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AN EVALUATION OF THE KEY SKILLS 2000 CURRICULUM IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING AT FOUNDATION LEVEL

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Northampton

2007

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ABSTRACT

Key Skills (KS), a component of Curriculum 2000 (C2000) was introduced by government in September 2000 as a range of essential generic, transferable skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. C2000 was introduced into Further Education (FE) colleges to replace the core skills (CS) which had, up to then, been integrated or attached to vocational course structures. KS are different in nature from CS. KS are evidenced, assessed and examined separately from vocational courses and therefore, because of their stand-alone nature, are attached to the vocational students, not to their courses.

This research is an evaluation of the conceptual coherence and practical viability of the KS curriculum (KS2000), as introduced and implemented within the further education sector. The study investigates issues for tutors delivering KS and its effects on their foundation students' motivation for learning. Eleven case-studies were carried out across one academic year within seven FE colleges in Southern England. The nature, provenance and purpose of KS2000 are explored, and the origin and rationale for KS are examined through an analysis of the concept of the 'skills' component on which it is founded. The framework of illuminative evaluation was adopted and ethnographic methods of interviews and observations employed. Progressive focussing, used in conjunction with a grounded theory approach of treating the literature as part of the collection of data, gave some capacity for theory-building.

The thesis found that all college staffs, both KS and vocational, whilst agreeing that KS were remedial in nature, held different opinions as to what KS were and of what value the KS2000 was to the foundation students. KS tutors believed they provided students with a basis for opportunities to acquire important 'skills' for their future, but most vocational staff did not and were even opposed to their being delivered in the context of FE. KS managers agreed that KS should not have to be provided by the FE sector. Members from all groups of participants reported having large numbers of school-leavers entering their colleges with poor levels of basic maths and English. Supplying adequate tutoring and support for such students was demanding for management and stressful for many KS tutors. The students were socialised into accepting that their future employment depended on KS and a majority were positive in their belief that they could achieve them. However, in spite of government funding to provide KS2000, great effort from all staffs to implement the curriculum and students' apparent motivation and self-belief, many students were observed behaving badly in class and KS qualification rates generally remained poor.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT) identified what were considered to be measurable targets for young peoples' foundation learning, thus enabling measurement of progress. These targets included what were named 'core skills' (CS) - Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology, which later became Key Skills (KS) in the National Curriculum, *Curriculum 2000* (C2000), introduced into Further Education (FE) in September 2000. FE colleges then began implementing the KS curriculum, which became known as KS2000, across their whole organisation.

In February 2001, I joined two FE colleges, delivering the new KS to students on foundation NVQ and GNVQ courses. I received no specific training in KS. My general education and qualified FE teacher status was considered to be sufficient to deliver it. From the outset, KS2000 created problems. Management of KS in both colleges was generally chaotic. There was confusion over how to interpret their specifications, how to implement them and which students they should be applied to. All management, KS and vocational, seemed overwhelmed by the KS2000 initiative, the implementation of which, as a tutor, I found to be overly complicated and prescriptive to deliver and unnecessarily difficult to assess. The idea of helping students, who had not achieved C+ GCSE grades to get a qualification that might generally help them, appealed to me. However, in reality, most of my students disliked doing KS and found them boring and irrelevant to the vocational training they had signed up for. *When* they attended lessons, students often behaved badly, and my role became one of pressurising dissenting adolescents to do the KS. This was made more difficult because significant numbers had poor levels of underpinning knowledge in maths and English language and comprehension. In addition, the time allocated in which to provide students with the necessary knowledge to build portfolios and pass exams was completely unrealistic.

In late 2001, one of the colleges in which I worked came up with an initiative to engage local employers in a dialogue, because of the employers' apparent lack of interest in the new KS. This initiative was extended to all FE colleges in England, resulting in the 'Employers and Key Skills Conference' (EKS Conference) held in February 2002, at which I played a principal part, developing a survey which received replies from over 5,000 students nationally, across 31 participating colleges. The collated results formed

a discussion-base for the one-day open forum that followed. The survey was on students' overall perceptions of KS. The forum brought together college heads of KS departments, coordinators and tutors, and employers, allowing them to exchange experiences and debate problems of providing KS. The outcomes of the conference confirmed that my encounters with KS were far from unique. The survey results and conversations with delegates, plus my own experiences hitherto, informed the research that is the subject of this thesis.

This study was conducted in four *Phases*. These are illustrated in Chapter 3, page 3.2, figure 3-1.

Phase 1 was conducted in three parts. Part 1 formulated the background to KS2000 and involved examining official documents to investigate the nature of the KS2000 policy and its provenance, exploring its purpose and identifying who developed it. These are set out in Chapter 1. Part 2 looked at the rationale for this research, accounting personal experiences, results from the EKS conference survey and anecdotal evidence from colleagues at that conference. From these, the study's aims and objectives were developed and the research questions formed. The background information on KS and the study's objectives and research questions, informed part three of *Phase 1*, the Literature Review (Chapter 2). The review begins with a chronological account of relevant education and training legislation and initiatives from 1944 through to today, from which the origins and rationale for KS2000 are tracked and identified. There is then a discussion on a number of issues concerning the history of KS, its introduction into FE and the implications of this mandate for staffs and foundation students undertaking it.

The emerging theories from the Literature Review informed *Phase 2*, which was conducted in two parts. Part 1 involved creating the qualitative research design and methodology. Chapter 3, section 3.4, describes the methodological principles and models that influenced the research, and section 3.5 explains the methods adopted to carry out the collections of data. The ethical considerations for the study are explored and addressed in section 3.3. Part 2 of *Phase 2* involved the practical elements of the project; securing the colleges and participants, developing the field documents and piloting them.

Phase 3 was also conducted in two parts. Part one was the gathering of data. Chapter 5 describes how, why, and from whom these data were collected and begins by

introducing the seven host colleges and the eleven case-studies conducted within them. Part 2 involved creating portraits of each case-study in which the instructional systems and learning milieux of the organisations, departments and classrooms were fully described. Two individual case portraits are presented as examples in Chapter 4. The other five case portraits are in the appendices.

