.C.S.E. at Grade C or above."

and the following example from the University of Luton follows the same model (6).

" Normal minimum entry requirements are:

- i. GCE/GCSE passes in 5 subjects, including 2 appropriate A levels.
- ii. An appropriate BTEC National Certificate or Diploma."

Neither of these examples imply that actual entry requirements are likely to be far higher than the stated minimum, especially in the performing arts. Some prospectuses do state expected grades as guidance for applicants but paper qualifications, whilst important for matriculation purposes, are notoriously poor indicators of a student's actual ability in the practical arts. It is for this reason that the majority of higher education performing arts places continue to insist on student interview/audition, as their entry criteria invariably cover a far wider spectrum than can be readily accessed through paper qualifications and academic references.

Whilst it is simple to publish projected A'level grades there are very few institutions which attempt to do the same for BTEC students.

" As a guide we normally require a minimum A'level profile of B,C or a BTEC National Diploma profile of merits and distinctions in all units." (7)

As prospectuses have become increasingly student friendly, and offer advice on everything from target entry grades, the number of places available, and the type of entry procedures that are required it is interesting to cross reference the general statements on access with the detail that is often supplied elsewhere for students. For example, although the Oxford University Equal Opportunities Policy is clear the actual entry requirements for Music students are so traditionally based as to exclude practically all applicants who may be attempting to gain entry with alternative qualifications. To gain access students have to pass the following selection process (8):

- i. Supply two substantial essays.
- ii. Supply harmony and counterpoint exercises in a variety of styles.
- iii. Demonstrate practical keyboard skills including sight reading, score reading and harmonisation.
- iv. Undertake a written test of harmony and counterpoint.
- v. Aural skills.
- vi. Performance of a prepared piece.

If successful they would also have to undergo a college interview.

It would be easy to argue that there is apparently no correlation between the stated aim to widen access and the precise requirements of the course, but does the one necessarily invalidate the other? Oxford proclaim under the banner headline "Widening Access",

" In recognition of the need to widen access to Oxford for students from non-traditional backgrounds, the University and colleges support two schemes that work to dispel persistent myths about Oxford, and to encourage applicants from groups that are currently under-represented. These include women, ethnic minorities, students from outside London and the South East, and schools that have no previous history of entry to Oxford." (9)

and yet the music entry process outlined in the same prospectus would automatically exclude all but a specific type of student. Nevertheless the paradox remains. Why should a course be changed to fit an access policy?

One can argue that across the sector there is an over provision of music courses which demonstrate a whole range of different approaches and foci, and therefore non-standard or alternatively qualified students should apply for courses which are more suited to their particular backgrounds in other institutions.

Naturally, a compromise position is reached in most institutions although it is interesting that there is considerable anecdotal evidence that some universities still actively discourage entries from such students within an apparent commitment to Equal Opportunities.

Even within official university policy barriers can be placed in the way of BTEC students. For example, the University of Birmingham welcome applicants "irrespective of age, sex, race or religion", but this flexibility of approach clearly does not extend to non-standard qualifications for when a BTEC student wishes to apply she/he is faced with the following statement,

" Students are advised not to apply without first contacting the Director of Admissions direct. Applicants who have such a qualification are advised to consult the Director of Admissions well in advance of making an application through UCAS to find out whether their qualifications are likely to meet the Course Entry Requirements and, if not, what further qualifications they will need." (10)

The problem therefore remains that irrespective of how clearly universities think they are portraying their requirements with respect to BTEC applicants the admissions statistics (presented in the Chapter Eight) suggest that many staff in the sector continue to believe that BTEC is a 'second class' qualification with regards to access to degree courses. However, the issue is complex in that data on whether this is due to genuine prejudice, misinformation to informed value-judgements based on the knowledge of variable standards The statistics in the following chapter present an interesting gloss on this perception, and yet this view also persists with some staff in the further education

sector as was evident from the course leader who when asked why his students took the BTEC National Diploma course responded,

" Because they are not good enough to do A'levels." (11)

In my current role within a higher education institution I have received literally dozens of letters from schools and colleges who are investigating the viability of establishing BTEC National Diploma courses in the performing arts. The primary question that all of these letters ask pertains to the acceptability of the BTEC for degree access,

" I would be grateful if you could comment as to the status of the BTEC National in relation to the courses you offer." (12) North Oxfordshire College.

However, only very few recognise the criticality of the interface with degree courses in terms of aims, philosophy and approach.

" I would therefore like to offer you an outline of our programme and would be grateful if you could comment on how relevant the experiences offered would be in terms of admission to a degree level course of a similar nature."
St Helens College (13)

These contacts demonstrate that further education colleges need reassurance and commitment from higher education before embarking on new course developments, and are unwilling to take the assurances of BTEC regarding student progression at face value.

Higher Education's Response to BTEC

The development of any new course will inevitably lead to policy changes and development in the sector required to receive such students. Whilst the primary impact of BTEC qualifications on higher education policy was at the start of the decade, it is my belief that a credibility gap remains in some institutions between the stated policy and the statistical evidence (as will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight). I am also

seeking to confirm my conviction that, although staff work from the best intentions, only a small minority actually have a real grasp of the content and structure of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts course from which they are assessing candidates' appropriateness for degree level study. In contrast, I believe that most university staff with responsibility for admissions have a good working knowledge of the various A'level syllabi, and these issues were examined through the structured interview questions detailed below.

If the introduction of BTEC qualifications in the eighties posed the sector with a challenge then it is inevitable that a similar challenge will need to be faced with respect to the recent introduction of GNVQ qualifications. They will most likely undergo a similar gestation period before a more widespread understanding permeates the sector.

Once again, a brief examination of Bretton Hall's response to the BTEC development is, I believe, fairly representative of the changing attitudes in the sector. In 1991 the prospectus mentioned the acceptance of BTEC qualifications as suitable for matriculation for the first time, and by 1993 projected entry projections were displayed for all relevant degree courses with regards to A'level grades and BTEC profiles (numbers of merits and distinctions). Nevertheless, the attitude of majority of staff at Bretton Hall concerned with admissions continues to be focused on the importance of the interview and audition process,

" Frankly, we do not find that qualifications are an accurate aid to our selection process" October 1993 (13)

If the assessment of suitability of candidates is really judged solely through interview then surely one would expect significant numbers of BTEC students to be accessing the courses. Students from BTEC will have had far more practical involvement with the specialist art form than a similar candidate progressing from an A'level pathway. So why are so few BTEC students gaining admission?

The simplicity of the response with regards to the equality of the audition process excludes the important fact that there has to be a major pruning of the applicants prior to the audition stage, and that this process is undertaken from paper. Applications clearly far outweigh the ability of colleges and universities to interview and therefore the initial selection, which may reject nine out ten applications, is clearly critical. Thus, it was

important to include within the structured interviews questions concerning the criteria utilised to select students for the interview process as well as questions concerning the selection criteria once students had been selected for interview.

In my experience most academics have received information on non-standard routes of entry in the form of access and admission documentation. The Registry provides a framework for comparison between A'level, BTEC and other non-standard entry qualifications when required. However, I believe the level of understanding varies considerably from individual to individual, and therefore this became another issue to be addressed in the development of the structured interview questions for academic staff. My hypothesis appears to be supported by Bretton Hall's entry statistics (See Chapter Eight). In 1992 the drama and music courses together admitted only three BTEC qualified students. Only in the area of dance was any significant progress made as evidenced in a letter to Ealing Green High School who were then in the process of establishing a new BTEC course.

" Bretton Hall certainly accepts BTEC Performing Arts as entry qualifications to degree courses in all areas, and indeed probably 30% of students on our BA (Hons) Dance course are entered through that route." (15)

Whilst this statement exaggerates the truth, the irony of the situation is that the only area of the performing arts at Bretton Hall to take BTEC qualifications seriously was dance, and it was no coincidence that at that time the person responsible was employed at the time in a dual role as Head of Dance and Head of Access. It is also interesting to note that the discussions underway in the College at that time were taking place against a backdrop of more than ninety established BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts courses located right across the country.

Higher Education Staff: Parameters for Data Collection

Data was collected from a variety of sources. Structured interviews were an important part of the process and involved staff from both 'old' and 'new' universities as well as reviewing documentation on admissions, student profiles and access which proliferate in the sector. Staff were selected to represent a cross-section of 'old' and 'new' universities and a cross-section of responsibilities. Thus, some eighteen staff

were interviewed representing academic management, lecturing and registry staff. As far as possible all were subject to the same series of structured questions (See Appendix 5I), however, some of the questions were not applicable to everyone and therefore the quantitative data is not comprehensive. Nevertheless, these individuals were included as they provide an interesting and informed insight into the sector.

The questions had were devised to provide a combination of qualitative and quantitative data that would, as far as possible, interface with the data collected from the further education staff questionnaires. Once the initial context to the research had been explained the following questions were posed to deal with differing aspects of the further education/ higher education interface.

Quantitative data on courses and student numbers provided the initial parameters for further discussion. In many cases this information was already known to me.

Name of College/University , No of Students (all years) on Performing Arts degree courses (Dance, Drama, Music, etc.)

The issue of modes of access and requirements for matriculation was addressed by,

Normal entry requirements?

How do you select students for entry to a degree course?

If oversubscribed, what processes/criteria do you use to select students for interview?

What processes/criteria do you use to select students during interview?

What is your opinion on the capabilities of students who apply with non-standard qualifications?

Staff were also asked to provide views on the rapid change with regards to the changing in performing arts course provision.

What do you consider to have been the key development in under-graduate performing arts education over the past few years?

What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?

Specific questions were raised to test the degree of knowledge of BTEC Performing Arts courses and to start to test hypotheses concerning the perceived quality and match of such courses with their own undergraduate programmes.

What do you know about the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Do you accept students from the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree-level education?

In your opinion what are the main weaknesses of the BTEC National Diploma course.

The majority of staff spoke freely within the structured interviews on the premise that they would not be individually identified. However, the various quotations that are used to illustrate points of interest in the following section were taken down verbatim during the interviews.

Whilst acknowledging the relatively small size of the sample taken the data received does provide an interesting overall picture of staff in the higher education sector that believe to be fairly representative of the true picture. The data also provides the opportunity to make some interesting comparisons between different categories of staff, although here it is acknowledged that the conclusions are less secure both because of the small size of the sample and the fact that the majority of staff now fulfil more than one role. For example, most senior academics are now required to undertake academic management and maintain a commitment to lecturing. This also ignores other key responsibilities such as quality assurance or research. Nevertheless, as the important questions seem to be focusing on the level and depth of understanding of higher education staff and the commensurate policy decisions, then it was hoped that interesting differences would emerge with respect to the type of institution ('old' university/ 'new' university) and the role played by the individual within that institution (academic management, lecturing or registry staff).

Higher Education Staff Attitudes to BTEC

The data collected through the structured interviews confirms a number of trends that will need to be explored further through analysis of the statistical data. The views

also affirm a number of themes that initially emerged from the staff and students in the further education sector.

The key areas to be explored further through the following statistical analyses are to do with the perceived problems that face BTEC students in the performing arts both with regards to obtaining an interview and then in obtaining an offer of a place. Although each institution worked within an admissions policy based on the 'equality of opportunity' for all candidates, the statistics for BTEC applicants will need to be closely compared with those of A'level qualified applicants and candidates entering through other non-standard pathways. Two further for points for comparison with the statistical data are whether the noticeable difference in attitude towards BTEC according to which side of the old binary line the institution hails, and the variations towards BTEC which emerged between the various disciplines encompassed within the performing arts, are confirmed or denied.

Themes which emerged from the further education surveys and were confirmed through these interviews focused on issues of BTEC course structure, the quality of courses and the probable changes that would take place in the next few years with regards to skills training, institutional mergers, coping with ever diminishing resources, etc.. (The comparisons with the further education themes and higher education statistics will be explored in more depth in Chapter Nine.)

Given the relatively small size of the sample it is dangerous to reach to many firm conclusions. However, the following data emerged from the interviews and is accurate in so far as it refers to the individual institutions which agreed to facilitate this research. Whether it is genuinely reflective of the sector as a whole can best be demonstrated through comparative analysis.

The interviews provided a considerable wealth of data (summarised in Appendix 7B) and there were a remarkable degree of uniformity of view on the major issues under discussion. For ease of comparison I chose to group the responses according to role, and therefore the data is presented under the headings of registry, academic management and lecturing staff. Naturally, there are instances where responsibilities cross-over but by grouping the responses in this way it helped provide a semblance of order from data which agreed in some instances, and was completely disparate in others. The following key points emerged with respect to the specific questions raised.

What are the normal entry requirements?

Registry-based staff invariably responded with the minimum requirements for matriculation whereas academic staff automatically qualified the entry requirements by specific grades (often over-stated). BTEC was treated as a 'non-standard' entry route in most institutions although it was felt that appropriate systems and structures had been put in place to deal with the rising number of applicants from this pathway. Academic managers had an accurate understanding of the requirements for specific courses and BTEC was broadly welcomed by staff from the 'new' universities and cautiously acknowledged by staff from the 'old' universities.

The lecturing/interviewing staff clearly had a great deal of detailed knowledge concerning entry requirements for the specific courses. They articulated the preferred A'level combinations, grades and examination boards. The expansion of BTEC courses was manifest through the increasing numbers of students applying from BTEC. None of the staff had any detailed knowledge of the BTEC course content or structure but the majority had a clear view of the type of BTEC profile expected from potential students.

If oversubscribed, what processes/criteria do you use to select students for interview?

Registry-based staff confirmed the complexity of the admissions process in that courses with identical entry targets might have widely differing targets for offers and interviews. (i.e. More offers and interviews were required to fill places in music than in dance and drama.) Academic managers confirmed the importance of the interview process and acknowledged that very few offers were given from paper. One acknowledged that students from their own access courses were almost certain to gain entrance to the course as they had been educated into the requirements and philosophy necessary. Another made reference to the development of guaranteed interview schemes with specific further education institutions to ensure local and regional progression.

The academic lecturing/interviewing staff provided a huge variety of response. In my view, the best practice was represented by selection being undertaken against specific written criteria with each form being considered by at least two members of

staff in contrast with one institution where all offers for a particular course were made by a single member of academic staff who based his judgements on experience, but could not specify what the criteria were. Despite this variance three main factors emerged upon which selection was made,

1. The quality of the projected A'level grades.
2. The quality of the academic reference.
3. The quality of the student's personal statement.

The academic reference normally included anticipated A'level grades but projections for BTEC were seldom provided. Although it was stated that this did not influence staff when one considers that on some courses nine out of ten forms are rejected, it must surely be an issue to be addressed by further education staff. Other interesting variations were that music courses appeared to place more emphasis on the projected grades, and the student's known achievement on the various graded examinations of the Associated Board, whereas drama and dance placed far more emphasis on the quality of the academic reference and the demonstration of a real 'passion' for the subject within the personal statement. It also appeared that the emphasis placed upon projected A'level grades was more marked in the staff from the 'old' university sector.

What processes/criteria do you use to select students during interview?

Both the registry-based staff and academic managers understood the actual processes involved in selecting students but practically no knowledge of the detailed criteria that were applied. Emphasis was placed upon the necessity to demonstrate equality of opportunity through the process and the need to communicate clearly and quickly with candidates following the interviews. It was also acknowledged that finding the time for academic staff to interview properly was becoming an increasingly difficult problem.

The academic lecturing/interview staff once again revealed a variety of response. Only one institution had detailed written criteria, but the majority had proformas that had to be completed which reflected the primary areas under consideration. It therefore emerged that there was a remarkable uniformity of the criteria upon which judgements were made in the different institutions. Although the specific skills of the selected art

form remain important it was clear that academic ability ranked alongside (or was considered more important than) practical skills in the majority of cases (regardless of 'old' or 'new' university background). Personality and communication skills were important and the vast majority of interviews included practical performance and a personal interview. It appears that the decision to accept or reject was reached quite quickly in the majority of cases and the interview was therefore utilised to define entry grades for accepted candidates.

What do you consider to have been the key development in undergraduate performing arts education over the past few years?

The registry-based staff naturally pointed to the rising application rates and the growth of new courses in both the further and higher education sectors. They were presented with an increasing number of new qualifications, sometimes without appropriate briefing.

The academic managers similarly referred to the rapid expansion of courses across the sector. Some felt aggrieved that higher education institutions which had no track record in the performing arts had quickly developed courses when expansion was required and concern was also expressed at the growth of degree courses in the performing arts in local further education colleges. Modularity had provided a number of challenges and opportunities, but foremost was the problem of adequately resourcing courses that required high technical specifications and good staffing levels if quality was to be maintained.

The growth of BTEC courses was acknowledged, and in one instance it was admitted that new under-graduate courses had been deliberately developed to reflect vocational focus evident in BTEC and other feeder courses.

Similar issues arose with the lecturing staff although stronger views were expressed regarding modularity and resourcing. The tendency was to localise the question and not provide a strategic view. Thus, the pressures of maintaining course content when contact time was being cut, difficulties in developing sufficient skill levels and concern over the increasing amount of time spent on the pastoral care and individual tutorials with students dominated the discussions. There was considerable scepticism towards

the expansion of degree courses in the further education sector and a number had anecdotal evidence from transfer students as to problems with course content and quality.

The remaining questions within the structured interviews were more speculative in nature and not all staff felt in the position to offer an opinion and the responses were largely uniform within the three categories of staff. For this reason no categorisation of response has been made with regards to the following questions.

What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?

The key developments were considered to be the growth of franchised degree courses and the formal partnership arrangements between further and higher education institutions. It was also felt that there would be an increasing focus on skills training and the more widespread introduction of GNVQs. Maintaining quality in times of diminishing resources was acknowledged as a key problem for both further and higher education and therefore the issue of alternative forms of teaching would have to be properly addressed within the performing arts.

What is your opinion on the capabilities of students who apply with non-standard qualifications?

The majority of staff were highly supportive and felt that students could clearly cope with the courses. Anecdotal evidence was supplied of both extremes of capability.

What do you know about the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

The course was widely recognised and acknowledged as an important provider of performing arts courses in the 16 to 18 age group. The vocational focus was widely understood although only one academic interviewed had any detailed knowledge of the course structure or content. The majority had a scant working knowledge of the course

drawn from the interaction with local providers, admitting they were unaware of the significant changes that were facing BTEC (particularly the introduction of GNVQs) with the exception of what had been read in the media.

Do you accept students from the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

The unanimous response to this question was "yes" although the percentage differences were quite marked between institutions. One institution admitted it only had one BTEC qualified student on the course (and he also had 1 A'level and a Grade VIII music) and another demonstrated that 25% of the year group on a particular course came from BTEC courses.

There was therefore no issue of policy but clear evidence of differing application of policy.

In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?

Once again there was considerable uniformity of response in that the vast majority of staff agreed that it depended upon the degree course chosen. BTEC was suitable for some courses but not suitable for others and this suitability was largely concerned with the academic content of the course requested.

In your opinion what are the main weaknesses of the BTEC National Diploma course or of non-standard applicants.

Few staff felt in the position to offer a real opinion on this question. Of those who did the theme that emerged concerned the lack of academic rigour in the course. One member of staff also raised the interesting point that BTEC (in his view) was quite heavily taught and therefore students expected to be "spoon-fed" when they came on the degree programmes. Thus, the problem of adjusting to self-managed learning was marked in the case of BTEC applicants.

Having examined the responses to specific questions it is necessary to review the data in respect to the overall debate concerning the interface between higher and further education institutions with regards to the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts. From the structured interviews with staff, and the numerous informal interviews that have taken place over the past five years through my professional involvement in the sector, I have deduced that the following analysis is representative of the current understandings in the higher education sector.