Phase 4 was carried out in two parts. Part 1 was the handling of data, which is fully described in Chapter 5, sections 5.4 and 5.4. This was followed by the reporting, full analysis and interpretation of the data in part 2. These are presented in the Analysis, Chapter 6.

The Discussion and Conclusions to the study are in the final chapter, Chapter 7.

This thesis contains many acronyms and specialised terms. These are listed in Appendix A - Glossary of Terms.

1 Key Skills

The Key Skills (KS) specifications are quite technical and their relationship to other qualifications is somewhat complicated. This chapter describes the nature, provenance and purpose of KS2000 in the simplest terms. The rationale for this research is explained later in the chapter (1.5), which then finishes with setting out the study's objectives.

1.1 What are Key Skills?

According to the Department for Education and Skills[1] website (DfES, 2007), '*Key Skills are a range of essential generic skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development.*' In their broadest sense, KS have been part of the education curriculum for more than twenty years, either as general skills integrated *into* vocational course structures or as extra core skills (CS) *attached* to students' vocational programmes.

The first National Curriculum (NC) was introduced in England between 1988 and 1992 and reformed in 1994. Following the government's consultation paper, *'Qualifying for Success' (*1997-98) in 1999, a 'new' Curriculum 2000 (C2000) was introduced for implementation in schools and colleges from September 2000. Although largely unchanged in its purpose from previous NC, C2000 introduced some new qualifications, KS being amongst these.

There are six KS in total. The first three came to be called 'the *main* key skills' (DfES, 2002, sect.1 p.1). These are:

- Communication (Comms)
- Application of Number (AoN)
- Information Technology (IT) or Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The second three are called the *wider* key skills (WKS):

- Working With Others (WWO)

[1] The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) used to be called the Department of Education (DoE). Three new departments were set up by the then Prime Minister on 28th June 2007. They replace the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is currently (2007) responsible for improving the focus on all aspects of policy affecting children and young people, as part of the government's aim to deliver educational excellence.

- Improving Own Learning (IOL)
- Problem Solving (PS).

All six KS are available at four levels i.e., AoN can be done at levels 1 to 4[1] and so on. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA[2]) produce the KS unit specifications (QCA, 2004), which are identical and structured in the same way at all external Awarding Bodies (ABs)[3] and in all educational and training contexts. The QCA *regulate* the KS qualifications and publish guidance on KS, WKS, and on KS tests.

KS qualifications relate to, but are not the same as, other qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and are currently awarded by the ABs[4]. Each level of KS is a qualification in its own right within the NQF. The WKS did not lead to a qualification prior to 2006, nor were they within the NQF. The content of each KS is designed to become increasingly demanding[5] at every level. The full specifications and the differences between the levels are set out in the *Key Skills Resource Manual* (DfES, 2002).

When the National Standards (NS) were revised in 2000, it was recommended that KS and Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN), the official name for Basic Skills (BS) 'converge[6]' at some level. This *convergence* of the two systems was made at L1 and L2 (see Table 1-1), but only as far as examinations were concerned, portfolios are not a requirement at ALN/BS. With KS, a portfolio and examination is required at each level. Table 1-1 shows the two parts of which KS comprise Part A, showing the

[1] There is a single integrated unit. The Personal Skills Development (PSD) unit, at Level 5, but the PSD is not relevant to this study.
[2] The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is a non-departmental public body, which is sponsored by the DfES, and governed by a board whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. The QCA is managed on a day-to-day basis by an executive team. The QCA regulate all external qualifications in England outside the universities. As informed by its website, http://www.qca.org.uk/9995.html, the QCA maintains and develops the NC and associated assessments, tests and examinations, and accredits and monitors qualifications in colleges and at work. It regulates the public examination system, so that it is responsive to the needs of learners and society and is responsible for the development, delivery and administration of national tests. It develops the NC, which defines the knowledge, understanding and skills to which children and young people are entitled, keeping it under review, to evaluate its appropriateness and relevance to the changing needs of learners and society.
[3] Awarding Bodies are what used to be called an exam board. After a series of mergers and takeovers, there are only three Unitary Awarding Bodies in England – Edexcel, OCR, and AQA. They are regulated by QCA, which also regulates the many scores of vocational awarding bodies which deal in NVQs and the wide range of occupational qualifications.
[4] From 2005, schools, colleges and employers will be able to moderate their own KS, which is currently being undertaken by the Awarding Bodies.
[5] The higher the level, the greater the underpinning knowledge is required in order to qualify
[6] The convergence is in the form of the requirements for ALN being the same as KS L1 and L2 in terms of underpinning knowledge, but only in exams - a portfolio of work is not required.

underpinning techniques required and Part B, the application of those techniques. Students must meet the requirements of Parts A and B to qualify.

Table 1-1 KS and the ALN/BS

KS (Part A)	National Standards ALN/BS
Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1
*	Entry 3
*	Entry 2
*	Entry 1

Adapted from: Key Skills Resource Manual (DfES, 2002)[1]

1.1.1 The National Qualifications Framework

There are six *levels* of *general* qualifications in the NQF (Table 1-2): an Entry level plus Levels 1 to 5. The Entry level is divided into sub-levels 1, 2 and 3, these being the ALN/BS needed by, '*those aged 16-18 who still need further help with literacy and numeracy in order to progress,*' (QCA, 2003, p.21). The three ALN/BS Entry levels constitute small progressive steps (DfES, 2002, sect.1, p.3) towards the *beginning* of KS at Level 1 (L1). The KS themselves do *not* have an Entry Level.

Within the NQF, there are three qualification pathways:-

1. general - GCSEs, AS and A-levels
2. occupational
3. vocational

According to the KS Resource Manual (DfES, 2002), students on these pathways can undertake any KS, the *level* being determined by (a) the complexity and range of techniques required, (b) the complexity of context, and (c) the autonomy and awareness shown by the student. Regarding a student's *ability* at any given level, each '*student should aim for the level to which they are suited. This will often vary from one key skill to another,*" (DfES, 2002, sect.1 p.4).