1. Acceptance/ understanding.

Approximately 25% accepted the equivalence of BTEC entry and actively tried to implement it. Their understanding of the course was limited in most cases but the support for the principles of widening access, accepting alternative qualifications, etc. was unwavering. Only a few of the staff had any real detailed knowledge of BTEC course content, the course structure, modes of assessment, or the scale of the practical activity undertaken. The view persisted that the courses were primarily practical and academically weak (a view apparently shared with then further education staff and students - Chapter 6) and some thought that there was almost no written course work. The majority thought that the 'training' the BTEC courses provided was purely vocationally focused.

Ironically, this understanding was more prevalent in registry staff and academic management positions than it was in academic/lecturing staff actually responsible for selecting potential students.

"We actively encourage applications from students with BTEC qualifications."

"The College has informal arrangements with a number of key BTEC courses in the region which supply us with a regular group of students."

2. Acknowledgement without complete Acceptance

Approximately 60% of staff interviewed accepted their institution's policy on access, but when pressed admitted they did not always feel they could do much to

promote it given the extremely high application rates for courses in the performing arts. The majority of staff who fell into this category were academics actively involved in undergraduate course delivery and not academic managers. BTEC entry was often considered more suitable for 'other' courses. When pressed it was clear that the vocational and training focus was an issue for them. They wanted to make it clear that they did not 'train' but that they 'educated' students. Their scepticism therefore revolved around whether BTEC students were capable of the levels of academic rigour required or not, although many admitted that BTEC students who had been admitted normally performed well.

" We have had some BTEC students on the course they were actually quite good."

" When I'm auditioning potential students I couldn't care less what qualifications they have."

3. *Consider BTEC Unsuitable in Most Cases*

A few of the academic staff interviewed acknowledged their institution's access policy but considered BTEC students to be mainly unsuitable due to the high degree of specialisation in the course on which they taught. When pressed as to what aspects of BTEC were considered unsuitable it became clear that they often had little or no knowledge of BTEC course requirements. This stance was partially due to the mounting pressure of work and the ever growing rate of applications.

" The problem is that they don't have the relevant aptitude for our courses."

Although the summary position outlined above is a gross simplification of a complex series of issues, the essence of the arguments and attitudes expressed remains accurate. Within any rapidly developing system it is to be expected that some participants lead and others follow. From my experience it is very rare to come across any overt discrimination against students from BTEC backgrounds - quite the contrary, the vast majority of staff actively support widening access and the taking of students from non-traditional pathways. However, few can then explain why the number of BTEC students on their courses remains so low when application rates are rising.

Although many staff will explain the situation by referring to the unsuitability of the BTEC courses in relation to the specific requirements of the course on which they teach, the majority admit they have had good BTEC qualified students on their courses in the past few years.

Conclusion

There remains a mismatch within the higher education sector with regards to the number of BTEC applications from candidates in the performing arts and the number of BTEC qualified students who are accepted on the course. This mismatch arises from a complex set of circumstances perhaps best exemplified through the contradictory access and admissions policies evident in the sector. Nevertheless, staff in the higher education sector are generally rather poorly informed as to the rapidly changing entry profile and the growth of non-standard entrants. The key issues therefore would seem to be: the perceived quality of BTEC courses; how to deal with the sheer quantity of applications received; the difficulty of the interface between the vocationally-oriented BTEC course and the majority of under-graduate degree programmes; the necessity to ensure that higher education staff (and particularly admissions tutors) are better informed regarding BTEC and non-standard applications. BTEC must take responsibility for the majority of these issues for without pro-active work initiated by BTEC with the higher education sector I believe the 'mismatch' will continue, eventually leading to a lack of credibility in the BTEC course provision that will demand attention.

Chapter Seven: Notes

1. Given my long standing involvement in the sector it was difficult to take an objective view to data collection. Hence the necessity for the structured interviews which adapted the questions posed to further education staff into a higher education perspective.
2. Elaine Harrison. One voice past the binary cross-roads to progress, Times Higher Education Supplement. 26.6.92 Pg 4
3. Bretton Hall Prospectus. 1995 Entry. Pg 14

4. Oxford University Prospectus for 1996 Entry. Pg 22
5. Bretton Hall Prospectus. 1995 Entry. Pg 17
6. University of Luton Prospectus. 1996 Entry. Pg 194
7. Bretton Hall Prospectus. 1995 Entry. Pg 83
8. University of Oxford Prospectus for 1996 Entry. Pg 136
9. Ibid. Pg 22
10. University of Birmingham. Prospectus for 1996 Entry. Pg 32
11. Questionnaire response from a course leader in the South of England. July 1995
12. Personal letter from North Oxfordshire College. March 1994.
13. Personal letter from St Helens College. July 1993

CHAPTER EIGHT

The BTEC Interface: Statistical Evidence

Introduction

Having obtained significant data from academic staff within the higher education sector it is necessary to test, where possible, the validity of this data through reference to another source - the principle on which multi-method research is based. The most obvious source of comprehensive data is the admissions statistics which are produced as a matter of course by the various admissions services on an annual basis.

Until 1993 the main admissions systems still reflected the binary line between the 'old' and 'new' universities. Candidates could apply through both systems, often keeping numerous applications live at any one time and playing one system off against the other to provide the assurance of a place if A'level grades were not met. This meant that many Polytechnics had to plan on recruiting a significant percentage of their undergraduate body through the various clearing systems. Together these systems placed an enormous burden on the administration, on candidates (interview/audition costs) and perpetuated the differences that had been largely swept away through incorporation. For two years after incorporation students applying to the 'old' universities continued to utilise the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) whilst applicants to the 'new' universities still applied through the Polytechnics Central Admissions System (PCAS). In 1993 the systems were merged to form a single body entitled the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) which has been developing its policies and procedures since this time.

Difficulties in Comparing Data

Although the UCAS system now dominates the admissions procedure within the higher education sector the overall picture is still far from clear. Applications for art and design courses continue to have to be made through the Art and Design Admissions Registry (ADAR) and many specialist colleges accept or require direct applications outside of the formally notified systems. ADAR and UCAS will merge in 1997 although the different pathways for applicants will still be maintained. To further complicate the matter the rapid growth of Higher National Diploma provision within further education colleges is primarily dependent upon direct application whereas the same HND courses within the higher education sector require UCAS application. Finally, when one considers the issues of franchised degrees, courses which are cross-validated between two or more institutions, and the necessity for students to apply for post-graduate teacher training through yet another system (GTTR - Graduate Teacher Training Registry) it is hardly surprising that students can get confused, and that statistical data is difficult to cross-reference.

The admissions procedures for higher education have changed considerably during the past five years. Different entry systems apply for different types of college or university, and despite the recent mergers of the major admissions systems students in the performing arts are still required to follow a number of different (and unrelated) systems dependent upon the type of institution to which they are applying.

Despite the difficult context from which this statistical evidence emerges there is a great deal of quality data contained within the formal publications of the admissions systems. All of these official bodies produce annual statistics related to student entry: qualifications, acceptance rates, subject, gender, age, area of origin, etc.. The major statistical parameters are consistent between the various systems although there are some important differences of procedure which can make direct comparison questionable. So long as one understands the context the data remains valid. For example, prior to the creation of UCAS students could make at least nine applications to higher education institutions by utilising both the UCCA (5 choices) and PCAS (4 choices) systems. In its first year of operation, students entering the UCAS system were able to make eight choices and now they are only able to make six choices. This has had the effect of making the total number of applications fall during a period when

the total number of students gaining places in higher education has actually risen.

The realignment of the sector following the collapse of the binary line continues to progress. A recent comparison of UCAS applications shows the universities are starting to lose some of their market share to the SCOP colleges (1) especially in the north of England. In contrast the universities application rates have risen significantly in London, Scotland and Ireland. Nevertheless, if one looks at the total number of students applying the reduction from eight applications to six is clearly having an effect. At a national level UCAS applications have fallen from 2,354,526 in 1995 to 1,802,087 in 1996 (2). This represents a 23% fall in the number of admission whereas one might have expected the procedural change (a cut from eight to six applications) and the known demographic down-turn should have reduced application rates even farther. At a local level, students applying to Bretton Hall through UCAS fell from 4,474 in 1995 to 4,344 in 1996, but because of the procedural change this actually represents a 26.86% increase in market share (from 0.19% to 0.25%).

It is therefore important to recognise the major effect that changing policies for admission can have upon the sector. Whilst external research income and commercial/private sources of funding are extremely important to the sector the majority of income still comes from student fees and central government in support of prescribed student numbers (MASN - Maximum Aggregate Student Numbers). The rationalisation of the admissions system outlined above (which was endorsed by the whole sector) has had the effect of greatly increasing the popularity of some institutions, and severely reducing the number of applications to others. Total applications for all courses in universities such as Bristol (+9.48%), Durham (+11.02%), Nottingham (+7.86%), Sheffield (+8.96%) and Warwick (+7.12%) demonstrate they have significantly increased their market share. However, these changes no longer reflect the 'old' and 'new' university distinctions as universities such as Central England (+6.41%), Nottingham Trent (+8.7%) and Teesside (+11.37%) have also fared extremely well in relation to their more established competitors. In contrast some well established universities are witnessing an alarming decline in applications. Universities such as Bradford (-14.48%), Hull (-17.15%), Sussex (-18.26%) and Keele (-21.64%) will surely not be able to maintain quality if such decreases continue in future years.

Although the majority of institutions are still able to fill most of their places it is interesting to note how the sector is adjusting to the post binary environment where

growth in student numbers and reductions in funding are the norm. It is possible that some of the major shifts in total applications illustrated above are a result of the subjects on offer. Certain subjects remain heavily oversubscribed whereas institutions across the country were unable to fill their MASN allocations in science and engineering. It would also appear that some 'old' universities that used to recruit heavily as the third or fourth choice of applicants within the UCCA system have been most severely effected by this change in procedure.

The inevitable result of the reduction in student applications has been to focus student choice towards institutions where they really have a real desire to study. Acceptance rates were notoriously low in parts of the PCAS sector with students waiting for their A'level results before choosing whether to accept the UCCA or the PCAS institution. This often left the PCAS institutions with raised expectations of prospective student numbers and at the whim of the clearing systems. In the performing arts areas this distinction was less noticeable as UCCA institutions did not have an established course tradition in many of the practical arts areas. Nevertheless, the same problem arose (and still does) through the number of students who had made direct applications to specialist colleges, effectively holding their polytechnic/university offer as "insurance".

Although the overall statistical data coincides between the various systems there are some significant policy differences which pertain to precise areas of data required by the various admissions systems. For example, there has been considerable debate concerning the inclusion or exclusion of data on ethnic origin and the PCAS system even had a question pertaining to social class.

Finally, to complete this overview of the changes in the admissions systems it is necessary to recognise that some higher education institutions have merged (3), others have changed their affiliation (4) and some have closed (5). All of these factors make detailed comparative statistical analysis difficult and thus the following sections will concentrate on particular points of interest relating to the interface between further and higher education courses and will not attempt a more comprehensive analysis. Naturally, the primary focus will be on the performing arts and upon candidates seeking access from the BTEC National Diploma course. These national statistics will be exemplified, where possible, by detailed examples from Bretton Hall (College of the University of Leeds) which is now one of the largest specialist arts providers in the

higher education sector, and in terms of the performing arts has one of the largest student cohorts in the performing arts within the sector (See Appendix 6). Whilst the two do not directly inter-relate they do provide a gloss on the higher education perspective, as evidenced through statistical data, at both a national and a local level.

Statistical Evidence

The following examination of statistical data will concentrate on five main areas. The final set of PCAS (1992 - 93) and UCCA (1992 - 93) statistics and the first set of UCAS (1993 - 94) statistics have been examined. All are focused on the relevant period informing and influencing the responses in the staff and student questionnaires, namely 1992 - 1994. Bretton Hall statistics for 1994 have also been included to provide evidence of local interpretation of national trends and policies, and finally the ADAR statistics for 1994 provide an interesting comparison in a complementary subject area.

PCAS 1992 - 93 Annual Report

The PCAS system operated for seventy eight institutions in 1992 - 93 receiving 322,700 forms from students. Students were allowed to name up to four courses and this resulted in 1,022,255 applications being made at an average rate of 3.2 per applicant. This represented a 6.5% increase over the previous year, but given the fact that the number of institutions represented by PCAS had grown the real increase was 3.2%. Of these applicants some 34% were considered to have also applied through the UCCA system.

Exactly 50% of applicants were male and 50% female, the vast majority 94.4% were home applicants and 5.6% were overseas applicants. Of these students 107,383 (33.26% of the total number of applicants) gained acceptance into degree courses and 27,784 (8.61% of the total number of applicants) onto Higher National Diploma courses (6). From this we can deduce that the majority of applicants (58.13%) were unsuccessful in gaining acceptance onto either a degree or an Higher National Diploma course despite the fact that PCAS acknowledge that growth of student numbers in the sector had far outstripped the growth in applications. In 1986 the ratio between each

year's applicant and admissions figures was 3.74:1, but by 1993 it had fallen to 2.39:1 - an interesting commentary on government policy in higher education.

Applicants came primarily from comprehensive schools, further education colleges and sixth form colleges. Only 4.6% of applicants came from grammar schools and 7.0% from independent schools. In contrast 5.5% of student applications were from mature students attending access courses.

Although the vast majority of applications continued to be from candidates qualified with A'levels there was a decrease in the number of students who had an A'level and AS'level background from the previous year. There was a corresponding increase in students from BTEC ND courses and those pursuing channels of non-standard entry. Thus, in 1992 - 93 BTEC qualified students represented 16.0% of the total applications to the PCFC sector. The application statistics were very closely mirrored by the admissions statistics with 5.6% being mature students, 17.4% BTEC qualified students and the vast majority continuing to be admitted with A'level qualifications. These figures apply to applications across all of the subject areas.

In the creative and performing arts (analysed together by PCAS) the ratio of applicants to admissions was the highest of all the subject groups at 11.8: 1 and a relatively small number of places (2,844) were available across the sector of which 2,753 were filled. BTEC applicants on performing arts courses comprised 17.2% of total applications yet, despite the increase in growth of BTEC National Diploma courses, this was not reflected in actual admissions where only 12.7% of students who gained admission came from BTEC or SCOTVEC backgrounds. Just over half of the total applications came from students with projected A'level backgrounds (53.5%) and yet the majority of students admitted to the courses came from this cohort. Thus, 60.7% of admissions were A'level qualified demonstrating a clear preference for A'level over BTEC between the point of application and admission. This tends to reflect the fierce competition for places in this area and interestingly the percentage of BTEC admissions in this subject area was almost 25% lower than the norm in the PCAS system as a whole.

In regional terms it should be noted that the northern region had by far the highest percentage of home student admissions (domiciled in the region) out of all of the English regions. More than 60% of under-graduate degree and nearly 70% of Higher

National Diploma admissions lived in the region in comparison with 45% (average) for the South West, 40% (average) for the West Midlands and 30% (average) for East Anglia.

Analysis by social class divided the intake into 6 categories (7) in respect to the background from which the application was made. The majority (78%) of applicants answered the questions on social class revealing a large percentage of students (42.1%) heralded from class II (Intermediate), 13.4% came from class I (Professional), 13.4% from class IIIN (Skilled non-manual) and 20.0% from class IIIM (Skilled manual). These proportions are maintained within the more detailed analysis of the creative arts subject area.

From these figures we can deduce that the 1993 intake into the PCAS system was still largely dependent on A'level-qualified students. Although alternative courses, such as BTEC, were gaining increasing acceptance they still generated only one sixth of total applications. In the performing arts students faced the stiffest competition for places (almost 13 applications per available place) (8) the admissions statistics reveal that BTEC qualified applicants were less likely to gain admission to a degree course in the creative arts favour than was the norm in the sector. However, significant numbers of mature students were enrolled and yet, in apparent contradiction, a large percentage of students came from a relatively privileged background (class II). Almost two thirds of students applying for courses in the North East were domiciled in the region and the student year average group contained more women than men (51.9% to 48.1%) in contrast to the overall gender statistics for admission which demonstrate the opposite profile (48.8% female, 51.2% male).

UCCA Thirty-first Report (1992 - 3)

1992 showed an increase in application rates of 8.97% over the previous year. In total the number of home applicants was 263,341 and the number of overseas applicants 32,175. There was a marked growth in the number of mature applications, up by almost 20% over the previous year, who account for slightly more than 20% of the total undergraduate student applications. The success rate of applicants fell slightly from 47.8% to 47.5%, and of the unsuccessful students almost one third (48,808) subsequently obtained places in the PCAS scheme.

The most popular subjects were in the field of mass communications and documentation which received 20.8 applications per place. The creative arts (which include music and drama) were the second most popular subject with 13 applications per place (almost identical to the application ration in the PCFC sector) brought about by a 13% rise in applications over the previous year. Students accepted on the courses were generally younger than in other subject areas, and less than 15% of admissions were from mature students in contrast to the 20% which was the sector norm.

More women applied than men (51.5% to 48.5%) but more men were offered places. 50.4% of male applicants were accepted as opposed to 46.6% of female applicants. In the performing arts the gender bias was very much towards female students who made up 63.7% of the intake. Overall, 9.1% of applicants had BTEC or SCOTVEC qualifications, however this percentage does not differentiate between courses at National or Higher National Diploma levels. Thus, many of these students would have held HNDs and a large percentage combined BTEC qualifications with more traditional A'levels for matriculation purposes. It is clear that the attitude of UCCA at the time was very much against consideration of awards at National Diploma level being considered for matriculation alone,

" 75.2% of all BTEC/SCOTVEC applicants were at the First or National level, which are not normally approved as university main entrance requirements." (9)

The vast majority of under-graduate students gained access from a GCE A'level background. 76.5% of the total applications came from A'level qualified students and 7.9% of applicants had BTEC/SCOTVEC qualifications. By the time of admission this distinction had become even more marked with 87.4% of admissions being from A'level qualified students and only 6.3% from BTEC/SCOTVEC backgrounds. The average points score for A'level students in all disciplines was between 21 and 22, and this held true for students in the creative arts subjects (10). The high standards required by certain departments are demonstrated by the fact that more than 3,000 students were rejected through UCCA despite having points scores between 26 and 30 (10% of the total accepted). In the creative arts the percentage differential for A'level and BTEC applicants was 74.3% and 8.1% respectively. By admission this differential had increased to 83.2% and 5.5%.

Thus, students with BTEC and SCOTVEC qualifications were starting to make an impact through gaining places on degree courses but A'level students were still being prioritised in many areas. Closer examination demonstrates that the impact of BTEC was variable between the subjects, and even between the disciplines within a subject area. For example, drama accepted 9.3% of its students with BTEC or SCOTVEC qualifications, but music only accepted 2.1% of its students with these qualifications. Similar distinctions can be found in the sciences and engineering.

Of all the English regions the North proved the most likely to have home students domiciled in the region. More than 45% of students were domiciled in the region as compared with 20% in the West Midlands and 15% in East Anglia. This reflects the same profile as was found in the PCAS statistics.

From these statistics we may deduce that the majority of students entering universities were well qualified through the normal A'level route. A small but significant number of students continued to gain admission through access provision and 'non-standard' qualifications. Competition in the creative and performing arts was high and BTEC qualifications were far more likely to be considered for access in drama than in music. Students were likely to travel out of their region of domicile to attend their chosen university, although students in the North of England were more likely to stay in the region than students in any other part of the country.

UCAS Annual Report 1993 - 1994 Entry

The problems of consistency and change are immediately drawn to one's attention in the opening paragraphs of the report by the UCAS Chief Executive,

" The bare statistics which appear in considerable detail in this report, cannot convey the unease experienced throughout the whole applications cycle by applicants, their families, schools and higher education administrators and admissions tutors alike. The fact that the statistics cannot easily show a time series and demonstrate historical trends in supply and demand indicates quite clearly that the market in which applicant and admitting institutions were operating was wholly different from anything experienced before." (11)

The first point to note was that whereas the previous two systems overlapped in respect to approximately one third of their applicants, the creation of a single system persuaded applicants, who might have only chosen five institutions within UCCA, to make more selections. Thus, in theory the possible number of applications per person fell from nine to eight but in practice the number of applications rose by 12% over the previous combined UCCA and PCAS figures without any additional students entering the system. Thus, although the number of students seeking higher education places remained static, the quantity of applications rose significantly.

The admissions cycle also coincided with the Government's announcement of the capping of student numbers from 1994 onwards. This would require an estimated reduction of 10,000 student places across the sector from the previous year if the enlarged second and third year cohorts were to progress through the system and MASN targets were to be kept. In simple terms the outgoing third year cohort had to become the incoming first year cohort, and with expansion built into the system this was bound to cause problems. Applicants thought that entry in 1994 would be significantly harder and tried to compensate through selecting additional 'safe' institutions which they thought would offer low grades.

" The rationale was that this would offer a sure-fire entry option in the event of extra pressure on places. This fear did not abate when an overestimate within the Treasury of overall student numbers was later discovered and the proposed cut in intake was restored." (12)

Given this degree of confusion the sector proceeded cautiously and far more students than was normally the case had to enter the clearing system. Nevertheless, some 405,117 applicants were considered and they received 270,898 places across the sector. Of these 50.4% were female and 49.6% male. 90.2% of total applicants were from home students and 26.6% of applicants were mature students. Successful candidates were mainly taken on to degree courses (91.4%) with the remaining 8.6% being accepted for Higher National Diploma courses within the higher education sector.

The creative arts (including dance, drama and music) revealed the highest ratio of applications to available places (13.8:1) They surprisingly had less mature students applications than the norm (21.8%) although the contrast between music, which attracts

a large percentage of 18-year-old students, and dance and drama where far more mature students are attracted and far more students have evidently taken a 'year out' remains marked.

The domicile statistics demonstrate the expected merger of the PCAS and UCCA trends from previous years. The North continues to have by far the highest percentage of accepted applicants domiciled in the region. However, a new trend emerges whereby the pattern of residency for degree programmes and Higher National Diplomas is very different. In general terms Higher National Diploma students are more likely to come from the region where the course is based and degree students are far more prepared to travel out of the region to a course of their choice.

The overall application statistics reveal 63.4% of candidates having two or more GCE A'levels, 13.3% holding BTEC/SCOTVEC qualifications and 6.1% an access qualification. Of the successful applicants admitted to degree courses 67.5% had A'level qualifications and 10.9% BTEC/SCOTVEC qualifications. This picture is markedly different with regards to HND entry where only 22.1% have an A'level background, 37.8% a BTEC/SCOTVEC background and 27.6% are non-standard entrants.

In the performing arts the majority of students continue to enter the course with A'level qualifications (at an average of 19 to 20 pts) but increasing numbers of students are being accepted through BTEC/SCOTVEC routes in drama and dance (15.6%). In music the BTEC qualification still seems to hold little credibility with only 4.6% of admissions coming from this background. This is surprising given the aggregation of music courses from the PCAS sector which focused in popular music, community music and music technology where well established BTEC qualifications were available.

Finally, the UCAS system does not perpetuate the PCAS class categorisation, but does provide interesting statistics concerning the relative success rates of different feeder institutions. Students were most likely to be accepted if they came from an independent school where 78.3% of applicants received a place. These were closely followed by grammar schools (75.6%), sixth form colleges (69.9%) and comprehensive schools (69.1%). One might have expected the differences to be more marked, although these statistics do not give any indications concerning which

universities students were accepted by , nor at what grade or in which subject.

What is apparent from the first set of UCAS statistics is that the basic trends outlined in the PCAS and UCCA systems continue. Application rates in the performing arts are very high and, despite the steady growth of the number of BTEC qualified applicants, A'level qualified students still seem to be preferred in the performing arts and the sector as a whole.

ADAR statistics: 1994 Entry

The ADAR application system differs considerably from those outlined above both in size and in method of application. The ADAR system dealt with 33,006 applications in 1994 and only places students on first degree and Higher National Diploma courses in art and design. The ADAR system requires students to place their chosen institutions in priority order. Interviews are held much later than the UCAS system and students who are accepted at their first choice institution do not (theoretically) have the chance to go to any other institution. If rejected they pursue the process to their second choice and failing this enter the "pool" (effectively a clearing system). The large number of students in this field undertake an art and design foundation course in a college of further education and the percentage of school-leavers applying through this system is relatively small (5.1%). The balance between degree and Higher National Diploma applications is noticeably different to the UCAS system, reflecting course availability. Almost one third of all applicants (30.1%) have Higher National Diploma courses as their first priority.

ADAR has been under some pressure since the creation of modular degree schemes which combine aspects of work traditionally accessed through this method with other courses accessed through the UCAS system. More and more courses have been switching into the UCAS system, and for this reason the ADAR scheme is the only admissions system reviewed that actually saw a reduction (2.4%) in student applications from the previous year. It is not therefore surprising to note that the planned merger of the ADAR and UCAS systems will start in 1997.

Of the students applying to first degree courses 42.4% come from foundation courses, 30.1% come from BTEC courses, 4.3% from secondary schools and the

remainder from external and overseas sources. For Higher National Diploma courses the applications come from foundation courses (33.0%), BTEC courses (44.8%) and secondary schools (9.3%), with remainder from external and overseas sources.

Regional distribution mirrors that of the UCAS system with students in the North being more likely to be domiciled there, and student mobility relatively high in all other regions.

Although the subject areas addressed through ADAR are not significant to the overall argument it should be noted that total percentage acceptance rate is far lower than the UCAS scheme at 44.4%, and interestingly the acceptance rate for Higher National Diploma courses demonstrates that admission is more difficult than on degree courses (42.2% as opposed to 45.9%). Another major difference is that more than 55% of applicants and admissions are female students and, given the prevalence of foundation course access, the average age of students and the percentage of mature students is far greater than the UCAS norm.

Thus, what is significant in these statistics to the overall debate concerning the BTEC influence on the access to higher education is the high degree of credibility that BTEC has within the disciplines of art and design, both as a higher education entrance qualification (BTEC ND) and as a higher education course in its own right (BTEC HND). It is hardly surprising to find that BTEC courses have a long tradition within these subjects and that art and design is being used to pilot the GNVQ route into higher education. Perhaps as BTEC (or the inevitable GNVQs) gain increasing credence in other areas of the curriculum we shall see further shifts away from the standard A'level entry profile as reflected here.

Bretton Hall (College of the University of Leeds): 1994 Entry Statistics

Bretton Hall is a relatively small institution with some 2,500 students all of whom specialise in the arts or education. The majority of students undertake a range of highly specialised degree programmes within the Faculty of Arts where a range of under-graduate degree programmes have been developed which explore the integration of theory and practice. Within the performing arts there are more than 700 students specialising in dance, drama or music and these are supplemented by more than 200

students who undertake specialist programmes in this area as part of a combined studies degree or as part of a BA QTS qualification. For this reason (and because of the accessibility of the data) it was considered appropriate to highlight points of interest that have emerged from the national statistics and demonstrate how they are interpreted at a local level.

Applications for dance and drama are high with the ratio of applicants per available place is 19:1. This contrasts with music applications where the ratio is music 8.4:1. The average ratio for the performing arts is 15.6:1 with 3,389 applications received for the 217 performing places available through the UCAS system. All students who are admitted are required to attend an interview and staff put a great deal of faith in an extensive interview process which examines practical, academic and interpersonal skills. However, only a percentage of applicants actually get to the interview stage (approximately 1 in 3 in dance and drama and 1 in 2 in music) and this initial selection is made from paper against specific criteria agreed within each subject area. It was therefore interesting to note whether A'level and BTEC students were treated at all differently in this respect.

In 1994 the college received 5,397 applications for all of its courses. Of these 3,806 were from female applicants (70.5%). This can partly be explained by the emphasis on primary teacher training and partially through aspects of the portfolio of courses which traditionally attract very high percentages of female applicants (i.e. Fashion, Textiles, Dance). Across the college 24.3% of admissions are by mature students and 40.2% are admitted to the institution straight from school (18-years-old). Consequently this means that 26.5% are admitted having taken at least one year out for a variety of reasons. In music the national trend evident in the UCAS statistics is mirrored by the fact that a far higher percentage of admissions are by school-leavers, whereas in drama certain cohorts are predominantly constructed from mature students.

College statistics show that nearly 40% of students come from the region. However, a breakdown by subject reveals that education students are almost exclusively domiciled in the region (91%) whereas in the performing arts the percentage is way below the national average (19.3%) with students travelling from all over the country (and the world) to attend the courses. The national average GCE A'level points scores are marginally exceeded by Bretton drama students but not matched by Bretton

music students. This is because of the distorting factor of the BA (Hons) in Popular Music Studies which accepts a large number of applicants with non-standard or alternative qualifications.

Given the portfolio of courses a surprisingly low percentage apply to the college from a BTEC background. In the performing arts less than 10% of applicants are on BTEC National Diploma courses, more than 60% have GCE A'level or equivalent qualifications and the remainder are non-standard, access or mature entries. Of the successful applicants 12.1% are BTEC ND qualified and 62% GCE A'level qualified. A substantial number enter as mature students and a limited number come through a designated access pathway.

From these statistics we can see the local realisation of national statistics, the influence of national policies on increasing student numbers and the local and subject-based interpretation of national guidelines. Bretton Hall has expanded rapidly since incorporation, moving from a student body of just over 1,000 to 2,500 in five years. To achieve this it has diversified its portfolio of courses creating a wide range of specialist and vocationally-focused degree programmes. This has attracted increasing numbers of applications from the BTEC National Diploma courses sufficient to require publication of standard BTEC requirements (all units merits or distinction) alongside its projected GCE A'level grades (A,B for drama and B,B for music) in all relevant publicity materials. Admissions staff now have a better understanding of the BTEC courses and formal and informal relationships have been established with a number of high quality further education colleges leading to a noticeable flow of students from these institutions qualified with the BTEC National Diploma. Staff development work has taken place on a regular basis and the issue of non-standard applications is a constant theme.

Nevertheless, the percentage of such applicants from BTEC background remains relatively low. Bretton Hall can find it difficult to relate to such students because of its geographical location and physical appearance. However, the experience of academic staff in teaching and assessing students from BTEC backgrounds has now demonstrated to staff that carefully selected BTEC students can more than match those entering the college with GCE A'levels and thus staff prejudice, however covert, is starting to be dispelled (13).

Conclusions

Despite all of the changes to the admission system it is evident that the number of students wishing to apply for higher education courses continues to grow. This is against the demographic trend which will actually see a fall in the number of 18-year-olds in the population until 1996. This has to be set against the backdrop of Government policy which fuelled massive, and often uncontrolled, expansion in the sector at the start of the decade, and then returned to capped numbers through precise MASN allocations in 1994/95. Many institutions were left in an intolerable situation with greatly expanded second and third year cohorts working their way through the system. This meant that many institutions had no alternative than to greatly reduce their intake targets. If one adds to this the problems of static or reduced funding and it is not difficult to see why changes in admissions procedures that can cause institutions such as the University of Keele to lose more than a third of the applicants (16,016 in 1995 and only 9,606 in 1996) are liable to cause alarm. Students equate to income and the failure to reach MASN targets can have punitive results on the institution's core funding.

Examination of the different systems revealed interesting consistencies in methodology and some critical differences. All of the systems analyse data according to gender, age, region of domicile, the application and admission ratio, overseas students, etc.. The PCAS system was notable for its deliberate omission of actual student entry grades. However, the UCCA system seems to try to avoid referring to its record on non-standard entry, except where it refers to its own access provision. The UCAS system brings together the best features of both and will inevitably absorb ADAR in the next few years.

Comparison of the various statistics demonstrate key similarities in areas such as entry profiles, application rates, gender balance and the region of domicile. Thus, the statistics confirm that,

1. Application rates for the performing arts courses remains extremely buoyant.
2. More women than men are accepted onto performing arts courses.

3. More mature students are found on drama and dance than music.
4. Students are generally well qualified, with the majority still gaining access as the result of A'level qualifications.
5. Although there has been massive growth in the development of BTEC ND courses in the performing arts the higher education sector takes proportionally less students from BTEC than do other subjects within the sector.
6. BTEC is more widely accepted by drama and dance than by music.
7. More applicants from the North of England choose to live and study in their region of domicile than in any other region of Great Britain.

The statistics also highlight a few areas of apparent concern,

1. Is the admissions system biased towards male candidates?

More women than men apply to universities and yet more men are accepted despite the fact that the women are generally better qualified? All of the statistics reinforce these distinctions with the UCAS statistics providing the most comprehensive evidence with 50.4% of applications being from female candidates translating into 49.0% of admissions. At the same time the average A'level points score for female students is 8.9 as opposed to 8.4 for male students.

2. How can an admissions system be developed which avoids good quality students being rejected?

Despite the complexity of the systems for admission that are put in place it is clear that a large number of well-qualified students fail to obtain a place each year. Whilst this can in part be accounted for by the intense pressure for places in certain subjects it cannot mask the fact that many candidates who should obtain a place are lost to higher education for one reason or another. Although this is a highly complex area capable of distortion by a large number of variables (e.g. social, economic, interpersonal factors) the sector must surely be

concerned that, according to the UCAS statistics approximately 20% of candidates with two or more A'levels, and more than 30% of BTEC qualified candidates fail to find a place in the sector.

3. How will cuts in institutional and student funding affect applications?

The demand for courses appears to be rising (403,003 in PCAS/UCCA in 1992-93 and 405,117 in UCAS in 1993 - 94 despite the change in methodology). The number of students being accepted is also rising (256,814 in PCAS/UCCA in 1992 - 93 and 270,989 in UCAS in 1993 - 94). MASN allocations may cap this trend, but it seems certain that demand will rise now that the trough in the demographic trend has been overcome. Yet at the same time funding for higher education has been cut substantially (between 10% and 25% over five years depending on whose figures one believes). Student grants have been capped for many years and there appears to be an increasing trend towards studying at a university within the region of domicile than had previously been the case (14). It is probably significant in economic terms why students in the North are far more likely to herald from the region than is the national average. (A point which is reinforced by the analyses of social class, and further emphasised by the student feedback given through the questionnaires: Ch.6)

4. The new vocational further education qualifications claim they provide students with access to higher education. The statistical evidence shows this to be far from the case. Students applying with BTEC are less likely to be accepted (pro rata) onto degree courses than A'level students although the admissions statistics in the performing arts show that BTEC is starting to gain acceptance in drama and dance, but is not really acknowledged in the field of music. (This confirms the necessity for the staff interviews detailed in the previous chapter.)

All of these points, whether positive or negative, will be further examined in relation to the data collected from other sources in the following chapters.

Notes: Chapter Eight

1. Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) - the forum for university sector colleges that is not governed by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP). It is hardly surprising that these two organisations are currently engaged in discussions concerning future merger.
2. Whilst this dissertation has focused on the interface between FE and HE as represented in and around 1994 these figures do illustrate issues to do with the rapidity of change in the admissions process and the lead time on applications means that in each case the figures actually refer to applications made in the previous year.
3. For example, in 1992 Charlotte Mason College merged with the University of Lancaster and Cambourne School of Mines with Exeter University.
4. University College Scarborough has recently terminated its relationship as a College of the University of Leeds and is now "An Autonomous College of the University of York".
5. The University of Lancaster recently announced that it was to close Charlotte Mason College. Ironically, this had only recently been merged into the institution and is now being closed supposedly because of its inability to score higher than "satisfactory" in recent OFSTED inspections.
6. At this time HND courses operated almost exclusively within the PCFC sector, and very few HNDs had been established within FE colleges.
7. It is not my place to comment on the validity of this process. Students were categorised as coming from the following backgrounds: I - Professional, II - Intermediate, IIIN - Skilled non-manual, IIIM - Skilled manual, IV - Partly skilled, V - Unskilled.
8. As Course Leader at Newcastle Polytechnic for the BA (Hons) Performing Arts degree (1989 - 92) I can confirm that more than twenty applications per place were received year on year.
9. Statistical Supplement to UCCA Thirty First Annual Report. p5
10. The points system is simply based on grading the different categories of GCE A' level passes as follows: Grade E = 2 pts, Grade D = 4 pts, Grade C = 6 pts, Grade B = 8 pts and Grade A = 10 pts. Most institutions extend the system to include AS levels and other subject specialist qualifications.
11. UCAS Annual Report 1993 - 1994 Entry. Pg 5.
12. Ibid.
13. In 1996 the University of Leeds Ames prize for the best student in the College (i.e. the highest first class honours classification) went to such a student.
14. It is widely anticipated that the much awaited report on higher education by Professor Ron Dearing will require greater regional co-operation between higher education providers, and a commensurate decrease in student mobility.

CHAPTER NINE

Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The analysis of different forms of data has illustrated a large number of points which inform the overall debate. Some of the findings are only evident from a single source, others have become recurrent themes. Whilst each finding remains valid it is the sheer weight of argument that becomes irresistible and has led to the conclusions outlined in the following chapter.

Brewer and Hunter refer to the utilisation of differing analytical methods to create their multi-method form of analysis. Although this study has employed fieldwork, surveys and various forms of non-reactive research, all of which provide interesting and informed data, it is the cross referencing and inter-relationship of these methodologies which effectively create a new approach, and one capable of providing informed understandings of the matter in hand.

" The multi-method approach provides an additional opportunity: the possibility of employing not just one type of method per study but instead a strategically selected set of methods. This approach has a number of advantages for theoretically oriented research." (1)

Utilisation of this 'new' method allows the creation of a comparative matrix through which the various arguments and debates are illuminated. Thus, whilst the

questionnaires clearly provide staff and student opinions they also contrast local and national perceptions. The survey of BTEC documentation similarly presents the national perspective which can be contrasted with local interpretations made in the individual courses, but at the same time it cross references with issues such as quality and resourcing. It also offers the opportunity to relate material that would not necessarily be considered in the same light within more conventional methodologies. For example, a comparison of BTEC documentation with prospectus materials or the statements of a registrar, may help to pose questions and formulate ideas that would not normally emerge if one only considered that the importance of the BTEC documentation was to inform the question of course delivery.

These new dynamics can illuminate the overall debate and support the more obvious forms of cross referencing. Thus, whilst the survey of statistical data is capable of addressing many of the questions under consideration in its own right, when reinforced through surveys and documentary evidence and the empirical views of staff, it provides an even more powerful argument capable of resisting complaints of biased interpretation which are so often alleged with respect to statistical analysis undertaken in isolation.

" The primary objective of the statistical method is to attach some sort of meaning to a mass of data. The task of this statistical method is to reduce the data to some meaningful measures. These measurements consist of numbers of some kind or other, and we feel very familiar with our number system. But before we perform these arithmetic manipulations on numbers that represent something we have to be aware of the properties that these numbers have. We must be sensitive to what the numbers represent." (2)

If we return to the questions posed at the start of this dissertation it is important to examine the data pertaining to each question individually before reaching the overall conclusions. The primary question concerning the interface between the further and higher education sectors in terms of A'level and BTEC qualifications was 'unpacked' through a series of subsidiary questions intended to confirm or deny the perception that students trying to enter universities with BTEC qualifications were disadvantaged, and possibly subject to discrimination.

Why have so many students interested in the performing arts apparently chosen to take BTEC courses rather than A'levels?

There is considerable evidence that the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts has grown rapidly in popularity. More than one hundred institutions now offer the programme to an estimated five thousand students nation-wide. This has come about through the restructuring of tertiary and further education which has resulted in ever increasing numbers of students leaving secondary schools in favour of large centralised further education colleges. In many instances this was a policy decision driven by the Local Education Authority, and sixth form provision throughout certain authorities was completely withdrawn. In others, the element of choice remains, with students having access to both types of institution (3).