KS are increasingly aligned with the levels of related curricula in the NC, where they form part of a *different* numbering system. Table 1-2 shows the qualifications pathways within the NQF and how the KS relate to other qualifications within it.

[1] There are no national standards for ALN above Level 2. There are no adult national standards for IT.

Table 1-2: The NQF

Level	General	Vocationally related	Occupational	Key Skill Level
Higher 5	(Postgraduate/professional)		NVQ5	5
Higher 4	(Degree/HND)		NVQ4	4
Advanced 3	AS/A	Vocational A-level (AVCE)	NVQ3	3
Intermediate 2	GCSE A*-C	Intermediate GNVQ (GCSE in voc. Subjects)	NVQ2	2
Foundation 1	GCSE D-G	Foundation GNVQ (GCSE in voc. Subjects)	NVQ1	1
ALN/BS Entry level 3 2 1				

Source: Key Skills Resource Manual (DfES, 2002)

1.1.2 The National Curriculum

Table 1-3 gives a *broad* indication of the relationship between the qualifications and levels and shows the alignments for Part A (the underpinning knowledge[1]) of the main three KS, the ALN/BS and the NQF. At KS L2 and L3, the relationship is '*indicative rather than exact,*' (DfES, 2002, sect.1 p.5). The alignments are associated particularly to English – literacy and comprehension (KS-Comms) and the Arithmetical branch of Mathematics – numeracy (KS-AoN).

Table 1-3 KS, ALN/BS and the NQF

NQF	KS (Part A)	National Standards ALN
Level 5	Level 5	-
Level 4	Level 4	-
Level 3	Level 3	-
Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
Entry Level	-	Entry 3
-	-	Entry 2
-	-	Entry 1

Adapted from: Key Skills Resource Manual (DfES, 2002)[2]

[1] A definition of '*underpinning knowledge*' is the knowledge, understanding and skills to underpin performance as an essential component of competence.
[2] There are no national standards for ALN above Level 2. There are no adult national standards for IT.

1.1.3 The Key Skills Continuum

Although related, the *characteristics* of KS differ from GCSEs, AS, A-levels and ALN/BS. The *essence* of KS is that they are a *continuum* of skills development which follows a particular progressive route from, what a student *needs to know*, what he or she *needs to do*, to what the student *must be able to demonstrate*. Table 1-4 shows the model used but it is emphasised by the DfES (2002, sect.1 p.6), that, as with any model, it is not a description of the real world, but a framework to be referred to.

Table 1-4 A model of the continuum of Key Skills development

Teacher–led	Teacher-guided	Independent learner
What students need to know Basic techniques and underpinning knowledge	What students need to do Practise and build skills	What students must be able to demonstrate The ability to apply skills in different contexts
Assessed by external tests	Internal formative assessment	Portfolio evidence: internally assessed; internally verified; externally moderated[1]
Relates to Part A of the key Skills specifications		**Relates to Part B of the Key Skills specifications**

Adapted from: Key Skills Resource Manual (DfES, 2002)

As shown in the continuum, students have to learn the basic techniques of literacy, numeracy and IT before they can apply them in contexts (DfES, 2002, sect.1 p.7), but students can enter the continuum at any level and progress from there. Every individual, once placed, can theoretically have their learning needs identified and met. As set out by the DfES (2002, sect.1, p.7), within the continuum model:-

(i) students often learn techniques out of context and can develop, build and apply them by practising them in the contexts of their main subjects, where it is often more motivating than learning that is out of context.

(ii) skills are properly applied only when they are being used in real situations to solve a problem, monitor a process, make a decision, or get something done.

(iii) active learning is encouraged to '*produce better results*,' (DfES, 2002, sect.1, p.10).

[1] The external moderation that is currently (2005) being undertaken by external awarding bodies is under review and is set to change in 2006 to a system of self-accreditation in FE colleges.

The DfES (2002) maintains that Part A and Part B (Table 1-4) focus on different aspects of skill and are assessed in different ways. Formative exercises are recommended to develop the underpinning techniques in Part A. The exams focus on these. Students' skills are developed and assessed through simple and guided activities and applications (Part B), which they demonstrate by selecting the *'right techniques,'* used *'correctly'* in, *'different situations on different occasions,'* (DfES, 2002, p.7).

Teaching and delivery methods, according to DfES (2002), need to be applied to students working at each *level* of KS, and Parts A and B. The list includes:-

- Learning underpinning techniques is usually done in specialist lessons
- Students should have learned most of the basic techniques before starting KS but many will need to refresh or repeat some of this learning
- Basic techniques are best learned in a context which is tutor-led and supported
- Developing skills is best done in the context of the main programme, practising and building skills when using them for a purpose
- The tutor must provide simulations, scenarios, and a range of learning resources for the different stages of the continuum
- Applying the skills has to be done in purposeful activities, which contribute to learning in the main curriculum
- Assessment of KS should be fully integrated with the purposeful context
- Part B should be done in contexts relating to students' subject area, work-related learning, and enrichment programme[1]
- As students move from dependency towards independence, they become competent at using the skills.

1.2 Where did Key Skills come from?

During the mid 1970s, the UK was experiencing economic recession and a rise in youth unemployment, discussed later in sections 1.3 and 2.2. In response to these social problems, government set up the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), whose consultative document, *'A New Training Initiative: A programme for Action'* (MSC, 1980), set out major national objectives for the future of industrial training. Employers, unions, and educational and training bodies supported these objectives and formed a general agreement that there was a need for urgent action from government. The Department of Employment's (DoE) White Paper (1981) responded

[1] Enrichment programmes are usually built into the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) of each student undergoing post-compulsory education.

by setting out their decisions on immediate action and proposals for a long-term strategy, substantially drawing on the recommendations made by the MSC for the new training initiative to produce, '*a better educated, better trained, and more adaptable workforce*'...'*to take the opportunities that new technology offered*' (DoE, 1981, p.4). As '*good academic results are prized by many who recruit directly from school,*' a new examination for young people aged 17+ was recommended, designed particularly for those with modest examination achievements at 16+ (DoE, 1981). Large public funding was to be made available to enable more young people to stay in full-time education to achieve this.

The training content of the new scheme would require an effective integration of skill; knowledge and experience through properly designed opportunities for off-the-job training and FE. Five main elements were suggested, one of which was, '*to ensure that basic skills like numeracy and literacy would be acquired,*' and, '*some basic office operations; to foster skills in communication,*' (DoE, 1981, p.7).

The DoE, at the time of these proposals (1981), considered employers to be the best placed to provide such training and grant schemes were made available to employers. Priority was to be given to widening foundation training for all young people, especially the unemployed, who were considered to be the least educated school-leavers. The DoE White Paper concluded that, '*for many years now our system of training has failed to produce the numbers of skilled people required by a modern competitive economy,*' (DoE, 1981, p.14), and called for employers, employees, unions, educationalists and government to '*play their part*' in doing what needed to be done to make this system work.

This call for '*partnership*' was reiterated by the DoE in the 1986 White Paper *Working Together – Education and Training,* in which they strongly emphasised their new role to encourage the development of an enterprise economy by '*pulling together its education and training policies*', particularly in the vocational areas, where it intended to '*achieve radical modernisation,*' (DoE, 1986, p.1). Education and training for young people were thus targeted and a new framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)[1] in England was created, supervised by the newly established National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). As well as NVQs, other '*major advances*' were

[1] NVQs are competence-based qualifications, designed to measure practical ability and skill as opposed to academic ability.

planned – to create a '*desire to learn*,' foster a '*habit of learning*,' and thus the '*skills that learning brings*,' (DoE, 1986, p.1).

The aim of the new framework was to secure a change of attitude towards learning and the achievement it makes possible, as well as improve the standards of competence, so that more young people would see the value of entering the labour market with the best qualifications they were able to achieve (DoE, 1986). By this time, a number of curriculum reforms were already, '*in train, with a view to creating a sound framework of courses and qualifications*,' (DoE, 1986, p.5).

The Department of Education (DoEd[1], 1988, p.9) then began creating opportunities to acquire skills through ambitious training, targeting those most likely to be reliant on the state during their life due to unemployment, the low academic, low skilled in our society. From the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the acquisition of skills became a major focus for all post-compulsory vocational education, largely seen as the alternative route to that of the academic and, as observed by Parrott (2003, p.25), '*immense effort and funding was being given over to infiltrating educational discourse with a skills discourse.*'

Following the DoEd White Paper (1988), the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT) came into being. Its mission was to create National Targets (NTs), designed to provide a framework for achieving a number of goals for all employers, individuals and the education and training provision to aspire to. Following consultation at both national and local level, the NACETT set an agenda for action, with the full endorsement of the government, to, '*identify specific measurable targets for young peoples' foundation learning and for lifelong learning, which focus on key areas of achievement which will enable us to assess our progress,*' Chairman NACETT (1995, p.1).

The National Targets for Education and Training (NTET) entitled '*Developing Skills for a Successful Future*', were thus devised and launched, and took effect straight away, with the specific aim, '*to improve the UK's international competitiveness by raising standards and attaining levels in education and training to world class levels,*' (NACETT, 1995, p.9). This was to be achieved through ensuring a number of targets, which were divided into two sections, Foundation Learning, the relevant division to this

[1] The abbreviation DoEd is used with a trailing "d" to distinguish it from the Department of Employment abbreviation of DoE.

thesis, and Lifelong Learning (Appendix B). For Foundation Learning there were three specific targets:

1. By age 19, 85% of young people to achieve 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, an Intermediate GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications)[1] or an NVQ L2.
2. 75% of young people to achieve L2 competence in communication, numeracy and IT by age 19, 35% to achieve L3 competence in those core skills by age 21.
3. By age 21, 60% of young people to achieve 2 GCE A-levels, and Advanced GNVQ or an NVQ L3.

The targets were defined by the then NCVQ as 'core skills' (CS), namely, *Communication, Application of Number* and *Information Technology*. The NCVQ later accredited CS in answer to calls from various employers, amongst them members of the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), who campaigned for the introduction and qualification of CS to demonstrate what they considered to be *essential competencies for the world of work.*

In 1995, Ron Dearing was invited to advise the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment on ways to strengthen, consolidate and improve the framework of 16-19 year-olds' educational and training qualifications. After consulting government regulatory bodies, educational bodies, ABs, commerce and industry, Dearing (1996) made a number of major recommendations concerning the NC. One was in direct response to representations by employers; the creation of a KS qualification, *'to build up competence in the KS of communication, application of number and information technology, as well as see young people develop wider skills such as team-working, problem-solving and managing their own learning.'* This idea was supported by the *'Qualifying for Success'* consultation in 1997-98.

The *16-19 Coherence Project* (Coates and Hamilton, 1996, p.2) confirmed that the term 'Key Skills' was to be applied to what were known then as the three 'Core Skills' in GNVQs (Comms, AoN and IT). It affirmed that KS should be mandatory for all 16+ students taking a GNVQ. The issue of adopting other CS valued by employers also received agreement (Coates and Hamilton, 1996, p.5-8). Again, the *need* for CS raising levels amongst low-achievers and general concerns about deficiencies in numerical

[1] GNVQs are specific NVQs designed for certain vocational areas and are 'broader' in their content to NVQs and have more academic content.

and communication skills, were high on the agenda. In 1997, government published another consultation document called *'Targets for our future'*, proposing new targets that again related to four distinct groups of people - 16-year-olds, young people over the age of 16, adults and employers.

Following a further period of consultation with many interested parties involved in both employment and education in Britain, the NACETT recommended that government promptly set challenging national targets (NTs) for KS, now describing them as *'vitally important qualifications.'* The NACETT had in fact long argued for making KS a normal part of other programmes of study and qualifications. In response to this, government devised a strategy it called *'Investment in Young People,'* to help all 16 and 17 year olds who can, to gain a qualification at least at L2. The NTs that derived from this strategy focused solely on the outputs of participation in education and training – qualifications, and enlisted the targets previously set out in the Foundation and Lifelong Learning divisions.