Naturally, the choice of subjects in further education colleges is far greater, the mode of delivery more flexible, the resourcing more up-to-date and comprehensive and the range and nature of the qualifications more attractive than most secondary schools. Secondary schools cannot normally hope to compete with, for example, specialist performing arts departments with professionally equipped theatres, sprung dance floors and recording studios. What they can do is offer a high quality and far more personal programme of study based in the locality. It is not surprising to see sixth forms within schools 'fighting back' since the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) has made it financially important to sustain pupil numbers in all areas of the curriculum. Nevertheless, I am not aware of any individual schools that have been endorsed to provide the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (4), although some schools have attempted to operate BTEC programmes in other areas of the curriculum in support of their traditional G.C.S.E. and A'level programmes (5).

Students appear to take the course because of its emphasis on developing performance skills. The course is largely practical and students want to act, dance or perform. Most of them take the course because it offers this high level of practical activity, contrasting with their more classroom-based G.C.S.E. studies. They want to leave the academic behind and focus on making, creating and doing.

Students also choose to take the course because it offers them the chance to get

away from the secondary school environment. The performing arts are heavily dependent on peer group co-operation and a certain critical mass is necessary. Not all secondary schools can offer this. More personalised tuition can lead to good results, but artistic isolation is difficult to justify (6) and can lead to a false sense of worth. However, students in that age group are far more critical concerning the overall educational experience available to them - colleges provide more freedom, but also require more self discipline. It is not surprising that the students surveyed stated that the majority had found out about the course themselves.

Thus, the reasons students choose to take the course are complex. Student choice is centred on a combination of artistic, academic and personal reasons. This is all set in a socio-economic framework which has for the past few years favoured the growth of further education at the expense of secondary schools. Student choice is also made within a broader political climate where increasing emphasis is being placed upon vocational skills development and yet, despite BTEC's and staff perceptions as to the criticality of vocational training, it is interesting to note that students at 16-plus do not concur with this view. In simplistic terms, the educational system may be pushing for students to gain more and more vocational skills, but in reality they just want to perform.

Is the claim that BTEC National Diploma courses provide access into higher education justified or not?

The answer to this question is yes and no. Statistically it appears that BTEC qualified students are gaining access to higher education in increasing numbers. However, the number of courses has increased hugely during the past decade and so this is hardly surprising. What the statistics do not show is how many applicants with BTEC qualifications also had at least one supporting A'level or a graded music exam. Furthermore, most universities are quite specific in terms of their minimum matriculation requirements. These are normally stipulated as five G.C.S.E. passes and two GCE A'level passes at a specified grade. BTEC students who perform well on the programme may still get rejected either at interview or from paper because they do not have five G.C.S.E. passes. It should be remembered that BTEC entry requirements only stipulate four G.C.S.E. passes and this is not always rigidly applied. Thus, more

than one third of the students surveyed would be automatically excluded from higher education if this rule were to be meticulously applied (and for academic failings whilst they were fourteen to sixteen years-old).

The statistics also fail to show what type of BTEC qualification was utilised for degree level access. The higher education sector has had extensive discussion concerning the role of Higher National Diploma courses. I am aware of some universities who have utilised Higher National Diploma qualifications for first year degree access. BTEC claim the courses are of graduate status, and this is largely acknowledged through the funding situation both from government to the institutions concerned, and from Local Education Authorities to students in terms of grant assistance. Even within my own institution (Bretton Hall) there is differing practice according to the subject specialism. For sound academic reasons students with Higher National Diplomas who apply to undertake a degree in drama are only allowed direct entry to the second year of the course. However, in Fashion students are taken direct into the third year due to the consonance between the Higher National Diploma course and the degree programme as validated. Discussions with further education staff show that Bretton is by no means unusual in this respect.

Here we return to the issue of consistency which was repeatedly raised by further education staff in terms of the interface with higher education through the questionnaires, and is borne out by documentary evidence in various prospectuses and admissions policies. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the problems of the interface are necessarily due to prejudice. The evidence of the staff questionnaires seems to point towards two key factors, firstly the lack of understanding of the nature, structure and content of BTEC courses and secondly the lack of consonance between BTEC courses and degree programmes in many areas.

Do BTEC National Diploma courses provide students with the necessary skills and understandings required for undergraduate study in the performing arts?

The further education staff questionnaires reveal a very high level of support for the capability of the BTEC National Diploma providing appropriate skills and

understandings for degree level access. Opinions in higher education seem to differ. Statistically the evidence points towards the sector's reluctance to take BTEC students in most subject areas (Art and Design being the exception). Central to this debate seems to be the requirement for most degree programmes in the performing arts to enrol students who can clearly demonstrate both practical and theoretical skills. The perceived lack of academic credibility in the BTEC course, as evidenced by the low priority, the separation of the academic units, and the feeling that academic concerns are difficult to integrate into the overall BTEC programme must surely support this argument.

Some of the further education staff recognise this difficulty, and the concerns seem to be highlighted in subject areas where more emphasis is traditionally placed upon academic scholarship (e.g. music) as opposed to practical skills (e.g. drama). The response of some further education staff to this problem has been to try and boost the academic credibility of their students for higher education through requiring them to undertake A'level studies in combination with the BTEC course. Others recognise the necessity to emphasise the academic, claiming the course had always had the capability of rigour in this area but,

" It depends on how it is taught." (7)

From the documentary evidence of the course guidelines it is clear that little emphasis is placed upon theoretical understandings and priority is given to practical skills development. It could be argued that there is an essential imbalance between BTEC's primary vocational focus and the fact that they claim the course provides access for students into higher education. Naturally, it is impossible to specify the needs of the higher education sector as they differ significantly according to university, subject discipline and subject interpretation. However, unless the higher education sector is prepared to start generating courses which interface with the new profile of students emerging from further education the apparent divide between BTEC and A'level student entry will surely widen.

There is some evidence to suggest that higher education is starting to address this concern, with the development of increasingly vocational degree programmes in the performing arts and the increasing clarity provided in terms of access policies.

Nevertheless, given the high numbers of quality students that are still being rejected from the more traditional A'level entry pathways, higher education is unlikely to take this agenda on board until funded growth is allowed back into the sector. Until that time change will only be through osmosis rather than as a result of direct action.

To what extent have the implementation of new access policies affected the recruitment profile in the performing arts?

This question cannot be fully answered from the statistical evidence. There are too many variables in the equation such as the rapid growth in higher education places, the pro-active way in which some universities deal with Access courses, the financial constraints faced by mature applicants considering returning to higher education, etc. Nevertheless, the interviews and statistical data suggest that there is certainly a willingness to implement the principles of widening access amongst higher education staff, but not the understanding of the effort required to engage with these policies at anything more than a superficial level (8).

The changes to the admissions systems make statistical comparison difficult as what is not known is the rate of growth of BTEC qualified applicants in relation to the overall intake profile in the performing arts. Whilst there is evidence to support the adoption and dissemination of access and non-standard entry policies by many higher education institution, there does not appear to be any marked change in the entry profile. Students with A'levels still comprise the majority of the intake and the percentage of BTEC qualified students accepted, if anything, seems to have fallen during the two years surveyed. In the 1993 UCCA and PCAS admissions systems approximately 12% of the applications were from BTEC qualified students. Of these approximately 11% were accepted onto the courses. In 1994 the percentage of total applicants had risen to 13.3% of whom 10.9% were successful.

In the performing arts the gulf between application rates and acceptances was even more marked, and there is clear evidence that the different disciplines address the issue of access, and the acceptability of non-standard qualifications in very different ways. Drama and Dance tend to be far more receptive to changes in policies and the adoption of non-standard routes of entry. Music seems very unwilling to change and only takes a

very small percentage of students (4.6%) who are vocationally qualified.

One might therefore deduce that, whilst policies on access and non-standard entry are endorsed officially by practically all institutions in the sector, the reality remains that very few students (in percentage terms) are being taken onto courses through these pathways. The increasing competition for places (especially in the performing arts) and the desire to maintain standards at a time of ever diminishing resources, would appear to result in the admission of 'safer' A'level in preference to BTEC qualified students. However, even this supposition is not wholly safe as none of the statistics provide an analysis of BTEC achievements (i.e. how many passes, merits and distinctions). Thus, students may have been rejected because of poor entry profiles and not necessarily because A'level qualified applicants were preferentially treated.

To what extent do BTEC staff and student attitudes militate against successful progress onto undergraduate courses?

In this respect there was a wide range of opinion demonstrated by the staff questionnaires and the structured interviews. At one extreme there was the view that students took the BTEC qualification because they were 'not good enough' for A'levels, at the other extreme the survey revealed 78.4% of further education staff confirmed the suitability of the course form higher education access. Neither of these positions are as clear cut as they might initially appear. Almost two-thirds of students in the three colleges surveyed had 5 G.C.S.E. passes at C or above and were therefore qualified to take A'levels. However, of the 78.4% of staff who responded, almost a quarter stipulated that BTEC was suitable for higher education access so long as it was delivered properly with the appropriate emphasis on the academic units.

Whilst staff clearly have to be supportive of their students one might question whether the level of expectation has anything to do with reality or whether it is simply a means of building confidence in the students. Student expectations are equally high with 75.4% anticipating they will go on to further study.

One might ask whether staff or students have considered the extent of competition with which they will be faced (i.e. more than thirteen applications per place across the

sector) and an average acceptance rate of approximately one in three. Thus, two out of every three applicants in the performing arts are likely to be unsuccessful in gaining a place anywhere within the higher education sector (let alone at their first choice college or university) regardless of whether they have a good BTEC qualification or good grades at A'level.

If one accepts the argument that student and staff expectations in the further education sector are inflated, it is difficult to ascertain whether this attitude actually assists them in their quest for a higher education place or not. An argument could be put forward that without this high level of expectation the acceptance rates would be even lower than at present. The interviews and survey of further education staff reveals considerable time is spent counselling students as to their choice of course, and in preparing them for interview and audition. I am therefore of the opinion that the high level of expectation does not militate against higher education access, but does lead to a feeling of discrimination and unfair treatment from the higher education sector. It is far easier to claim unfair treatment than to accept that, given the competition, one is just not quite good enough.

The collapse of the binary line has clearly started to erode the differences between the old PCFC and UCCA institutions. Similarly, it will be important for the further education sector to continue to discuss its interface with higher education over the next decade as incorporation in further education offers them increased opportunities for educational freedom.

Whatever the case, it cannot be acceptable in the long term for further and higher education to continue to ignore the problems caused by misinterpretation of one another's needs. Both sectors are dependent upon one another, both have the capability to ignore this fact and whilst demand for their services remains high this attitude can be retained. Nevertheless, the warning signs of the effect of market forces, the devastating effects of complacency or under recruitment (9) cannot be resisted in the longer term.

Is there any evidence of discrimination against National Diploma students within university/ college departments?

Discrimination is an emotive term. I firmly believe that higher education staff believe they are scrupulously fair in respect to admissions and would reject any suggestion of discrimination. Nevertheless, the statistical data clearly shows that BTEC students are less likely to gain admission to higher education than A'level qualified candidates.

The reasons for this have been rehearsed above, but key to the debate are the following three points:

1. The admissions processes of many higher education institutions are designed to evaluate a different skills set than those offered by BTEC students. Entry procedures which focus on the academic and theoretical skills may be necessary, but will obviously not be reflective of the strengths of BTEC students whose focus for the previous two years is likely to have been on practical realisation (10).
2. Staff in higher education have seen their workloads increase dramatically in the past few years. The admissions process is laborious, and requires the reading of hundreds of individual applications. Decisions have to be made before students even get to interview and from my discussions with some higher education staff it is evident that certain students are rejected almost immediately because of their anticipated qualifications and their educational background. There is no overt policy to reject BTEC students but, put simply, the detailed statistics from Bretton Hall show that more BTEC students than A'level students get rejected prior to interview, and that acceptance rates from interview are proportionally the same. If it was to be the case across the sector one could argue that BTEC students were not being given a fair chance to compete against other students.
3. The level of awareness of alternative qualifications amongst the majority of higher education staff is limited. Access and admissions tutors seem to be bombarded with literature but the majority of higher education institutions do not have developed systems by which this information is disseminated to all concerned with the interview process. There is safety in what is known, and

yet pose the question of the suitability of a BTEC in Music Theatre, a SCOTVEC qualification in Musical Instrument Technology, a GNVQ in Art and Design or a City and Guilds qualification in Electronics and most higher education tutors are left calling for advice from the registrar's department. It is easy to blame the higher education sector for this, and yet the responsibility must also remain with the further education sector for the confusion it is causing through the plethora of different qualifications, validating bodies, the contrasting aims and objectives of courses and the acknowledged variations in the quality, delivery and standards of courses. Surely some rationalisation must follow, and government policy on GNVQs and NVQs was meant to bring this about. The reality, however, is different. Whilst acknowledging that we are in a period of transition within further education, the effect of both forms of vocational qualifications has been to greatly confuse the overall picture and to send even more confused signals to the higher education sector.

Does BTEC's vocational focus militate against access into undergraduate courses?

Yes, in the majority of cases. Some further education staff recognise this fact and are at pains to ensure the academic content is thoroughly developed from within the course guidelines. The majority do not place sufficient emphasis upon the development of both academic and practical skills whilst acknowledging the necessity for student to demonstrate both for higher education access. There was also recognition that BTEC was more suited to degree programmes that had a "high practical content" or degree courses with a more overtly vocational focus. Given the care that the higher education sector takes over admissions it is likely that tutors perceive these problems and are therefore not prepared to make more offers to BTEC qualified candidates.

The BTEC documentation places considerable emphasis on its ability to provide appropriate training for progression into higher education, and one of the main aims is to,

" provide a suitable education and training for entry to higher education" (11)

and yet the statistical data and the survey information on the nature and quality of the teaching in respect to the academic units does not bear this out. In this light it is interesting to note that BTEC has recently been reviewing its primary objectives with a view to moderating this claim.

Can any generalised qualification in the performing arts serve the varied needs of the higher education sector?

This question is somewhat of a 'hostage to fortune'. The obvious answer is no, in that even a cursory examination of entry requirements to courses in a single subject area reveal enormous variations in the criteria being applied and the skills and understandings expected from students. This is hardly surprising when one considers the variety of possibilities in the arts, the differences of interpretation, and the different methodologies available, all of which have academic credence. Thus, if one surveyed the hundred or so music degree programmes across the country there would be large areas of consonance, but equally significant areas of dissonance.

It is also known that Government policy is seen to be driving 16-plus education away from the limited specialism of A levels to a broader set of qualifications. AS'levels have started to facilitate this process and there is widespread support from some quarters to develop the type of qualification already undertaken in Scotland where at least four subjects have to be studied to obtain a Scottish Higher.

Yet this push towards more generalised qualifications for matriculation purposes seems to be in conflict with the increasing specialisation of vocational qualifications, and student demand which is equally subject specific, and in some instances has led to closure of more generalised pathways (e.g. The BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts at Newcastle College no longer has a music pathway as this has been superseded by three specialist National Diploma courses in music).

Given all of this information it is now possible to return to the primary question,

Are students with A'levels more likely to be given places in higher education than appropriately qualified BTEC students? (11)

The answer must be a qualified 'yes'. Whilst acknowledging that there are a wide range of mitigating and interpretative factors which lead us to this position, it cannot be denied that student do appear to be less likely to progress into higher education than if they had been undertaking A'level courses.

Chapter Nine: Notes

1. Brewer and Hunter. Op.cit. p48
2. Bartz. A.E. Basic Descriptive Statistics. p1
3. It is ironic that the very LEAs that established many of the huge further education colleges across the country have now had control wrested from their hands through incorporation.
4. BTEC's lists of approved centres for the National Diploma in Performing Arts was last published in 1994. This list only includes colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. More recent data is not yet available.
5. In 1991 Cramlington High School in Northumbria made formal application to run the BTEC First Diploma in Business and Finance.
6. Between 1984 and 1988 I taught specialist music classes to 6th form students in Bedfordshire Schools. Whilst the county had an outstanding reputation and infrastructure in support of practical music making, the largest year group I taught during this period contained seven students. In some schools the cohort was as small as three.
7. Course Leader at Coventry Centre for Performing Arts
8. For example, non-standard students were actively encouraged to apply for drama at Newcastle Polytechnic in 1990 and 1991 as a direct result of community engagement on behalf of students on the course who took their work, and the course philosophy, to a wide range of communities in the region. However, at Bretton the policy has now been extended through formal partnership with

Hereward College (the national centre for the disabled) and in many cases this requires the creation of individual programmes of study and the utilisation of flexible distance and open learning packages.

9. It is interesting to note that under-recruitment has led to the holdback of funding from a wide range of institutions in both sectors. For example, Bolton Institute of Higher Education have lost £450,402, University of Northumbria £304,990 and South Bank University £1,341,427. For similar reasons Rotherham College of Further Education recently announced ninety one staff redundancies as a direct result of under recruitment.
10. One student who recently graduated from Bretton Hall with a first class honours degree related to me his experience of interview at a well known 'new' university with a good reputation in the performing arts. He was offered an interview on the basis of his outstanding performance ability and the reference clearly identified that he had outstanding potential but needed assistance with music literacy if he were to progress. In audition he was publicly asked a wide range of questions pertaining to music theory. He was then asked to sit an music theory examination paper and by this time felt so "brutalised" (his words) by the system that he left and withdrew all of his applications to higher education. It was only the personal intervention of the course leader who utilised personal contacts in the College that led to him being interviewed, accepted and graduating from Bretton Hall.
11. Given the lack of statistical evidence concerning the composition of BTEC qualifications it is difficult to know whether BTEC students are rejected because their unit marks are not considered 'appropriate'. Many prospectuses now publish projected BTEC profiles for under-graduate degree courses in the performing arts, and the normal profiles refer to unit marks being 'mainly merits and distinctions' (Bretton Hall Prospectus: Dance course 1994 - 96) Thus, I have chosen to interpret the term 'appropriate' as 'suitable for matriculation' to try and avoid such complexities.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

The primary focus of this research has concerned the evolving relationship between the further and higher education sectors as evidenced through the BTEC National Diploma course in Performing Arts, illustrated through case studies of two colleges in the North East of England. The contextual framework behind all of these areas is critical in providing a level of understanding from which the analysis can take place. Whilst the previous chapter concentrated on reviewing the data in relation to the specific questions posed at the start, this final section will examine these findings in relation to the educational and philosophical issues that have remained 'live' during this research programme, and which I suspect will remain at the forefront of our concerns for years to come.

The utilisation of a multi-method analytical approach has provided useful cross-referencing of material and ideas in what is a highly complex and constantly evolving area. Education policies are difficult enough to analyse in isolation, but when one has to consider the effects of such policies on both the further and higher education sectors during a period of unprecedented change, it is hardly surprising that the answers that appear to emerge are seldom 'black or white'.

The utilisation of a multi-method analytical technique goes some way towards providing the safety net required to explore such a huge quantity of shifting data. An argument arising from a single source through a single analytical technique has to be

viewed extremely cautiously in relation to the overall argument and a value judgement made as to its significance. An argument that arises from more than one source, or from more than one technique, can rapidly develop into an irresistible theme demanding attention.

The collapse of the binary line and freeing of PCAS and further education institutions from Local Education Authority (ergo Government) control has irreversibly changed the face of education. Although the cynical view may be taken that the primary motivating factor was to enforce financial constraint on the sector under the guise of improved efficiency, it should not be forgotten that other more laudable aims were also motivating factors. These were the desire to increase student numbers engaged in higher education and to widen access to parts of the population who may not normally have considered this an appropriate or achievable goal. Whilst it is clear the former has been achieved, with statistics demonstrating a significant increase in the number of students now engaged in higher education, the statistical evidence would seem to indicate that the issue of widening access remains only partially resolved.

Obviously there are increasing numbers of students entering higher education through 'non-standard' routes, but the extent to which this simply reflects the increasing number of students undertaking vocational qualifications is not clear. There are numerous examples of excellent access initiatives across the sector which have been specifically designed to encourage adult learners to enter higher education, but many of these schemes operate within subject areas that universities have traditionally struggled to fill. Thus, generic access courses exist and a number of specialist access courses are in existence designed to encourage candidates in the subjects such as business, sciences and engineering. However, my research has been unable to find a single dedicated access course for non-standard entrants seeking to gain access to an undergraduate degree course in the performing arts. This obviously raises the question of whether such policies are driven by financial imperatives or educational philosophy.

“The ending of the binary line has been welcomed..... It will only be meaningful if it improves access and the quality of education for students themselves.” (1)

The statistical data seems to prove that the rapid increase in student numbers has largely been achieved through making more places available to students from

A'level backgrounds. Thus, it could be argued that all we have achieved are higher success rates in social categories that were already well represented in the higher education sector. The Government's statements on increasing the number of students entering higher education were based upon the necessity to create a more highly educated work-force and to open university education to parts of society that had not previously considered this form of education accessible. It is sometimes easy to forget that this period of change has been motivated by a complex cocktail of fiscal, moral and philosophical factors which have been shaping all aspects of educational policy. For example, if we were to examine the single issue of whether students should pay for their education many would argue strongly against this. Politicians proclaim the importance of equality of access, the student charter supports fair treatment for all and yet surely we are already in a situation where funding issues are forcing many students to consider whether they can afford to enter universities or to continue with their studies. The National Union of Students has indicated that levels of student borrowing have never been so high as at present, and surely one must question a system where almost 10% of students within an institution are driven to apply for financial assistance to the Student Hardship Fund. (2) In my opinion the continued financial pressure on students and the sector as a whole threatens the very principles of academia which are central to our existence. (3)

“ In recent years the expansion of higher education was achieved on the cheap. This cannot continue if the quality standards in higher education are not to fall.” (4)

The focus on the two colleges in the North East of England was designed to bring detailed and subject specific data into an argument that had previously been based on generalities and national perspectives. Although there are some areas of specific local interpretation within the data (the high percentage of students who seek higher education places in their region of domicile, or the distortion of statistics that arises from the high profile of the HNDs at Newcastle College) the results that emerge from the case studies would seem to be representative of the national picture generated by the survey of further education staff. Similarly, the focus on Bretton Hall in terms of certain higher education perspectives was not assumed to be wholly representative of the sector, but in my view (as supported through the statistics and cross-referenced through the structured interviews) it is representative and occupies the middle-ground

between the extremes of views and data that are perpetuated in parts of the hugely complicated higher education sector.

The growth of BTEC courses has been extremely rapid, providing a much needed vocational and practical course of study for students in the 16-plus age group who wished to continue in education but were either not suitable for or not attracted by A'level courses. There is little evidence to support the notion that BTEC is for the students who are not capable of A'level study as the majority of students on the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts exceeded the normal A'level entry requirements of five G.C.S.E. passes, and many of the students surveyed were already taking A'level programmes in parallel with their BTEC qualification.

Herein lies the nub of the issue. Whilst many concerned with admissions into higher education courses claim the reasons behind the poor acceptance rates are issues of standards and the unsuitability of candidates, the real reason issue is one of educational philosophy. The interface between A'levels and under-graduate degree programmes is easy. Courses have been written over many years to capitalise on the knowledge and understandings of students coming from A'level courses, and the pressure of increased workload on academic staff and diminishing resources provides little incentive to change. The interface between the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts and the majority of undergraduate degree programmes in the same subject area is difficult. Although some under-graduate programmes are slowly adapting to the changing entry profile with which they are being presented the majority see no reason to change considering the popularity and success of a proven product.

The debates concerning 'education' and 'training' have been rehearsed for many years, and will no doubt continue. It is ironic that the one area where BTEC and GNVQ qualifications are gaining more widespread acceptance is art and design. It is not without coincidence that the debates concerning 'theory' and 'practice', 'academic' or 'vocational' and most prominently 'art' and 'craft' have been extensively aired, placing the discipline further down the route towards understanding these issues than is the case in other subjects.

Whatever the political or financial reasons behind changes in educational policy one should not forget that, at an operational level, the students who are actually on the

BTEC National Diploma course are unlikely to be concerned with philosophical debates concerning the nature of education. Their primary concerns are focused on whether they will be successful in gaining employment or a place in higher education at the end of their studies. They want a course that is relevant, balanced and enjoyable. Most of the students considered the BTEC National Diploma to be all of these things. They were sceptical as to the vocational capability of the course and had a more realistic understanding of their future 'employability' than is stated in the BTEC documentation. Most considered their 'passport' to future employment was through a degree programme. Hence, the desire to gain access to higher education.

An unexpected result of the questionnaires was the very high levels of staff and student expectation concerning access into higher education. This was despite the knowledge that the performing arts are very popular and highly competitive. From the student perspective it may be possible to attribute this partially to the 'enthusiasm of youth' but there are other factors that must surely contribute to this perception, and the consequent disappointment which inevitably follows for many of them. Students are repeatedly told how good they are. They have to audition to gain access even to the National Diploma course, they are told their work is subject to national standards, professionally moderated, open to constant external scrutiny through public performance and is appropriate for matriculation. Of course they believe this, because all of it is true. What is missing is the reality that more than thirteen applications are made for every available higher education place in the performing arts. Less than 40% of applicants will gain admission to any course in the performing arts, let alone their first choice, regardless of whether they are BTEC or A'level qualified.

Staff from both sectors are culpable in continuing to fuel the debate. It is possible to become so embroiled in the philosophical and educational debates that we lose sight of the real 'players' upon whom we all depend. Students are being required to make career shaping decisions at sixteen, or even earlier. I believe the majority find it difficult to project what will happen next week let alone where they want to be in ten years time. Their decisions are made upon the basis of information provided from a variety of sources. Teachers and Careers Advisors may help but the questionnaires reveal the vast majority of students said they found out and decided upon the course themselves.

We are also being bombarded with demands for changes in educational policy

through the media. The importance of vocational training for the future health of the economy is constantly being reinforced. Students are told vocational training is their future, and BTEC itself proudly proclaims that its courses: provide an educational foundation for a range of careers; develop the ability to inter-relate and use knowledge, skills and understandings; assist students to be responsive to changing demands; provide the opportunity for the development of personal qualities and competencies; provide a basis for continuing education and career development (5). Because students believe the course will provide them with "a basis for continuing education" they inevitably feel 'let down' or even discriminated against when the higher education sector is unable to meet their expectations.

Thus, in returning to the primary question concerning the ability of BTEC National Diploma students to progress into higher education courses, the answer would seem to be that progression onto degree courses will remain problematic for the majority of students (6). The reasons for this are many and varied: the inappropriate nature of the National Diploma course for certain academic degree programmes; the lack of understanding of BTEC courses and structures by higher education staff; the lack of emphasis placed on the teaching of a balanced curriculum of academic and practical activity by further education staff; the high levels of expectation of staff and students in the further education sector; the culture of change across both sectors that has led to mixed messages being projected to students concerning growth, expansion and constraint.

Although we know that there are a mitigating factors (the majority have been explained through the conduct of this research), the answer to the question.

Are students with A'levels more likely to be given places in higher education than well-qualified BTEC students?"

is yes. A state of affairs likely to remain so for some considerable time unless philosophical differences are resolved, understandings widened and funding improved to enable those in the sector capable of providing a quality educational experience to meet the demands and expectations of future students.

Chapter Ten: Notes

1. Elaine Harrison One Voice Past the Binary Crossroads to Progress (26.6.92) Times Higher Education Supplement p 4
2. In 1996 Bretton Hall received 192 applications to the Student Hardship fund. Its total undergraduate fte at the time was 2090 (9.2%).
3. Bretton Hall continues to receive good reports from HEQC, HEFCE Quality Assessments and the T.T.A. and yet the harsh reality of the funding situation is that in 1992 the College received an average £7,200 per fte from a variety of government sources. At the start of 1996 this had fallen to £4,100 per fte. Without imaginative staffing policies and the generation of increasing quantities of income from alternative sources the College would surely have been forced to close. Government statistics still proclaim that Bretton is one of the most financially stable Colleges, giving pause for thought about the situation facing other institutions.
4. Elaine Harrison Op cit.
5. BTEC Annual Report 1990, p3
6. Progression is also difficult for A'level qualified candidates. However, BTEC emphasises the capability of National Diploma courses in providing students with higher education access when this is patently not the case in the vast majority of cases.

GLOSSARY**Abbreviations**

ADAR	Art and Design Admissions Registry
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CNAAB	Council for National Academic Awards
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
EEDS	European Economic Development Services
ELIA	European League of Institutes in the Arts
FE	Further Education
FEFCE	Further Education Funding Council England
GTTR	Graduate Teacher Training Registry
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council England
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HND	Higher National Diploma
ILB	Industry Lead Body
MASN	Maximum Aggregate Student Number
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OND	Ordinary National Diploma
PCAS	Polytechnics and Colleges Admissions System
PCFC	Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council
QAC	Quality Assurance and Control
RSA	Royal Society for the Arts
SCOTVEC	Scottish Vocational Education Council
SCUDD	Standing Conference of University Drama Departments
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UCCA	Universities and Colleges Central Admissions
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions System

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Policies in Response to Secondary Curriculum Change and
Wider Access, Nov. 1988
- DES Universities in the Training Market, 1989

- DES After Lancaster House: A Study of Industry's Plans for training and its use of Further and Higher Education, May, 1989
- DES In Pursuit of Quality: An HMI View, 1990
- DES A Survey of Creative and Performing Arts Degree Courses, 1990
- EEDS The Economic Impact of the Arts in Tyne and Wear
European Economic Development Services, Jan 1991
- FEFCE Getting to Grips with Education and Training
Unit for Industry, 1992
- HEQC Vocational Qualifications and Standards in Focus
Higher Education Quality Council, 1995
- Newcastle College BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music, Course Submission, 1989
- Newcastle College Strategic Plan, 1995
- Nottingham Polytechnic Quality in Higher Education, Sept. 1990
- PCAS 1992 - 93 Annual Report
- PCFC Action Plan: for the Creation of a Single Funding Council for Higher Education in England, Nov 1991
- RSA GNVQ: Information on General National Vocational Qualifications, RSA Examination Board, Jan 1993
- Sunderland City Colleges 1995 Prospectus, 1994

- UCCA Admissions Procedure 1992-3
- UCCA Thirty-first Report 1992-93
- UCCA Statistical Supplement to 1992-93 Report.
- UCAS Annual Report 1993 - 1994 Entry
- University of
Birmingham Propsectus for 1996 Entry, (1995)
- University of Luton 1996 Prospectus, 1995
- University of
Oxford Propsectus for 1996 Entry, (1995)

Articles and Periodicals

- Harrison. E One Voice Past the Binary Crossroads to Progress,
Times Higher Education Supplement, 26.6.92
- Sanders. C Lawsuit Threat as Kingston Ponders Cuts
Times Higher Education Supplement 9.4.93
- Sanders. C Demands for Grades Hinders Access Claim
Times Higher Education Supplement 9.4.93
- Smith. A A Voice for Culture Times Higher Education
Supplement 19.6.92
- Tysome. T FE Heads Go Radical on Funding
Times Higher Education Supplement 7.5.93
- New Qualification Lacks Test
Times Higher Education Supplement 26.6.92

APPENDIX ONE

**Further and Higher Education Courses in the Performing Arts
in the North East of England**

Gateshead College	<p>BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music</p> <p>BA (Hons) Performing Arts (in conjunction with the University of Sheffield)</p>
Monkwearmouth College	<p>BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music</p>
Newcastle College	<p>Access to Popular Music, Dance and Drama</p> <p>NCFE Dipoma in Music (Foundation Studies)</p> <p>BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Dance)</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Drama)</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Stagecraft)</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Media</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology</p> <p>BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Dance</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Drama</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Music Theatre</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Applied Music Studies</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Jazz, Popular and Commercial Music</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Music Technology</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Music Production</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Theatre/ Media Prod.</p>

New College Durham	<p>BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music</p> <p>BTEC Higher National Diploma in Business (Music Industry Management)</p>
North Tyneside College	<p>BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts</p>
South Tyneside College	BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts
University of Durham	<p>BA Music (Single Honours) BA Music/Eng (Joint Honours) BA Music/Latin (Joint Honours) BA Music/Modern Languages (Joint Honours) BA Combined Studies BA Music and Education MA Music (Composition and 20th Century Studies) MA Music (Ethnomusicology) MA Music (Analysis) MA Music (Electroacoustical Studies) MA Research M Mus Ph.D.</p>
University of Newcastle	<p>BA Music BA Music (Combined Studies) MA Medieval Music MA Music MA Music Research Techniques MA/Diploma Music Technology M Mus/Diploma Composition M.Mus/Diploma Performance M.Phil/PhD</p>

University of Northumbria	BA Drama BA Music M.Phil/PhD
University of Sunderland	BA Creative Art Studies (including Dance, Drama and Music) BA Combined Studies (Music option)

APPENDIX TWO**Academic Staff Interviewed/Assisted the Process of Research**

<u>Higher Education Staff</u>		<u>Responsibilities</u>
Professor G. Bell	Principal, University College Bretton Hall (OFSTED Inspector)	<i>Acad Man</i>
Professor D. Best	Philosophy Department. University of Wales.	<i>Acad Lect</i>
Mr I. Birchinall	Deputy Registrar, University of Leeds.	<i>Registry</i>
Mr A. Brown	Registrar, University College Bretton Hall, (Chair of SCOP Admissions Committee)	<i>Registry</i>
Ms J. Butterworth	Head of Centre for Dance Studies, University College Bretton Hall	<i>Acad Man/ Lect.</i>
Mr P. Cowen	Head of School of Dance and Theatre, University College Bretton Hall.	<i>Acad Man/ Lect</i>
Dr P. Harrop	Head of Drama, Chester College of Higher Education.	<i>Acad Man/ Lect</i>
Ms E. Jones	Course Leader BA(Hons) Performing Arts, University of Northumbria	<i>Primarily lecturing</i>
Professor L. Landy	Head of Music, University College Bretton Hall.	<i>Acad Man/ Lect</i>
Professor D. Marjoram	Retired (Ex -Chief H.M.I.)	<i>Acad Man</i>

Dr A. Moore	Senior Lecturer in Music, University of West London	<i>Lecturing</i>
Mr T. Myatt	Senior Lecturer in Music, University of York	<i>Lecturing</i>
Mr J. Neelands	Senior Lecturer in Drama, University of Warwick	<i>Lecturing</i>
Prof S. Roodhouse	Dean of Faculty of Arts University of Derby	<i>Acad Man</i>
Professor J. Rushton	Head of Department of Music, University of Leeds	<i>Acad Man/ Lect</i>
Ms J. Smith	Admission Officer, University College Bretton Hall.	<i>Registry</i>
Mr I. Spiby	Head of Performing Arts, Nene College, University of Leicester	<i>Acad Man/ Lect</i>
Mr R. Williams	Ex-Chief HMI for Performing Arts, OFSTED Inspector.	<i>Acad Man</i>

Further Education Staff

Ms V. Jobbins	Head of Performing Arts, Islington, 6th Form Centre.
Mr S. May	Head of Performing Arts, Monkwearmouth College.
Mr R. Patterson	Head of Drama (Performing Arts), Newcastle College

(Other academic staff were interviewed in each of the three selected FE institutions. Because of the sensitivity of some of the information provided they have not been named here. My thanks to the course/subject leaders above without whose co-operation this research could not have been undertaken.)

APPENDIX THREE**Colleges Running BTEC National Performing Arts
Courses in England: 1993**

Avon	City of Bath College *Weston Super-Mare College of Further Education
Barking	*Barking College of Technology
Barnsley	Barnsley College
Berkshire	*East Berkshire College Langley College of Further Education *Newbury College
Bolton	Bolton Metropolitan College
Bucks	Stantonbury Campus
Calderdale	*Calderdale College
Cambridge	*Cambridge Regional College
Cheshire	West Cheshire College
Cleveland	*Cleveland Technical College Kirby College of Further Education *Stockton-Billingham Technical College
Cornwall	Mid Cornwall College
Coventry	*Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts
Croydon	*Croydon College
Cumbria	Cumbria College of Art and Design
Derbyshire	*Chesterfield College of Technology and Arts *South East Derbyshire College
Devon	*South Devon College of Arts and Technology South West Consortium for Leisure, Training and Education
Doncaster	Doncaster College
Dorset	Weymouth College
Dudley	Halesowen College
Durham	New College Durham

Essex	Epping Forest College *Harlow College
Gateshead	Gateshead College
Hants	Cricklade Tertiary College Farnborough College of Technology The Regional Centre at Queen Mary's College *South Downs College of Further Education
Harrow	Elm Park College
Hereford	*Kidderminster College of Further Education
Herts	Dacorum College North Herts College
Humberside	Grimsby College of Technology and Arts *Hull College of Further Education
Kirklees	Dewsbury College *Huddersfield Technical College
Knowsley	*Knowsley Community College
Lancs	Accrington and Rossendale College *Blackpool and the Fylde College Nelson and Colne College
Leeds	Park Lane College Thomas Danby College
Liverpool	*City of Liverpool Community College Sandown College
London	City and East London College Cockpit Theatre and Arts Workshop Hammersmith and West London College Islington Sixth Form Centre Kingsway College *North London College Tower Hamlets College Waltham Forest College
Manchester	South Manchester College
Newcastle	Newcastle College
Norfolk	Norfolk College of Arts and Technology
Northern Ireland	*Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
North Yorks	Harrogate College of Arts and Technology
Northants	*Northampton College

Notts	Nottinghamshire College of the Performing Arts
Oldam	*Oldam College
Oxford	North Oxfordshire College and School of Art
Rochdale	Hopwood Hall College
Rotherham	Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
Sefton	*Southport College of Arts and Technology
Sheffield	Norton College
Solihull	The City Technology College Kinghurst
Somerset	Bridgwater College
	*Strode College
	*Yeovil College
St Helens	St Helens College
Staffs	Stafford College
	*Stoke on Trent College
Stratford	*Stratford Upon Avon College
Suffolk	Suffolk College of Further and Higher Education
Sunderland	Monkwearmouth College
Surrey	Brooklands Technical College
	North East Surrey College of Technology
Sussex	Chichester College of Technology
	Redbridge College
Tameside	Tameside College of Technology
Tyneside	North Tyneside College of Further Education
	*South Tyneside College
Wakefield	*Wakefield District College
Wales	*Coleg Glan Hafren
	*Swansea College
Warcs	East Warwickshire College of Further Education
	*South Warwickshire College of Further Education
Wigan	Leigh College
	Wigan College of Technology
Wilts	*New College Swindon
	*Salisbury College of Technology

97 Colleges in all **BOLD** = Institutions engaged in Student Questionnaires

* = Institutions who responded to the Staff Questionnaires (37 in all).