The first set of standards for KS qualifications were published in 1992. After some revision, a second set followed in 1997. The main target for KS was the GNVQ and NVQ programmes. More new standards (a refinement of the two previous versions) were introduced that same year and a two-year pilot began in September 1997. In early 1999 the units were approved, and in November 1999, government ministers made their final decisions about how the 'KS' should be assessed (LSDA, 2004, p.1).

After a one-year phased implementation (LSDA, 2004, p.1) into more than 250 schools, colleges, training and work-based settings, Curriculum 2000 (C2000) was introduced into FE colleges in September 2000, with the revised and streamlined KS from those previously developed and piloted since 1997. The demand, target and purpose of each KS at each level had not changed from the earlier NTs in Foundation Learning. KS remained as separate qualifications in their own right and mandatory components of the GNVQ, NVQ and Modern Apprentice (MA) overall NQF, but not always the actual vocational qualification.

1.3 What is their purpose?

Government bodies have increasingly focussed on perceived skills shortages, or *gap*[1] as it became known, in Britain's workforce, believing that a high-skill, high value-added industrial and commercial strategy needed to be adopted to create a future skilled workforce comparable to any in the world. KS are part of government's educational agenda to raise standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT, by focussing the acquisition of education on knowledge, skills and understanding, considered to be the essential factors leading to economic growth and employability for life (DfES, 2004, sect.1.1).

Throughout the 1980s, Britain's education and training system was considered to be, '*an inefficient and confusing mess,*' according to Bennett (1993, p.4). The result of this mess was more young people finishing formal schooling earlier than in most other industrial countries. The Moser Report (1999, sect.1.1) maintained, that as a consequence, one British adult in five was not, '*functionally literate and far more people had problems with numeracy,*' which was part of the reason for the British economy suffering from relatively low productivity. By the end of the 1980s, government identified what they saw as a, '*skills shortage*' (DoEd, 1988, p.9), and began determined and rigorous training and re-training systems.

Concentrated effort and funding was made available to plug this skills gap in Britain's workforce and for 16-19 year olds with C- GCSE grades, KS became the, *'panacea for creating an effective and successful future workforce for the 21st century'* (Parrott, 2003, p.25).

According to Keep (2003, p.14), the need to acquire new *types* of skills largely arose because of Britain's major shift in the last three decades, from manufacturing and engineering industries to more white-collared, technical and service industries. Youth unemployment in the mid 1970s, through the 1980s and into the 1990s triggered government into creating training and work-experience schemes to tackle this problem. Elaborate frameworks of skills, competences and attributes were devised so they could be imparted to trainees, thus making them more *marketable* to employers, people with high levels of skills and qualifications that are 'flexible' in their use and are continuously being broadened and upgraded. Training throughout life (DoEd, 1988, p.19) is government's new crusade, 'life long learning', its latest battle cry.

[1] It is not clear precisely when the term 'skills shortages' became interchangeable with 'skills gap'. It is suspected that the term arose from media coverage of the topic. The British Broadcasting Corporation was using both terms in 1998.

With technological progress in recent years, many low-skilled jobs have been destroyed and, according to Crouch *et al* (1999, p.1), '*unemployment is highest among those with low levels of education.*' The prevailing concern is that this group '*will be left at the mercy of global labour competition if they do not acquire high levels of skills,*' (Crouch *et al*, 1999, p.1). Keep (2003) also maintains that a workforce with higher, transferable and more 'flexible' skills is deemed essential to obtain and maintain a job in an increasingly and relatively harsh, competitive climate of employment that exists throughout the developed world.

This need for a higher skilled, flexible workforce fuelled the succession of policy changes in education and training, particularly towards the post-compulsory education sector, where the vocational training systems largely reside and the least academic students are to be found.

The Government's White Paper *21st Century Skills* (DfES, 2003, p.12) states that, '*employers are not getting recruits with the right skills,*' and '*too many young people are not properly prepared for the world of work. In particular, they may lack skills such as communication and teamwork.*' The education system was then charged with the role of being the main, '*vehicle for delivering a more highly skilled cohort of young entrants to the national workforce.*' (Keep, 2003, pp. 2, 7).

It would appear that KS was devised specifically to raise the standards of students who did not achieve C+ GCSE grades, to an 'employability' level. It was stated by the then Education Minister that, '*where students have not achieved A* to C in GCSE English, Maths or ICT, those programmes should lead to the formal acquisition of the relevant Key Skills qualifications at Level 2,*' - Green Paper (DfES, 2002a, *14-19:* p.35, paragraph 3.43).

1.4 Who developed Key Skills?

The KS specifications were produced and are continually developed by the QCA. The NQF, which is controlled by the QCA, enables them to accredit qualifications at appropriate levels to meet the needs of employers and learners. QCA fund occupational standards, support learning at work and regularly review the suitability and availability of qualifications. The QCA collaborates with other British regulators and oversees the work of the ABs, to ensure their administration, marking and awarding procedures run smoothly. The QCA also works closely with its main strategic partners,

which includes the DfES, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), employers' organisations, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the General Teaching Council (GTC) and the Sector Skills Councils (SSC), and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).

1.5 The rationale for the present research

1.5.1 A personal perspective

As a tutor, I encountered many students at foundation level with poor underpinning knowledge in English language and comprehension, and arithmetic. Consequently, they struggled with KS Comms and AoN. Students' competency in IT was considered to be reasonable. The presumption of the DfES (2002, p.8) that, *'students should have learned most of the basic techniques before they start KS,'* and that all they might need is *'to refresh or repeat some of this learning,'* was, in my opinion, imagined.

Alan Wells, the then Director of the Basic Skills Agency (Wells, 2003, p.9) reported that, *'almost a third of assessed students in FE need basic skills support.'* ALN/BS, as shown in Table 1-2, are below KS L1, a level that many foundation students did not reach and which is significantly below government's L2 benchmark for employability.

Amongst the students who struggled with KS were some with C+ GCSE grades. Although exempt from taking the KS exams because of the proxy system[1], many C+ students also had insufficient knowledge, particularly in English language and comprehension, with which to build a portfolio at L1 without help. Exempting C+ students from taking exams whilst making C- students sit them, caused divisions and unease within student groups and lessons, as well as further complicating the administration. This was against a background where KS was *not* supposed to be equivalent to GCSEs, yet in respect to proxy exemption, was treated as one and the same. Indeed, GCSE English and KS Communication requirements are different - the KS have a requirement for grammatical accuracy, which the GCSEs do not.

Many of the students with poor underpinning knowledge had *not* entered college with 'statements'[2] of learning needs, and it was not college policy to screen *all* students on entry. I therefore found myself with classes containing large numbers of students

[1] The proxy system allows students with C+ GCSE grades to claim the exam part of the KS qualification, without having to pass the exam. To fully qualify in KS students only have to produce a portfolio.
[2] 'Statements' are a recorded assessment of the student's learning difficulties undertaken whilst in compulsory education. A 'statemented' student can attract government funding for extra tuition.

needing a lot of extra help, which, without a formal statement, were not eligible for learning support funding, so none was provided.

At the introduction of KS2000, the college managers appeared to share the same misguided presumptions as the government regarding the students' abilities to do KS. Management sweepingly made it mandatory for all students across the colleges, possibly to attract the funding offered by government, without fully understanding or appreciating the volume of work involved in KS delivery and assessment, the needs of students and their resistance to doing it.

Consequently, I had unmanageable groups of, at best, apathetic students, and at worst, students who were openly hostile towards me[1], many of whom were unable to do the work. It was an impossible task to take students back 11 years and begin their education again, which, in many cases, was what, was actually required. As a result, portfolio completions were poor and exam pass-rates were low.

The NQF made KS part of NVQ/GNVQ course qualification frameworks[2]. However, with full vocational timetables, on average, only one hour per week was allocated for KS. This was insufficient time in which to teach two challenging academic subjects up to exam level *and* produce a substantial portfolio of work, particularly from students lacking the basics of English and maths. There was also little support from the vocational areas for their students doing KS.

The results from the 2002 national survey of students conducted for the Employers and Key Skills (EKS) Conference, described in the Introduction and shown in Appendix C, was that, unsurprisingly, most students disliked doing KS and thought they were boring. Many felt they did not have enough time to do them alongside their vocational courses. The majority also believed they were able to do the KS.

What emerged strongly from the EKS forum, was that government's drive towards *'higher skills training'* (NIACE, 2003, p.1), and the introduction of KS2000 to do this, was being questioned by others working with them, not just myself. Issues raised by colleagues at the forum were that KS2000 was overly prescriptive, had complicated assessments and were given unrealistic targets. Students' ability to do it was

[1] During my employment as a KS tutor, I was regularly ignored, verbally abused on several occasions and had empty drink bottles and computer keyboards thrown at me in lessons.
[2] Although KS were incorporated into vocational NQFs, they were not mandatory for *all* NVQ/GNVQ vocational qualifications at L1.

questioned, along with their attitude towards doing KS. FE managers did not have enough qualified and competent KS tutors and suffered from a high turnover of such staff. Most of the managers accused their vocational personnel of being very negative towards KS. Two large employers who contributed to the forum maintained that they supported government's moves to improve their employees' KS, but were not clear as to what skills these actually were.

1.5.2 A policy view

As a policy, KS2000 appears to have been devised to improve school leavers' employability. Keep (2003, p.2) however, maintains we need to see '*a clearer view of where policy is taking us,*' and if the rationale for improving skills training is to solve future '*unemployment*' (DoEd, 1988, p.9), then perhaps, as Crouch et al (1999, p.30) suggest, the, '*current search for a high-skill economy may not be the best panacea.*' Parrott (2003, p.30) maintains that possibly, '*the state is intervening in a market that is not actually failing,*' a view that seems to be corroborated by some national employer surveys (see section 2.3). Hayward (2005, p.6) maintains that *'in spite of the rhetoric of the knowledge economy, the UK labour market continues to provide a large number of job opportunities for poorly qualified entrants.'*

As far as employers' attitudes to KS, Keep (2003) argues that they actually lack enthusiasm for the skills revolution, are reluctant to fund training and do not know *what* skills they *actually need for their workforce.* If Keep (2003) is correct, then the role that employers increasingly play in education needs examination.

Findings from DfES research conducted by Leman (2001, p.19) maintains, '*there is as yet little evidence about what works*' (policy-wise) and states that it is at the foundation level where there, '*has been little change in gaining educational diplomas and credentials.*' A study by Noble (2001, p.33), recommends, '*getting young people's views on what is provided for them and what they want.*' According to Campbell (2001, p.43), there exists, '*research gaps from a post-16 student perspective,*' the most important areas being those which study appropriate national targets for skills and qualification levels.

There is anecdotal evidence that suggests the KS2000 might be de-motivating for foundation level students, especially in relation to the exams. According to Stobart (2003, p.139), assessment and testing regimes that now dominate vocational training can present the non-academic student, '*for whose sake these assessments are often*

introduced,' with difficult and de-motivating hurdles, classed as *'negative effects'* by Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, p.169). Stobart (2003, p.139), maintains these effects might be more negative for the less successful students and act to widen the gap between higher and lower achievers. McDonald (2001, p.98) further argues that test anxiety can make the difference between passing and failing, for at least one fifth of students. This one fifth of students, as identified by the OECD (2000, p.27) comprises those, *'in the greatest need of motivation,'* and *'some sense of and actual achievement, because it is this group who will face the greatest difficulties in any socio-economic climate.'* The OECD (2000) expresses concern that initiatives designed to increase student participation, inadvertently may be contributing to, rather than alleviating social and educational exclusion. KS2000 might be such an initiative.

However, the results from the EKS 2002 national survey suggested that students themselves did not appear to foster these same beliefs. Only 3% of students indicated they could *not* do KS and only 6% pointed out that they did not understand them. These survey results were in stark contrast to my own experience of students and KS.

The grounds for this research are based in anecdotal evidence that KS, in its current form and in its targeting of vocational foundation students, is unable to achieve its aspired-to purpose. The aim of this study is to evaluate the KS2000 in the FE sector, and its effects on students' motivation for learning at foundation level.