APPENDIX FOUR

Courses Offered By BTEC: (Correct as of February 1994)

First Courses

Business and Finance
Caring
Construction
Design
Distribution
Engineering
Hotel and Catering Studies
Information Technology Applications
Leisure Studies
Materials Technology
Motor Vehicle Studies
Performing Arts
Science

National Courses

Agriculture and Related Subjects
Audio Visual Design
Beauty Therapy
Building Studies
Business and Finance
Cartography
Civil Engineering Studies
Communications
Computer Studies
Construction

Crafts and Related Subjects
Dental Technology
Design
Design (Theatre Studies)
Display
Distribution
Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Engineering
Environmental Health Studies
Fashion and Clothing
Fashion and Textiles
Food technology
General Art and Design
Graphic Design and Related Subjects
Health Studies
Home Economics
Horticulture and Related Subjects
Hotel, Catering and Institutional Operations
Housing Studies
Interior Design
Land Administration
Leisure Studies
Maritime Technology
Materials Technology
Media
Metals Technology
Mining (Electrical) Engineering
Mining (Mechanical) Engineering
Motor Vehicle Studies
Music Production and Performance
Nautical Science
Nursery Nurses
Performing Arts
Photography
Pharmaceutical Science
Physics and Physiological Measurement
Plant Engineering

Popular Music
Printing
Public Administration
Reprography
Science
Social Care
Spatial Design
Surveying
Technical Illustration
Textile Science
Three Dimensional Studies
Travel and Tourism

Higher National Courses

Agriculture and Related Subjects
Applied Biology
Arts Management
Building Engineering Services
Building Studies
Business and Finance
Business Information Technology
Chemistry
Communications
Communications Engineering
Community Theatre
Computing
Crafts and Related Subjects
Dance
Distribution
Design
Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Engineering
Fashion and Clothing
Food Technology
Graphic Design

Home Economics
Horticulture and Related Subjects
Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management
Laboratory Science and Administration
Land Administration
Leisure Studies
Materials Technology
Mathematical Studies
Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Medical Laboratory Science
Medical Physics and Physiological Measurement
Metals Technology
Motor Vehicle Management
Motor Vehicle Studies
Music
Nautical Science
Pharmaceutical Science
Photography
Physics
Plant Engineering
Popular Music
Printing
Public Administration
Software Engineering
Spatial Design
Technical Illustration
Textile Science
Theatre
Theatre and Education
Three Dimensional Studies

APPENDIX FIVE**FE Surveys: Staff and Student Questionnaires**

- 5A Student Questionnaire
- 5B Staff Questionnaire
- 5C Statistical Return. (Newcastle College)
- 5D Statistical Return. (Monkwearmouth College)
- 5E Statistical Return. (Islington Sixth Form Centre)
- 5F Statistical Return. Summary of all three Colleges.
- 5G Statistical Return. BTEC Nat Dip staff. (37 Colleges)
- 5H Structured Interview Questions: Further Education Staff

APPENDIX 5A : BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN PERFORMING ARTS

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible.
 You are not required to identify yourself and all responses will be treated in confidence.

AGE SEX Male/Female (Delete as applicable)

QUALIFICATIONS: No of GCSEs C or above below C

Any other qualifications? (specify)

1. What was the main reason that led you to choose to undertake the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts? (Tick one)

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create Perf Arts work	Other
-----------------------	---------------------	----------------------------------	---	-------------

.....

(Other)

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts? (Tick one)

Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
--------------------	---------	--------------------------	--------	---------------------------

.....

(Other)

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations? (Tick One)

Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
------------	------------------	-----------	--------------	------------

.....

4. BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
-------	------	------------	-----------	------------

.....

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course?
(Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Practical Technical Academic Interpersonal Other
(Please specify)

.....

(Other).....

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most?
(Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

Arts in Production Performance Common Option
Society Techniques Workshop Skills Units

.....

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Arts in Production Performance Common Option
Society Techniques Workshop Skills Units

.....

8. Do you consider the teaching accommodation available to you on the course to be (Tick one)

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor Totally
Inadequate

.....

9. Do you consider the equipment/technical facilities available to you on the course to be (Tick one)

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor Totally
Inadequate

.....

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do? (Tick one)

- Be employed within the performing arts
- Be employed outside of the performing arts
- Go on to further study
- Unemployed
- Other (Please specify)

.....

(Other)

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose to attend? (Tick one)

- HND in one of the perf arts
- HND in another subject
- Degree in the one of perf arts (or comined PA)
- Degree in a subject outside of the perf arts)
- Other (Please specify)

.....

(Other)

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- No chance

.....

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- No chance

.....

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy? (i.e. Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Royal College of Music, London School of Contemporary Dance, etc.) (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

.....

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

.....

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

.....

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

.....

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Degree HND Specialist NVQs Other

.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The information contained within it is entirely confidential and no individual responses will be identified when collating the data.

APPENDIX 5B: BTEC NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN PERFORMING ARTS

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible. All responses will be treated in complete confidence. No individual responses will be identified in the analysis of the data.

1. Name of College

2. No of Students (all years) on BTEC Nat Dip in Performing Arts

3. Number of male students female students

4. Number of mature students (ie over 21)

5. How many staff are employed to teach the course?

Full time Part time Student/Staff Ratio

6. Normal entry requirements

7. How do you select your students?

8. Does your College offer any other BTEC courses in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Yes No

If yes please specify

9. What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?

10. What are the main strengths of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

11. Does the course structure outlined by BTEC have any major areas of weakness?

12. What impact will the introduction of GNVQs have on the courses you run?

13. In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?

14. Students wishing to go on to further study will normally be required to attend an interview/audition. How do you prepare students for this?

BTEC Performing Arts Staff Questionnaire

Page 2

15. Degree courses in the performing arts are normally greatly over subscribed. Most courses offer anticipated 'A' level entry grades required for entry. Are you aware of the normal BTEC profile that is required for students to gain admission?

Yes Please list average requirements (merits/distinctions)
 No What would anticipate? (merits/distinctions)

16. In your opinion what is the main reason why do students choose to take the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts? (Tick one)

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other (Please specify)
--------------------	------------------	----------------------------	---	---------------------------------

17. Where do most of your students gain information about the course prior to enrolment? (Tick one)

Careers Advisors	Teachers	Students on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
------------------	----------	------------------------	--------	---------------------------

18. Does the course fulfil the expectations of the students? (Tick one)

Completely Most of the time Sometimes Occasionally Not at all

19. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim? (Tick one)

Fully Well Reasonably Partially Not at all

20. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area students gain during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other (Please specify)
-----------	-----------	----------	---------------	---------------------------

21. Which of the course units do students most enjoy? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
-----------------	-----------------------	----------------------	---------------	--------------

BTEC Performing Arts Staff Questionnaire

22. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare students for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
-----------------	-----------------------	----------------------	---------------	--------------

23. Is the teaching/tutorial accommodation available to you for the course.....(Tick one)

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
-----------	------	--------------	------	--------------------

24. Are the technical facilities and equipment available to you for the course.... (Tick one)

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
-----------	------	--------------	------	--------------------

25. When students finish the course, what do you anticipate they will do?

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
.....%%%%%

26. Students who choose to continue their studies can opt for a variety of different courses. Which type of courses do they choose to attend?

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts (or combined PA)	Degree in a subject outside of PA	Other (Please specify)
.....%%%%%

27. On completion of the BTEC National Diploma course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
-----------	------	------	------	-----------

28. Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
-----------	------	------	------	-----------

BTEC Performing Arts Staff Questionnaire

Page 4

29. Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy? (i.e. Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Royal College of Music, London School of Contemporary Dance, etc.) (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

30. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

31. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

32. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy? (Tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor No chance

33. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts? (Tick one)

Degree HND Specialist NVQs Other

34. In your view how appropriate are the moderation and examination procedures prescribed by BTEC to the type of work undertaken by the students? (Tick one)

Completely Mainly Sometimes Occasionally Not at all

35. How much of your performance work is open to the public? (Approx. percentage)

0% - 20% 20% - 40% 40% - 60% 60% - 80% 80% - 100%

.....

36. How much of your performance work takes place outside of the college/institution?

0% - 20% 20% - 40% 40% - 60% 60% - 80% 80% - 100%

.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The information contained within it is entirely confidential and no individual responses will be identified when collating the data.

**APPENDIX 5C: SUMMARY OF STATISTICS: BTEC OND STUDENTS AT
NEWCASTLE COLLEGE**

Cohort Information: Number of students surveyed 38

Average Age of Students: Male 20.1 Female 18.2 Average 19.2

Gender Ratio: Male 52.6% Female 47.4%

Qualifications: GCSE Grade C or above: 5.0

GCSE Below Grade C: 2.6

Alternate: 1 mature student also has an 'A' level and one has a C&G in Communication and Entertainment

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
36.9%	5.2%	36.9%	10.5%	10.5%

Other: Loved the subject at School and wanted to do it again
Always wanted to do the performing arts
Needed to work with new people.

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
15.8%	10.5%	10.5%	5.3%	57.9%

Other: Vast majority said they found out about the course themselves
Fiancee who is sound technician.
Friend (tutor on the course)
Director at Local Arts Centre

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
0.0%	68.4%	26.4%	0.0%	5.2%

 Newcastle College: Summary of Statistics

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
0.0%	21.0%	31.6%	31.6%	15.8%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
1.2 (average scores)	3.2	3.2	2.8	2.0* only where specified by 6 people

Other: Directing, Increasing experience.

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
4.1 (average scores)	2.7	1.8	3.5	2.9

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
4.1 (average scores)	3.2	1.6	3.2	2.9

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
15.8%	26.3%	31.6%	15.8%	10.5%

 Newcastle College: Summary of Statistics

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
5.2%	47.4%	31.6%	15.8%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
15.8%	5.3%	68.4%	0.0%	10.5%

 Other: Travelling or moving abroad.

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose?

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
68.4%	5.3%	21.0%	0.0%	5.3%

 Other: Combined Arts Degree.

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
10.5%	68.4%	15.8%	5.3%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
5.2%	31.6%	52.8%	5.2%	5.2%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.0%	15.8%	57.9%	21.0%	5.3%

 Newcastle College: Summary of Statistics

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
5.3%	52.6%	42.1%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.0%	57.9%	42.1%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
10.5%	63.2%	26.3%	0.0%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
15.8%	31.6%	52.6%	0.0%	0.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
M	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%
F	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	33.3%	22.3%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
M	1.3	3.0	3.5	2.5	2.0 (Specified by 2 people)
F	1.1	3.4	2.9	3.2	2.0 (Specified by 4 people)
	(average scores)				

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	3.8	2.8	1.9	3.6	2.9
F	4.4	2.7	1.4	3.4	3.1
	(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	4.2	2.9	1.6	3.3	3.0
F	3.9	3.4	1.7	3.2	2.8
	(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%
F	11.1%	22.2%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	0.0%	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%
F	11.1%	44.5%	33.3%	11.1%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
M	20.0%	10.0%	70.0%	0.0%	0.0%
F	11.1%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	22.2%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
M	80.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
F	55.6%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	11.1%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	10.0%	70.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%
F	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	10.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	10.0%
F	0.0%	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	0.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%
F	0.0%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	11.1%

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%
F	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%
F	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%
F	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
M	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
F	11.1%	22.2%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%

ANALYSIS BY YEAR GROUP OF BTEC OND STUDENTS AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

Cohort Information: **Number of students surveyed 38**

Yr 1 18 (8m/ 10f)
Yr 2 20 (12m/ 8f)

Average Age of Students: Yr 1 Male 18.5 Female 18.0
 Yr 2 Male 21.2 Female 18.3

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

	Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
Yr1	22.2%	0.0%	44.4%	22.2%	11.2%
Yr2	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	10.0%

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

	Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%	66.7%
Yr2	20.0%	10.0%	20.0%	0.0%	50.0%

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

	Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
Yr1	0.0%	66.6%	22.2%	0.0%	11.2%
Yr2	0.0%	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
Yr1	0.0%	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	22.3%
Yr2	0.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
Yr1	1.2	2.7	3.1	2.3	2.0 (Specified by 2 people)
Yr2	1.1	3.4	3.0	3.1	2.0 (Specified by 4 people)
	(average scores)				

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	4.4	3.3	1.7	3.7	1.9
Yr2	3.8	2.2	1.7	3.4	3.9
	(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	4.3	2.9	1.8	3.8	2.2
Yr2	3.8	3.4	1.5	2.8	3.5
	(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	22.2%	11.1%	33.4%	22.2%	11.1%
Yr2	10.0%	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	22.3%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	0.0%	22.2%
Yr2	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	77.8%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%
Yr2	60.0%	10.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	20.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%
Yr2	10.0%	30.0%	50.0%	0.0%	10.0%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	11.1%	44.5%	33.3%	11.1%
Yr2	0.0%	20.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%

 Newcastle College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	55.6%	44.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	11.2%	44.4%	44.4%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	10.0%	80.0%	10.0%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
Yr1	11.1%	22.2%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

**APPENDIX 5D: SUMMARY OF STATISTICS: BTEC OND STUDENTS AT
MONKWEARMOUTH COLLEGE**

Cohort Information: Number of students surveyed 44

Average Age of Students: Male 21.1 Female 21.0 Average 21.1

Gender Ratio: Male 47.7% Female 52.3%

Qualifications: GCSE Grade C or above: 4.5

GCSE Below Grade C: 3.0

Alternate: 1 mature student also has a 2.1 degree
in Social Sciences.

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
29.5%	4.6%	34.1%	29.5%	2.3%

Other: To see how good I was.

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
9.1%	31.8%	15.9%	0.0%	43.2%

Other: Vast majority said they found out about the course themselves
Friend
Came through City and Guilds.

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
15.9%	63.6%	11.5%	4.5%	4.5%

 Monkwearmouth College: Summary of Statistics

4. BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?
- | Fully | Well | Reasonably | Partially | Not at all |
|-------|-------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 13.6% | 50.0% | 18.3% | 13.6% | 4.5% |
-
5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)
- | Practical | Technical | Academic | Interpersonal | Other |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1.7
(average scores) | 1.8 | 3.0 | 3.5 | NA. No-one specified. |
-
6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)
- | Arts in Society | Production Techniques | Performance Workshop | Common Skills | Option Units |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 3.6
(average scores) | 2.8 | 1.4 | 3.1 | 4.1 |
-
7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)
- | Arts in Society | Production Techniques | Performance Workshop | Common Skills | Option Units |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 4.1
(average scores) | 2.4 | 1.9 | 2.6 | 4.0 |
-
8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?
- | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Poor | Totally Inadequate |
|-----------|-------|--------------|------|--------------------|
| 4.5% | 56.7% | 31.8% | 6.8% | 0.0% |
-

 Monkwearmouth College: Summary of Statistics

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
6.8%	59.1%	29.6%	4.5%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
18.2%	0.0%	79.5%	2.3%	0.0%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose?

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
47.7%	0.0%	45.5%	4.5%	2.3%

 Other: Counselling

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.0%	47.8%	50.0%	2.2%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
2.3%	22.7%	63.6%	11.4%	0.0%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
2.3%	4.6%	65.9%	20.4%	6.8%

 Monkwearmouth College: Summary of Statistics

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
22.7%	40.9%	27.3%	9.1%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
13.6%	52.3%	29.6%	4.5%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
13.7%	29.5%	43.2%	9.1%	4.5%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
63.7%	29.5%	4.5%	2.3%	0.0%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

4. BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
M	0.0%	52.4%	28.6%	9.5%	9.5%
F	26.1%	47.8%	8.7%	17.4%	0.0%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
M	1.5	2.0	2.9	3.6	NA Not specified
F	1.9	1.6	3.1	3.4	NA Not specified

(average scores)

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	3.8	3.0	1.8	2.7	3.7
F	3.4	2.7	1.2	3.4	4.3

(average scores)

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	4.2	2.7	2.1	2.6	3.4
F	3.9	2.3	1.6	2.7	4.5

(average scores)

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	0.0%	57.1%	38.1%	4.8%	0.0%
F	8.7%	56.5%	26.1%	8.7%	0.0%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	14.3%	23.8%	52.4%	9.5%	0.0%
F	0.0%	91.3%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
M	38.1%	0.0%	57.1%	4.8%	0.0%
F	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
M	61.9%	0.0%	23.8%	9.5%	4.8%
F	34.8%	0.0%	65.2%	0.0%	0.0%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	52.4%	42.9%	4.7%	0.0%
F	0.0%	43.5%	56.5%	0.0%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	4.8%	19.0%	52.4%	23.8%	0.0%
F	0.0%	26.1%	73.9%	0.0%	0.0%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	4.8%	0.0%	38.1%	42.8%	14.3%
F	0.0%	8.7%	91.3%	0.0%	0.0%

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	19.0%	52.5%	19.0%	9.5%	0.0%
F	26.1%	30.4%	34.8%	8.7%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	76.2%	14.3%	9.5%	0.0%
F	26.1%	30.4%	43.5%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	9.5%	28.6%	42.9%	9.5%	9.5%
F	17.4%	30.4%	43.5%	8.7%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
M	52.4%	33.3%	9.5%	4.8%	0.0%
F	73.9%	26.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

**ANALYSIS BY YEAR GROUP OF BTEC OND STUDENTS AT
MONKWEARMOUTH COLLEGE**

Cohort Information: **Number of students surveyed 44**

Yr 1 25 (14m/ 11f)
Yr 2 19 (7m/ 12f)

Average Age of Students: Yr 1 Male 19.9 Female 20.9
 Yr 2 Male 23.7 Female 21.2

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

	Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
Yr1	36.0%	0.0%	24.0%	36.0%	4.0%
Yr2	21.1%	10.5%	47.3%	21.1%	0.0%

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

	Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	8.0%	32.0%	12.0%	0.0%	48.0%
Yr2	10.5%	31.6%	21.1%	0.0%	36.8%

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

	Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
Yr1	28.0%	56.0%	12.0%	0.0%	4.0%
Yr2	0.0%	73.7%	10.5%	10.5%	5.3%

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
Yr1	24.0%	40.0%	24.0%	8.0%	4.0%
Yr2	0.0%	63.2%	10.5%	21.0%	5.3%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
Yr1	1.6	1.8	3.0	3.5	NA Not specified
Yr2	1.9	1.7	2.9	3.5	NA Not specified
	(average scores)				

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	3.7	3.6	1.5	2.8	3.4
Yr2	3.4	1.8	1.4	3.5	4.9
	(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	4.2	2.6	2.1	2.3	3.8
Yr2	3.9	2.3	1.5	3.0	4.3
	(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	8.0%	60.0%	32.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	52.6%	31.6%	15.8%	0.0%

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	0.0%	48.0%	44.0%	8.0%	0.0%
Yr2	15.8%	73.7%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	20.0%	0.0%	76.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Yr2	15.8%	0.0%	84.2%	0.0%	0.0%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	57.9%	0.0%	26.3%	10.5%	5.3%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	28.0%	72.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	73.6%	21.1%	5.3%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	4.0%	8.0%	72.0%	16.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	42.1%	52.6%	5.3%	0.0%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	4.0%	0.0%	52.0%	32.0%	12.0%
Yr2	0.0%	10.5%	84.2%	5.3%	0.0%

 Monkwearmouth College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	16.0%	56.0%	16.0%	12.0%	0.0%
Yr2	31.6%	21.1%	42.1%	5.2%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	16.0%	60.0%	20.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	10.5%	42.1%	42.1%	5.3%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	24.0%	36.0%	36.0%	0.0%	4.0%
Yr2	0.0%	21.1%	52.6%	21.1%	5.2%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
Yr1	72.0%	16.0%	8.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Yr2	52.6%	47.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

**APPENDIX 5E: SUMMARY OF STATISTICS: BTEC OND STUDENTS AT
ISLINGTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE**

Cohort Information: **Number of students surveyed 36**

Average Age of Students: Male 18.2 Female 19.1 Average 18.6

Gender Ratio: Male 61.1% Female 38.9%

Qualifications: GCSE Grade C or above: 4.2

GCSE Below Grade C: 2.2

Alternate: 3 of the students on the course had no formal qualifications.

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
11.1%	11.1%	66.6%	5.6%	5.6%

Other: To learn to work in a Studio.

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
5.6%	19.4%	22.2%	11.1%	41.7%

Other: Vast majority said they found out about the course themselves

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
5.6%	44.4%	44.4%	0.0%	5.6%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Summary of Statistics

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
0.0%	16.6%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
2.0 (average scores)	1.8	3.4	2.9	3.0 (1 specified)

Other: Ability to adapt

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
3.0 (average scores)	2.4	1.7	4.4	3.5

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
3.7 (average scores)	3.0	2.2	2.6	3.5

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
0.0%	5.6%	55.6%	22.2%	16.6%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Summary of Statistics

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
5.6%	44.5%	27.7%	11.1%	11.1%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
16.6%	0.0%	77.8%	0.0%	5.6%
Other: Travelling or moving abroad.				