Five questions were identified as relating to the aim and objectives for this research:

1. What is the origin and rationale for KS2000?
2. What is the concept of 'key skills'?
3. What are the issues for tutors in their delivery and teaching of the KS curriculum?
4. What is the impact of KS on students' motivation at foundation level?
5. What is the coherence and viability of the KS2000 curriculum?

1.6 Summary

This chapter primarily explored the systems of KS, each section looking at a particular aspect of KS2000. Its nature and provenance were examined and the general purpose of KS2000 and who developed it were explored. The rationale for this research was explained from a personal perspective and by looking at the KS policy itself. The study's aim was set out and the objectives were then stated; to answer the five research questions.

The following chapter looks at relevant literature to KS in respect to the research questions, taking in a wide body of written works from across different but related fields.

2 Literature Review

This chapter begins by examining the origins and rationale for KS2000, which are discussed through a chronological account of education and training legislation and initiatives from 1944 through to today. This background information guided the early direction of the study by isolating significant features in line with an illuminative evaluation approach (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972)[1], which provided some grounded theory (Glaser, 1978)[2].

The thoughts behind the government's KS2000 initiative are well documented in the large volume of literature freely published by the many government-funded organisations that carry out research, reviews and evaluations on the progress of the skills strategy across the education and employment sectors. This collection helped provide a wide and in-depth study of the KS policy and instructional systems '*as a whole*' (Parlett and Hamilton 1972), and provided background to the political aims for KS, its goals, objectives and desired outcomes, and tracked the timing of policy changes during the period of study.

Other sources were identified using keyword electronic searches of bibliographic databases, hand searching key academic journals, publications, conference papers, and research theses. A wide body of written works from politics, education, curriculum, employment, philosophy, psychology, sociology and history were included in the search, which informed the study by substantiating the emerging theories from data. This body of literature provided some critical examinations and evaluations of the coherence and viability of KS2000, and served to balance the generally partisan publications from government and its funded agencies on its skills programme.

The overview of KS tutors discusses the problems they face delivering KS and provides a background to their role. This is followed by a description of the students and an examination of the issues they face with KS2000.

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[1] A feature of Illuminative Evaluation (fully described in Chapter 3, Methodology) is that it facilitates what is termed 'progressive focussing', where the series of interviews are informed by the on-going observations and focussed down on to the 'real' problems and issues (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, p.69). Illuminative evaluation has the capacity for theory-building, and therefore it is compatible with grounded theory.

[2] In a grounded theory study (fully described in Chapter 3, Methodology) the literature is treated as part of the data collection procedures (Dick, 2005) and progressively accessed as it becomes relevant. In this study, the grounded theory approach enabled the investigation to compare literature to the emerging theory in the same way that it compared data to the emerging theory, a method that proved valuable for tracking the changes and developments of KS throughout the duration of the study and any effects they may have had on the key research areas and the participants.

2.1 Origins and rationale for Key Skills 2000

The 1944 Education Act laid the foundations on which our modern education and training has been constructed. The Act created a Ministry of Education[1], the first government department dedicated to education, which made steps to legally determine the *provision* of a public educational system, albeit not yet the *content* of that education (Mackinnon and Statham, 1999, p.54).

Following this Act, government commissioned a number of enquiries into areas of education, youth training and employment, which resulted in a series of influential reports. In spite of calls to introduce some vocation-like education into schools, the Clarke Report (1947) *School and Life*, looked at the transition from school to working life and concluded, that on '*education and employment*', purely educational aims came first. Schools should *not* prepare pupils for particular types of employment as industry itself benefited from the teaching and learning of basic educational skills (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999). The FE sector, not schools, remained the principal provider for employment education.

With youth unemployment on the rise during the late 1940s, government passed the Employment and Training Act in 1948, part of which established the Youth Employment Service (YES) (later the Careers Service), specifically to look at ways of improving youth apprenticeships and employment. One problem that faced such youth training initiatives was highlighted in the Gurney-Dixon Report (1954) *Early Leaving,* which found that too many young people were not staying on at school[2] and recommended financial provision as an incentive to remain there after the age of 15[3]. Two other reports followed. The Carr Report (1958) looked into the reform of apprenticeships and found that employers were *overwhelmingly opposed* to vocational instruction being provided by schools, preferring it to remain with them or FE colleges, and the Crowther Report (1959) investigated post-compulsory education specifically to recommend the place therein of exams *below* GCE level. According to Kelly (2001, p.31), Crowther was the first person to introduce the idea of underpinning post-compulsory education with CS.

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[1] The title of 'Minister of Education' was changed to Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1964. The Ministry of Education was renamed the Department of Education and Science (DES) in 1964, then the Department for Education (DFE), then the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and, since June 2001, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

[2] By not staying on at school, pupils were gaining no more than a basic education.

[3] 15 was the leaving age in 1948.

Both Crowther and Gurney-Dixon considered it to be *'wastage'* of talent that only 12 % of 16-17 year olds were in full-time education at that time. Much attention was paid to this *'neglected educational territory'*, but the waste was considered to be pupils leaving school at 15 to follow a craft or a technical, rather than an academic career (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999, p.23). To remedy this and encourage more pupils away from the occupational and into the academic streams, the report called for more FE[1], and argued that in secondary modern schools, the top third of pupils were capable of taking and benefiting from external exams, albeit *below* the GCE (the future CSE), whilst the majority however, should be *'spared them'* (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999, p.24). Another recommendation was that school-leaving age should be raised to 16.

The question of 'wasted' talent arose again in the Newsom Report (1963) *Half our Future*, which looked at the education of 13-16 year olds of *'average and less than average ability'* (Gillard, 2007). Newsom also recommended raising the school leaving age to 16, calling for a national curriculum with courses to include some *'broadly related to occupational interests'* and *'others concerned with personal and social development'* (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999, p.24). Contrary to Newsom's explicit recommendation however, the curriculum for the academically less able pupils became geared towards the new external Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) exam[2].