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose to attend?

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
16.6%	0.0%	66.6%	5.6%	11.2%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
16.6%	38.9%	38.9%	0.0%	5.6%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
5.6%	11.1%	66.6%	11.1%	5.6%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy? (i.e. Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Royal College of Music, London School of Contemporary Dance, etc.)

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.0%	11.2%	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Summary of Statistics

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
38.9%	50.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
50.0%	27.8%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
38.9%	50.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
50.0%	22.3%	19.4%	0.0%	8.3%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
M	0.0%	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	9.1%
F	0.0%	28.6%	14.2%	28.6%	28.6%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
M	1.9	1.7	3.7	2.7	
F	2.1	1.9	3.0	3.2	3.0 (1 specified)

(average scores)

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	2.9	2.4	1.8	4.5	3.4
F	3.2	2.4	1.6	4.2	3.6

(average scores)

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	3.8	3.0	2.8	1.9	3.5
F	3.6	3.0	1.2	3.6	3.6

(average scores)

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	0.0%	9.1%	45.4%	18.2%	27.3%
F	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	9.1%	27.3%	36.3%	9.1%	18.2%
F	0.0%	71.6%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
M	18.2%	0.0%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%
F	14.3%	0.0%	71.6%	0.0%	14.3%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
M	18.2%	0.0%	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%
F	14.3%	0.0%	71.6%	0.0%	14.3%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	27.2%	36.4%	36.4%	0.0%	0.0%
F	0.0%	42.9%	42.9%	0.0%	14.2%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	9.1%	18.2%	63.6%	9.1%	0.0%
F	0.0%	0.0%	71.6%	14.2%	14.2%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Gender

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	0.0%	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%	9.2%
F	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	28.6%	42.8%

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	36.4%	45.4%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%
F	42.9%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	54.5%	18.2%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%
F	42.8%	42.8%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
F	57.1%	28.5%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
M	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%	9.1%
F	42.8%	28.6%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%

ANALYSIS BY YEAR GROUP OF BTEC OND STUDENTS AT ISLINGTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Cohort Information: **Number of students surveyed 36**

Yr 1 20 (12m/ 8f)
Yr 2 16 (10m/ 6f)

Average Age of Students: Yr 1 Male 17.4 Female 18.2
 Yr 2 Male 19.2 Female 20.3

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

	Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
Yr1	10.0%	10.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Yr2	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

	Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	10.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	50.0%
Yr2	0.0%	18.8%	37.5%	12.5%	31.2%

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled your expectations?

	Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
Yr1	0.0%	40.0%	50.0%	0.0%	10%
Yr2	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
Yr1	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	10.0%	20.0%
Yr2	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
Yr1	2.0	1.9	3.2	3.2	
Yr2	2.0	1.7	3.4	2.9	3.0 (1 person specified)
	(average scores)				

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	3.2	2.5	1.6	4.5	3.2
Yr2	2.8	2.3	1.8	4.3	3.8
	(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	3.8	2.8	2.1	2.7	3.6
Yr2	3.6	3.2	2.3	2.5	3.4
	(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%
Yr2	0.0%	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	0.0%	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	20.0%
Yr2	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	10.0%	0.0%	90.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	25.0%	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	12.5%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	25.0%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	20.0%	40.0%	30.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Yr2	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	10.0%	10.0%	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Yr2	0.0%	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	0.0%	10.0%	35.0%	25.0%	30.0%
Yr2	0.0%	12.5%	31.3%	43.7%	12.5%

 Islington Sixth Form College: Analysis of Statistics by Year Group

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Yr2	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
Yr1	40.0%	20.0%	35.0%	0.0%	5.0%
Yr2	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

 Overview Statistics: Summary

4. BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
5.1%	30.4%	32.3%	20.3%	11.9%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
1.6 (average scores)	2.3	3.2	3.1	2.2

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
3.6	2.6	1.7	3.6	3.5
(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
4.0	2.8	1.9	2.8	3.5
(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
6.8%	31.3%	39.0%	14.4%	8.5%

 Overview Statistics: Summary

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
5.9%	50.8%	29.7%	10.2%	3.4%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
16.9%	1.7%	75.4%	0.8%	5.2%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you choose?

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
45.7%	1.7%	44.9%	1.8%	5.9%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
8.5%	51.7%	35.6%	2.5%	1.7%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
4.2%	22.0%	61.0%	9.3%	3.5%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.8%	10.2%	53.4%	24.6%	11.0%

 Overview Statistics: Summary

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
22.0%	47.5%	27.1%	3.4%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
20.3%	46.6%	31.4%	1.7%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
20.3%	46.6%	28.0%	3.4%	1.7%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
44.1%	28.0%	24.6%	0.8%	2.5%

 Overview Statistics by Gender

4. BTEC courses are designed to "prepare people for employment". In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
M	0.0%	33.3%	41.3%	15.9%	9.5%
F	10.9%	27.3%	21.8%	25.4%	14.6%

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
M	1.6	2.2	3.4	2.9	2.0 (2 specified)
F	1.7	2.3	3.0	3.3	2.2 (5 specified)

(average scores)

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	3.4	2.8	1.8	3.6	3.4
F	3.7	2.6	1.4	3.6	3.7

(average scores)

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
M	4.0	2.9	2.2	2.6	3.3
F	3.8	2.8	1.5	3.1	3.8

(average scores)

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	6.4%	31.7%	31.7%	14.3%	15.9%
F	7.3%	30.9%	47.3%	14.5%	0.0%

 Overview Statistics by Gender

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
M	7.9%	33.4%	39.7%	12.7%	6.3%
F	3.6%	70.9%	18.2%	7.3%	0.0%

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
M	25.4%	3.2%	69.8%	1.6%	0.0%
F	7.4%	0.0%	81.7%	0.0%	10.9%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
M	52.4%	3.2%	33.3%	6.3%	4.8%
F	36.3%	0.0%	56.4%	0.0%	7.3%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	12.7%	52.4%	30.2%	4.7%	0.0%
F	3.6%	50.9%	41.9%	0.0%	3.6%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	7.9%	25.4%	52.4%	11.1%	3.2%
F	0.0%	18.2%	70.9%	7.3%	3.6%

 Overview Statistics by Gender

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	1.6%	12.7%	44.5%	33.3%	7.9%
F	0.0%	7.4%	63.6%	14.5%	14.5%

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	22.2%	52.4%	22.2%	3.2%	0.0%
F	21.9%	41.8%	32.7%	3.6%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	19.0%	54.0%	23.8%	3.2%	0.0%
F	21.8%	38.2%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
M	12.7%	38.1%	36.5%	9.5%	3.2%
F	21.8%	20.0%	40.0%	18.2%	0.0%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
M	42.9%	30.1%	22.2%	1.6%	3.2%
F	45.4%	25.5%	25.5%	0.0%	3.6%

OVERVIEW STATISTICS OF BTEC OND STUDENTS BY YEAR GROUP
(Islington, Monkwearmouth and Newcastle Colleges)

Cohort Information: **Number of students surveyed 118**

Yr 1 63 (34m/ 29f)
Yr 2 55 (29m/ 26f)

Average Age of Students: Yr 1 Male 18.7 Female 19.2
 Yr 2 Male 21.1 Female 20.1

1. Why did you choose the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?

	Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other
Yr1	23.8%	3.2%	44.4%	23.8%	4.8%
Yr2	25.4%	10.9%	41.8%	14.6%	7.3 %

2. Who advised you to choose the BTEC National Diploma Course in Performing Arts?

	Careers Advisor	Teacher	Student on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	9.5%	22.2%	7.9%	6.4%	54.0%
Yr2	10.9%	20.0%	25.4%	3.7%	40.0%

3. Now that you are on the course, has it fulfilled you expectations?

	Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
Yr1	11.1%	54.0%	27.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Yr2	3.7%	65.4%	25.4%	3.7%	1.8%

4. BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?

	Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
Yr1	9.5%	25.4%	34.9%	15.9%	14.3%
Yr2	0.0%	36.4%	29.1%	25.4%	9.1%

 Overview Statistics by Year Group

5. Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area from which you have gained during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other
Yr1	1.6	2.2	3.2	3.1	2.0 (2 specified)
Yr2	1.6	2.4	3.1	3.1	2.2 (5 specified)
	(average scores)				

6. Which of the course units have you enjoyed the most? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	3.7	3.2	1.6	3.6	2.9
Yr2	3.5	2.0	1.8	3.6	4.1
	(average scores)				

7. Which of the course units do you consider best prepare you for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)

	Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
Yr1	4.1	2.7	2.0	2.9	3.3
Yr2	3.9	2.9	1.8	2.7	3.7
	(average scores)				

8. How do you view the teaching accommodation available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	9.5%	27.0%	38.1%	15.9%	9.5%
Yr2	3.6%	36.4%	40.0%	12.7%	7.3%

9. How do you view the facilities/technical available to you on the course?

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
Yr1	3.2%	41.3%	36.5%	12.7%	6.3%
Yr2	9.1%	61.8%	21.8%	7.3%	0.0%

 Overview Statistics by Year Group

10. When you have finished the course, what do you anticipate you will do?

	Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	14.3%	3.2%	74.6%	1.6%	6.3%
Yr2	20.0%	0.0%	76.4%	0.0%	3.6%

11. If you were to continue with your studies which type of course would you attend?

	HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the perf arts	Degree in another subject	Other (Please specify)
Yr1	44.4%	0.0%	52.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Yr2	45.5%	3.6%	34.5%	7.3%	9.1%

12. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	12.7%	42.9%	41.2%	0.0%	3.2%
Yr2	3.6%	43.6%	47.4%	5.4%	0.0%

13. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	4.8%	15.9%	66.6%	12.7%	0.0%
Yr2	3.6%	29.1%	54.6%	5.4%	7.3%

14. When you complete the course what do you think your chances would be of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	1.6%	6.4%	44.4%	30.2%	17.4%
Yr2	0.0%	14.6%	63.6%	18.2%	3.6%

 Overview Statistics by Year Group

15. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	19.0%	54.0%	22.2%	4.8%	0.0%
Yr2	25.4%	40.0%	32.8%	1.8%	0.0%

16. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	22.2%	46.0%	30.2%	1.6%	0.0%
Yr2	14.5%	36.5%	32.7%	14.5%	1.8%

17. What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
Yr1	22.2%	33.3%	30.2%	12.7%	1.6%
Yr2	10.9%	25.5%	50.9%	10.9%	1.8%

18. Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?

	Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
Yr1	44.5%	19.0%	33.3%	1.6%	1.6%
Yr2	43.6%	38.2%	14.6%	0.0%	3.6%

APPENDIX 5 G

Questions 1 - 4: *Student Statistics*

Name of College	No of Students	Male	Female	Mature
Barking College	76	26	50	12
Belfast Institute	42	11	31	8
Blackpool and the Fylde	74	32	42	7
Calderdale College	24	10	14	3
Cambridge Regional Col.	28	9	19	3
Chesterfield College	22	11	11	3
Cleveland College	-	-	-	-
Coventry Centre for P.Arts	44	12	32	9
Croydon College	50	17	33	6
Coleg Glan Hafren	23	7	16	6
East Berkshire College	40	12	28	6
Harlow College	60	20	40	6
Huddersfield Technical College	33	12	21	11
Hull College	65	24	41	10
Kidderminster College	70	30	40	0
Knowsley Community Col.	40	16	24	6
Liverpool Community Col.(City)	55	25	30	28
Newbury College	39	14	25	2
Northampton College	38	9	29	5
North London College	60	32	28	5
Oldham College	55	20	35	5
Salisbury College	52	18	34	9
South Devon College	48	20	28	6
South Downs College	94	44	50	10
South East Derbyshire Col.	36	16	20	4
Southport College	30	14	16	2
South Tyneside College	50	24	26	25
South Warwickshire College	18	7	11	5
Stoke on Trent College	28	11	17	3
Stratford Upon Avon College	58	18	40	3
Stockton and Billingham College	47	13	34	0
Strode College	26	14	12	5
Swansea College	26	10	16	4
Swindon (New College)	38	12	26	4
Wakefield College	40	20	20	2
Weston Super Mare College	34	12	22	8
Yeovil College	34	12	22	1
	<u>1597</u>	<u>614</u>	<u>983</u>	<u>227</u>

Average Student Numbers	44.3
Average Percentage of Male Students	38.5%
Average Percentage of Female Students	61.5%
Percentage of Mature Students	14.2%

Question 5: Staffing Statistics

Name of College	FT Staff	PT Staff	Student/Staff Ratio
Barking College	3.5	5	15:1
Belfast Institute	4	2	14:1
Blackpool and the Fylde	5	6	-
Calderdale College	2	4	15:1
Cambridge Regional Col.	5	5	15:1
Chesterfield College	2	5	11:1
Cleveland College	-	-	-
Coventry Centre for P.Arts	3	8	15:1
Croydon College	2	8	12:1
Coleg Glan Hafren	2	5	11:1
East Berkshire College	6	12	-
Harlow College	6	5	15:1
Huddersfield Technical College	2	13	12:1
Hull College	2	4	13:1
Kidderminster College	5.5	6	15:1
Knowsley Community Col.	4	2	20:1
Liverpool Community Col.(City)	6	2	15:1
Newbury College	3	2	-
Northampton College	5	1	12:1
North London College	4	3	12:1
Oldham College	8	7	17:1
Salisbury College	2	4	17:1
South Devon College	10	9	14:1
South Downs College	7	3	15:1
South East Derbyshire Col.	2	3	-
Southport College	3	2	10:1
South Tyneside College	3	9	12:1
South Warwickshire College	2	4	11:1
Stoke on Trent College	4	5	-
Stratford Upon Avon College	2	2	-
Stockton and Billingham College	5	1	15:1
Strode College	4	3	-
Swansea College	2	7	13:1
Swindon (New College)	4	7	10:1
Wakefield College	4.5	8	15:1
Weston Super Mare College	1	5	-
Yeovil College	8	5	-
	<u>143.5</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>13.7 : 1</u>

Average Full Time Staff Numbers	4.0
Average Part Time Staff Numbers	5.1
Average Student Staff Ration	13.7 : 1

Question 6: *Normal Entry Requirements*

36 Colleges responded with BTEC Guideline of 4 GCSE at Grade C or above. Some Colleges added the necessity for students to have relevant experience in an appropriate discipline.

1 College stated its entry requirements as 3 GCSEs (Grade C or above).

1 College mentioned that it also took students from the BTEC First Diploma course and 1 College mentioned its used of the APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) for mature students.

Question 7: *How do you select your students*

35 Colleges responded that students were selected through Interview and Audition, assuming they had the appropriate entry qualifications.

2 Colleges selected students through full day practical workshops.

Question 8: *Does Your College offer any other BTEC courses in the performing arts?*

Yes - 22 Colleges = 59.5%

No - 15 Colleges = 40.5%

Other BTEC courses specified:

BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts x 8

BTEC National Diploma in Design (Theatre Studies)

BTEC National Diploma in Music Production and Performance.

BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music x 2

BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Circus)

BTEC HND in Community Theatre x 2

BTEC HND in Dance x 2

BTEC HND in Music

BTEC HND in Performing Arts x 4

BTEC HND in Popular Music

BTEC HND in Theatre

BTEC HND in Theatre and Education x 2

Question 9: *What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?*

Expansion of Access courses for adults.
 Gaining acceptability for BTEC Performing Arts courses.
 GNVQ x 20 (All against the introduction)
 Growth of more specialist National Diplomas in the Performing Arts x 3
 Growth of specialist HNDs x 4
 Introducing concept of life long learning.
 Modularisation x 6 (4 for 2 against)
 More students taking degree courses, less students in specialist schools.
 Move towards more students taking A'level courses.
 Requirement for greater standardisation of standards x 2
 Revision of courses in terms of quality, quantity and HE needs.
 Responding to cuts in funding

Question 10: *What are the main strengths of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?*

Ability to interpret guidelines flexibly and individually x 3
 Breadth of programme x 13
 Community interface x 2
 Continuous Assessment x 2
 Development of self management and interpersonal skills x 3
 Emphasis on technical and administrative aspects of production.
 Focus on performance opportunities x 4
 For students who want to 'get up and do' rather than academic study.
 Practical approach to learning x 4
 Quality assurance mechanisms x 2
 Skills development x 4
 Students able to progress into HE.
 Synthesis of theory and practice x 4
 Technical skills development.
 Vocational focus x 7

Question 11: *Does the course outlined by BTEC have any major areas of weakness?*

No 12 Colleges (32.4%) Yes 25 Colleges (67.6%)

Weakness identified were:

Arts Administration and Arts and Society do not integrate with other units

Assessment and grading procedures x 7

Common skills grading very poor

Concern that national grading levels are not equitable.

Course is too prescriptive for mature students.

Course lacks definition x 6

Music units inappropriate.

Inappropriate objectives x 6

Indicative content is haphazard

Too bureaucratic.

Out-dated course programme - lack of relevant skills x 4

Question 12: *What impact will the introduction of GNVQs have on the courses you run?*

Negative responses received from 25 Colleges (67.6%)

Administratively cumbersome x 6

Jeopardise integration x 2

Lack of flexibility x 2

Lowering of quality/standards x 5

Reduction in ability to develop centre-initiated work x 2

Running production based courses will be difficult or impossible

They will close the BTEC courses x 3

Wholly negative x 3

8 Colleges (21.6%) said they didn't know/were unsure of the impact of GNVQs on their course?

4 Colleges (10.8%) responded that there would be little or no impact.

Very little x 3

None - BTEC Diplomas to be retained "as long as there is a need"

GNVQs being piloted from 1996, but BTEC allowed to continue

None of the Colleges responded in favour of the introduction of GNVQs.

Question 13: *In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?*

29 Colleges said BTEC did adequately prepare students (78.4%)

Fine for practically based performance degrees x 8

Yes if they are performing at distinction level.

Yes if delivered appropriately (with a proper academic content) x 7

Yes. That's why we changed from offering A'level courses.

2 Colleges were undecided (5.4%)

In some instances/It can do x 2

6 Colleges thought BTEC did not adequately prepare students (16.2%)

Not of use for performing arts courses with a high academic content x 2

Not at present - (course needs to be re-written) x 2

Not for 'old style' academic degrees x 2

Question 14: *Students wishing to go on to further study will normally be required to attend an interview/audition. How do you prepare students for this?*

36 Colleges said they did prepare their students. The majority said that they undertook 'mock' auditions, all said they gave tutorial advice and two Colleges said that the audition process had been built in as an essential course component.

1 College said they did not prepare students due to a lack of time.

Question 15: *Degree courses in the performing arts are normally greatly over subscribed. Most courses offer anticipated 'A' level entry grades required for entry. Are you aware of the normal BTEC profile that is required for students to gain admission?*

Yes 78.4%

Please list average requirements (merits/distinctions)

The majority made the point that offers varied. Respondents who stated precise requirements varied greatly. E.g. 4 distinction, all distinctions, 5 distinctions and 8 merits, 3 distinctions and the rest merits, 66% merits only.

No 21.6%

What would anticipate? (merits/distinctions)

The responses to the anticipated requirements largely followed those above, varying from 5 merits and 4 distinctions, mainly distinctions, all merits, etc.

Question 16: *In your opinion what is the main reason why do students choose to take the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?*

Practical Training	Vocational Focus	Develop Performance Skills	To understand and create perf arts work	Other (Please specify)
24.3%	32.4%	29.8%	5.4%	8.1%

Other: Not qualified to take 'A' levels, Reputation of the Course, Other courses not available in region.

Question 17. *Where do most of your students gain information about the course prior to enrolment?*

Careers Advisors	Teachers	Students on the course	Family	Other (Please specify)
24.3%	27.0%	27.0%	0.0%	21.7%

Other: College publicity (x3),
High local profile of performances (x2),
Open/Taster days (x2)
Friend.

Question 18: *Does the course fulfil the expectations of the students?*

Completely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
0.0%	94.6%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Question 19: *BTEC courses are designed to “prepare people for employment”. In your view does the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts achieve this aim?*

Fully	Well	Reasonably	Partially	Not at all
5.5%	45.9%	21.6%	18.9%	8.1%

Question 20: *Which of the following do you consider to be the most important skills area students gain during the course? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)*

Practical	Technical	Academic	Interpersonal	Other (Please specify)
1.7	3.2	3.5	1.9	2.4 (5 specified)

Other: Creative skills (x2), Publicity and Marketing, Transferable skills.
Interpersonal skills.

Question 21: *Which of the course units do students most enjoy? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most enjoyable)*

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
3.7	3.0	1.4	4.6*	2.3

* 9 of the 37 Colleges who responded said that all aspects of their Common Skills teaching was now integrated into the other units.

Question 22: *Which of the course units do you consider best prepare students for future employment? (Prioritise 1 to 5. 1 is the most important)*

Arts in Society	Production Techniques	Performance Workshop	Common Skills	Option Units
4.3	3.0	2.8	1.6	3.3

Question 23: *Is the teaching/tutorial accommodation available to you for the course.....*

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
10.8%	48.6%	18.9%	21.7%	0%

Question 24: *Is the technical facilities/equipment available to you for the course.....*

Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Totally Inadequate
8.1%	56.8%	32.4%	2.7%	0%

Question 25: *When students finish the course, what do you anticipate they will do?*

Be employed within the performing arts	Be employed outside of the performing arts	Go on to further study	Unemployed	Other (Please specify)
9.2%	21.3%	61%	8.5%	0%

Question 26: *Students who choose to continue their studies can opt for a variety of different courses. Which type of courses do they choose to attend?*

HND in one of the perf arts	HND in another subject	Degree in one of the P A (or comb PA)	Degree in a subject outside of PA	Other (Please specify)
30.5%	4.7%	56.5%	3.1%	5.2%

Question 27: *On completion of the BTEC National Diploma course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto an HND course in the performing arts?*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
86.5%	8.1%	5.4%	0%	0%

Question 28: *Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance onto a degree course in the performing arts?*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0%	64.9%	21.6%	13.5%	0%

Question 29: *Having completed the BTEC National Diploma Course what chance do you think students have of gaining acceptance into a specialist school/academy? (i.e. Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Royal College of Music, London School of Contemporary Dance, etc.)*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
0.0%	21.6%	56.8%	13.5%	8.1%

Question 30: *What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto an HND course in the performing arts?*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
27.0%	18.9%	54.1%	0.9%	0.0%

Question 31: *What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand of being accepted onto a degree course in one of the performing arts?*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
8.1%	72.9%	13.6%	5.4%	0.0%

Question 32: *What sort of chance do you think that students who have taken 'A' levels stand a of being accepted into a specialist school/academy?*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No chance
8.1%	16.2%	67.6%	8.1%	0.0%

Question 33: *Which type of higher level course do you consider best equips students for a profession in the performing arts?*

Degree	HND	Specialist	NVQs	Other
13.5%	40.6%	37.8%	8.1%	0.0%

Question 34: *In your view how appropriate are the moderation and examination procedures prescribed by BTEC to the type of work undertaken by the students?*

Completely	Mainly	Sometimes	Occasionally	Not at all
5.4%	67.6%	21.6%	2.7%	2.7%

Question 35: *How much of your performance work is open to the public?*

Range between 20% and 100%

Average 78.4%

Question 36: *How much of your performance work takes place outside of the college/institution?*

Average 42.6%

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: FE STAFF

Introduction

- A. Outline to interview.
- B. Explain rationale behind research.

Questions around which to structure the interview

1. Name of College, No of Students (all years) on BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts: Male/Female/Age
2. How many staff are employed to teach the course? What is your role?
3. Normal entry requirements? If oversubscribed, what processes do you use to select students?
4. Does your College offer any other BTEC courses in the performing arts?
5. What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?
6. What are the main strengths of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?
7. Does the course structure outlined by BTEC have any major areas of weakness?
8. What impact will the introduction of GNVQs have on the courses you run?
9. In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?
10. Students wishing to go on to further study will normally be required to attend an interview/audition. How do you prepare students for this?
11. Degree courses in the performing arts are normally greatly over subscribed. Most courses offer anticipated 'A' level entry grades required for entry. Are you aware of the normal BTEC profile that is required for students to gain admission?

APPENDIX SIX**Courses in the Performing Arts**
Bretton Hall (College of the University of Leeds)*Specialist undergraduate degree programmes:*

BA (Hons) Dance	Annual intake 33
BA (Hons) Contemporary Music	Annual intake 21
BA (Hons) Music Performance Studies	Annual intake 21
BA (Hons) Popular Music Studies	Annual intake 21
BA (Hons) Theatre (Acting)	Annual intake 33
BA (Hons) Theatre (Broadcast Acting)	Annual intake 17
BA (Hons) Theatre (Devised and Applied Acting)	Annual Intake 33
BA (Hons) Theatre (Design and Technology)	Annual Intake 33
BA (Hons) Performance Management	Annual intake 18

Joint or combined honours degree programmes

BA (Hons) Performing Arts (Drama with English/Music/Dance)	Annual intake 18
BA (Hons) Performing Arts (Dance with English/Music/Drama)	Annual intake 18
BA (Hons) Performing Arts (Music with English/Drama/Dance)	Annual intake 18
BA (Hons) Arts and Education (Music with Education)	Annual intake 18
BA (Hons) Arts and Education (Drama with Education)	Annual intake 18

Specialist Postgraduate Programmes

MA Contemporary Performing Arts (Dance)

MA Contemporary Performing Arts (Drama)

MA Contemporary Performing Arts (Music)

Joint or Combined Postgraduate Programmes

PGDip/MA Arts Education (Music)

PGDip/MA Arts Education (Dance)

PGDip/MA Educational Theatre

Research Degrees

MA (Research)

M.Phil.

Ph.D.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Structured Interviews: Higher Education Staff

7 A: Questions

Introduction

- A. Outline to interview.
- B. Explain rationale behind research.

Questions around which to structure the interview

1. Name of College/University , No of Students (all years) on Performing Arts degree courses (Dance, Drama, Music, etc.)
2. Normal entry requirements?
3. If oversubscribed, what processes/criteria do you use to select students for interview?
4. What processes/criteria do you use to select students during interview?
5. What do you consider to have been the key development in undergraduate performing arts education over the past few years?
6. What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?

7. What is your opinion on the capabilities of students who apply with non-standard qualifications?
8. What do you know about the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?
9. Do you accept students from the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?
10. In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?
11. In your opinion what are the main weaknesses of the BTEC National Diploma course **or** of non-standard applicants (if the answer to question seven had been negative).

Appendix 7 B: Summary of Responses

The following data has been extracted from the notes taken during the structured interviews. I was impressed by the similarity of understandings and the consonance of views (irrespective of the host institution) represented by the three main categories of staff interviewed - registry, academic management and lecturing staff. For this reason the responses have been grouped in this manner to highlight the main issues.

1. Institutional Statistics

Bretton Hall	circa 600 fte undergraduates.(See Appendix Six: mainly on specialist degree pathways)
Chester College	circa 200 fte undergraduates (Mainly drama - majority on modular programmes with drama a major/minor part)
University of Leeds	circa 220 fte undergraduates.(Mainly on music degree programmes but also a strength in Drama within English)
Nene College	circa 150 fte in drama, but also developing other specialist pathways and providing modular courses for students on a range of courses)
University of Northumbria	circa 120 fte in drama and music (major emphasis on community-based arts work and very high percentage of non-standard entrants)
University of York	circa 200 fte. (Mainly on music degree programmes, but these have developed into areas technology providing a significant interface with other departments within the University)

2. *Normal entry requirements?*

Registry-based staff - (largely conformed with one another - informed by regulation and statute - extensive experience)	G.C.S.E. passes in 5 subjects including two at A'level. Specific grades needed and/or A'level points - appropriate subjects for individual courses widely understood. BTEC treated as a special case in most institutions, however, administrative systems simply reliant on confirming academic judgement on suitability. Decisions on BTEC profiles quite confused or not understood at all. Only one interviewee actually knew how many units were contained within the BTEC ND course - and therefore what was meant by staff when they stipulated a BTEC profile of 'primarily merits and distinctions'. Attitudinal differences between 'old' and 'new' universities manifest in the manner in which these staff interact with academics and management, but largely operating to the same criteria and terms of reference.
Academic Management -	all able to talk with confidence about entry requirements, entry policies, etc. Many had an accurate understanding of the requirements for specific courses, even though it was clear these decisions may well be taken by others. BTEC broadly welcomed by staff from the 'new' universities and cautiously acknowledged by staff from the 'old' universities.
Lecturing -	great deal of detailed knowledge concerning entry requirements for the specific courses. Understanding of the preferred A'level combinations, grades and examination boards. All recognised the significant development of BTEC courses and that they were now being presented with increasing numbers of students applying from BTEC. None knew how many units were contained in the BTEC ND although the majority had a clear view of the type of BTEC profile expected.

3. *If oversubscribed, what processes/criteria do you use to select students for interview?*

- Registry-based staff - Academic staff selected against individual criteria. Not generally understood how these judgements were reached. Process is highly complex and influenced by registry staff experience as the take up of offers varies greatly from course to course/ institution to institution. Registry staff were (in most cases) responsible for calculating the number of live offers required per course, and the number of interviews required to reach this target. These were calculated according to a complex formula based on previous experience. In general terms it appeared that applicants for courses in drama were far more likely to confirm than in music or dance. Music and dance candidates often kept places open whilst simultaneously applying for places in one of the conservatoires. Thus, in one institution the drama courses maintained 1.5 live offers per required place (1.5:1) whilst in another the ratio was 7:1 for some of the music courses.
- Academic Management - Only those engaged in lecturing and interviewing were able to provide details of entry criteria. It was acknowledged that practically all performing arts courses continued to rely heavily upon interview and that relatively few gave offers from paper. Some were aware that written criteria had been adopted. Reference was made in one instance to the access policies of the institution, and the fact that a number of special initiatives had been put in place to facilitate non-standard applicants. However, it appeared that whilst the students from their own access provision were highly favoured in terms of selection, other non-standard candidates were not. One institution made reference to guaranteed interview schemes - a series of agreements with quality FE institutions to ensure local and regional progression.

Lecturing -

Huge variety of response. The best practice was represented by selection being undertaken against specific written criteria with each form being considered by at least two members of staff who conferred before a candidate was accepted or rejected. Each form had a detailed series of questions that had to be answered to prove that candidates had been treated equally. By contrast, interviewees were selected in one institution by a single member of academic staff who based his judgements on experience, but could not specify what the criteria were. It became clear that three main factors influenced the acceptance or rejection of any candidate at this stage in the process,

1. The quality of the projected A'level grades.
2. The quality of the academic reference.
3. The quality of the student's personal statement.

Projections for BTEC were seldom made although the academic reference was normally more comprehensive in terms of performance capabilities for students applying from a BTEC background. Music courses placed more emphasis on the projected grades, and the student's known achievement on the various graded examinations of the Associated Board. Drama and dance placed far more emphasis on the quality of the academic reference, a number of staff highlighted the importance of students demonstrating a real 'passion' for the subject within their personal statement.

Although the sample was extremely limited it appeared to me that the emphasis placed upon projected A'level grades was more marked in the staff from the 'old' university sector, whereas the importance of the student's personal statement was more heavily emphasised by staff from the 'new' university sector.

4. *What processes/criteria do you use to select students during interview?*

Registry-based staff -

The majority had considerable knowledge of the actual processes involved both through talking to academic staff and because of their responsibility for mailing interview information to candidates. Some also dealt with the detailed arrangements of interview (i.e. 'customer care', arranging talks by central services, booking rooms, arranging transportation, dealing with parents and relatives, facilitating overnight accommodation, etc.)

Academic Management -

Most had full understanding of the process, but practically no knowledge of the detailed criteria currently being utilised except in those cases where staff continued to interview candidates themselves. All were conscious of the necessity to prove oneself in both practical and academic terms. Many were involved in the complex logistics of the interview process and reflected on the changing climate, brought about by increased competition and the student charter, whereby far greater care was given to the support structures, the necessity to demonstrate equality of opportunity through the process and the need to communicate clearly and quickly with candidates. It was also acknowledged that finding the time for academic staff to interview properly was becoming an increasingly difficult problem. Recent years have seen staff contact time rise, the pressure to deliver high quality research increase and the needs of academic administration "spiral out of control". It is obviously a major problem to find the correct balance between competing factors when establishing the workload for any individual academic.

Lecturing -

Considerable variety of response. Only one institution had detailed written criteria, but the majority had proformas that had to be completed and attached to the candidates' forms. These forms reflected the primary areas under consideration - and by default represented a remarkable uniformity of criteria upon which judgements were made. Although the specific skills of the selected art form remain important it was clear that academic ability ranked alongside (or was considered more important than) practical skills in the majority of cases (regardless of 'old' or 'new' university background). Personality and communication skills were also very important. Practically all interviews included practical performance and a personal interview. In drama many courses also included compulsory group work. It appears that the decision to accept or reject was reached quite quickly in the majority of cases. The interview was therefore utilised to define entry grades for accepted candidates (i.e. the better you performed the lower your entry requirements).

In approximately half of the institutions candidates were assessed by more than one member of staff - although this was being eroded by rising application rates and the increased pressure on academic time. Only two staff stated that they had timetable remission for interviewing candidates - the remainder just accepted the undertaking as part of their normal working year.

5. *What do you consider to have been the key development in undergraduate performing arts education over the past few years?*

- Registry-based staff - Rising application rates. Growth of courses. Introduction of increasing number of new qualifications. Some students 'play the system' deliberately keeping places open which they do not intend filling - making decisions at the last minute. Introduction of modular courses in performing arts has significantly increased the number of applicants - not all students get the precise type of course they are lead to believe from the publicity.
- Academic Management - Rapid expansion of courses across the sector. Some felt aggrieved that institutions which had no track record in the performing arts had quickly developed courses when expansion was required. Some of these courses were considered to be of somewhat dubious quality. Concern was also expressed at the growth of degree courses in the performing arts in local further education colleges.
- The issue of maintaining resource levels - staffing and facilities - was acknowledged as being extremely difficult. In one instance public performance work had been cut significantly - a decision which was felt could undermine the course quality - a "Catch 22" situation. The growth of BTEC courses was acknowledged, and in some instances it was admitted that new under-graduate courses had been deliberately developed to reflect the same vocational educational focus as BTEC and other feeder courses.
- Development of the higher education portfolio of courses has required institutions to develop and maintain a specific reputation in the performing arts. (i.e. the music degrees at York, Leeds, Bretton and Northumbria have totally different specialisations and attract different candidates. Although they appear side by side in the UCAS hand-book they are not really in competition with one another.)

Lecturing -

Key issues identified were the changing nature of the cultural industries - the focus for courses was changing, the changing entry profile of students - often technically well skilled but poor academically, the increasing emphasis on vocational aspects, the impact of the introduction of modularity.

In one institution modularity had been imposed on a centralist model where all students were required to take a sixth of their course each year within another Faculty. Staff felt strongly that this had undermined the cohesiveness of the drama degree programme. It also presented them with enormous resourcing difficulties both with the influx of students from other parts of the institution keen to take drama as their modular course, but also by disrupting the timetable for main course students. The majority of the specialist performing courses on which staff taught were modular, but taught in substantial blocks of contact time. This did not fit well with the requirement for 2 hrs per week access into theatres and studios from non-specialist students.

Pressures on maintaining course content when contact time was being cut. Difficulties in developing sufficient skill levels and concern over the increasing amount of time spent on the pastoral care and individual tutorials with students. Some viewed the expansion of degree courses in the further education sector with extreme scepticism. Many had anecdotal evidence from transfer students as to problems with course content and quality. Almost without exception the lecturing staff admitted that the only way courses were delivered was because of the extensive additional teaching (off-timetable) that took place - and the gap between resourcing requirements and reality was ever widening. However, very few would admit to having changed their teaching methodology other than in areas that had been centrally imposed (e.g. learning contracts or external skills classes)

The detailed responses given to questions 1 - 5 was not mirrored in the more speculative questions concerning the future of the further education sector and issues to do with BTEC. Thus, not all staff wished speculate with regards to a sector about which they had little knowledge. Most staff were well informed (largely from the media) as to the changes that were going on in further education and the following points of interest were raised.

6. *What do you consider will be the key developments in performing arts education at further education level over the next decade?*

1. Growth of franchised degree courses.
2. Development of formal partnership arrangements between further and higher education institutions in the same region.
3. Increasing focus on skills training.
4. More widespread introduction of GNVQs.
5. Quality of FE work will be difficult to sustain given the current financial climate, and the crises facing many further education colleges with regards to compulsory redundancies.

7. *What is your opinion on the capabilities of students who apply with non-standard qualifications?*

Majority of staff were highly supportive. On the whole students could clearly cope with the courses who applied with non-standard qualifications. However, anecdotal evidence was supplied of both extremes of capability.

One staff member referred proudly to the high percentage of non-standard and mature students on the course and stated that these students were invariably more committed to the course and achieved better results than A'level qualified students. This was hardly surprising as course work in the particular area of drama under discussion relied heavily on experiential and devised activity.

At the other extreme cases were cited where considerable investment had been made by administrative and academic staff in supporting non-standard candidates only for them to leave the course or fail badly at the end of the first year. In these cases it appeared that "capability" was not necessarily the deciding factor - students were more likely to leave because of difficult personal circumstances than their inability to cope with the course.

8. *What do you know about the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?*

- Registry-based staff - Fully aware of the qualification and its capability of being accepted for matriculation. Anecdotal evidence supplied regarding the differing manner in which academic staff dealt with BTEC applicants.
- The problem of obtaining BTEC profiles was mentioned twice - this may be another important factor for if academic staff are required to make rapid decisions once the A'level results are posted incomplete data on BTEC candidates could place them at a major disadvantage.
- Academic Management - Course recognised as one of the suite of vocational courses offered by BTEC. Many had working knowledge of the basic parameters of the course from publicity materials and visits to local further education colleges, but none had any detailed knowledge of the course structure or content.
- Lecturing - Considerable variation in understanding was found in the interviews with lecturing staff. One person admitted to know nothing at all about the course other than reading the title on an application form. Another had undertaken considerable work in helping to develop BTEC courses in another region and hence understood the structure and content in detail. The majority had a scant working knowledge of the course drawn from the interaction with local providers, but admitted they were unaware of the significant changes that were facing BTEC - particularly what the introduction of GNVQs would mean.

9. *Do you accept students from the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts?*

Unanimous response was "yes" although the percentage differences were quite marked with one institution admitting it only had one BTEC qualified student on the course (and he also had 1 A'level and a Grade VIII music) and another demonstrating that 25% of the year group on a particular course came from BTEC courses.

10. *In your opinion does the BTEC National Diploma adequately prepare students for degree level education?*

Considerable uniformity of response once again. The vast majority of staff responded by saying that it depended upon the degree course chosen. BTEC was suitable for some courses but not suitable for others. Concern was raised again about the academic content of the course and this was reiterated from the alternative perspective by some staff who stated that BTEC was fine when the degree programme was highly practical and skills-oriented.

11. *In your opinion what are the main weaknesses of the BTEC National Diploma course or of non-standard applicants (if the answer to question seven had been negative).*

Academic and registry staff were largely unwilling to offer an opinion. The persistent theme that emerged from the lecturing staff concerned the lack of academic rigour - the fact that students were not prepared for academic content of degree work - the lack of academic study skills. One member of staff also raised the interesting point that BTEC (in his view) was quite heavily taught and therefore students expected to be "spoon fed" when they came on the degree programmes. Thus the problem of adjusting to self-managed learning was significant for all students entering higher education but, he considered, more marked in the case of BTEC applicants.