It would appear that as far back as 1959, Crowther was talking of the challenges facing youth in a progressively more, *'technological workplace'* (Payne, 2000), as the need for unskilled labour was declining in regions where the less able pupils traditionally found work. Crowther urged government to, *'mobilise far more human potentialities'* (Coffey, 1992, p.165), warning that there would not, in the near future, be enough *'pure scientists and technologists'* in the workplace, and that an *'army of technicians and craftsmen'* would be needed for industry and agriculture.

The 1962 Education Act appears to have been government's response to Crowther's call to mobilise human potential, by creating opportunities for working-class students to attend full-time, degree studies, diplomas, and teacher training courses at university, by requiring Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to provide maintenance grants to students resident in their area. To accommodate the envisaged higher demand for further/higher

[1] Major expansion of the FE sector did not happen until the 1980s, to ease high youth unemployment and accommodate strategies such as the Youth Employment Service (YTS).
[2] The GSE was later amalgamated into the GCSE.

education, the Robbins Report (1963-4) *Higher Education*, recommended that government massively extend college and university education so as to make it a universal provision for *all* with the '*necessary ability*'. Robbins also concluded that there was an untapped '*pool of ability*' in the population, especially in the lower socio-economic groups (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999, p.25). There followed a sharp increase in working-class pupils moving *away* from the *vocational* craft and technical training, and towards the *professional* academic studies.

The 1962 Education Act came into force during major cultural changes in society and in the nation's employment. Government became increasingly focused on future demands for skilled labour in a rapidly changing workplace. The *National Plan* (HMSO, 1965, p.40) predicted an expected need for '*certain types of qualified*' workers[1]. At the same time, there was an economic decline[2], which prompted government to start intervening in the technical and vocational training end of education (Hyland, 1999). The 1964 Industrial Training Act (ITA[3]) had earlier established the Central Training Council (CTC), which consisted of six employers and six trades' union representatives, to advise regional networks of Industrial Training Boards (ITBs). By 1966, this network covered 7.5 million workers (Lees and Chiplin, 1970). It was a grant/levy system imposed on firms that financed the provision of training, and it was reasonably successful in expanding employee training and FE day-release opportunities for workers throughout the 1960s, particularly in larger firms, where the ITA became a national policy from 1964 to 1973. Firms with less than 50 workers were exempt. However, it appears to have been unpopular with employers and industrial representatives (Hyland, 1999, p.34). They consistently complained about the ITA's financial sanctions and increasingly criticised the Act for its, '*lack of progress in avoiding shortages of skilled labour and inadequate co-ordination of skills training in different occupations*,' (Hyland, 1999, p.34), and above all, its failure to provide for the needs of young people in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs.

The 1973 Employment and Training Act (ETA), was designed to resolve some of these problems, formally establishing the Manpower Services Commission's (MSC[4]) in 1974,

[1] These are listed by HMSO (1965, p.25) as engineers, especially electrical and electronic, and those concerned with the production problems, mathematicians, chemists, physicists, technicians, work study engineers, accountants and economists, systems analysis and computer programmers in general, instrument mechanics, and electrical and electronics craftsman.
[2] The decline was, in part, a result of loss of the British Empire and its protected world markets.
[3] The ITA (1964) marked the turning point for the intervention of the State in job-training, except with respect to particular craft and technical qualifications.
[4] The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) - An agency of the Department of Employment, formed in 1974, which organised (amongst other things) vocational training for the unemployed, and following a 1984

to bring together all the main mechanisms of training, education and employment. The MSC set about its function to unify (administratively), the training services aimed at companies and employing bodies, with training services aimed at individuals looking to acquire additional skills.

The plan to unite all the 'interested parties' was reiterated in Prime Minister Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976. This 'Great Debate' focussed on the *'role and purpose of education'* (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.29). Callaghan's address impugned an education system that had, in his view, *'failed'* to provide the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes needed in a vibrant industrial economy (Payne, 2000, p.355), and needed to be *'reminded'* of its responsibilities towards young people in preparing them for work in an increasingly changing landscape of employment opportunities. The speech informed schools that they were there to help children *appreciate* how the nation earns and maintains its standard of living and to properly esteem the role of industry and commerce in the process. From this point onwards, the notion of core skills (CS) began to acquire, *'totemic significance for the English post-16 education and training system,'* (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.29).

Callaghan's speech also came to be viewed as the opening shot of a protracted political struggle for control over an education service perceived as being too autonomous[1] from the requirements of the national interest (Callaghan, 1987). Against a backdrop of, *'general disenchantment with education as a palliative of society's ills,'* (Galton, Simon and Croll, 1980) and with the country facing an economic crisis and youth unemployment running high, Callaghan was under pressure to do something.

However, it was the Conservative government coming to power in 1979, not Callaghan's government, that *really* drove forward the agenda to, *'transform the country's schools, colleges and universities into an education market place,'* (Gillard, 2007), where educational goods (qualifications) were deliberately constructed as commodities and the influence of educational professionals and LEAs, was diminished, many of whom were considered, by that Conservative government, to be *the loony left.*

White Paper "Training for Jobs" organised vocational qualifications. This function was then taken over by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

[1] The LEAs set local education policies and allocated the resources to schools and head teachers and governing bodies, which set school policies and allocated resources within the schools. National government policies included practically nothing on the curriculum (except religious education). This was left to the teaching profession, namely the head teachers, who controlled the schools and continued to do so until the 1980s.

The drive happened on three fronts, virtually simultaneously. The first was the rapid legislation bought in by the Conservative government's 1979 Education Act, which repealed the Labour government's 1976 Act (Trowler, 1998) and increased control of the national curriculum, beginning with schools. The second front increased control over the teaching profession, implemented through the new National Occupational Standards[1] (NOS) and teacher training, teachers at all levels were to be *'helped'* to gain a closer understanding of the industrial, commercial and economic base of our society (DoE, 1982, p.5). The third front was on the vocational education and training (VET) delivered nationally. The DoE (1981) devised the *New Training Initiative (NTI), A Programme for Action*, which gave rise to the review of vocational qualifications and the establishment in 1986 of the NCVQ and NVQs[2] (Gillard, 2007). The NTI called for a VET system to create, *'a better educated, better trained and more adaptable workforce,'* to secure a national economic renaissance (DoE, 1981, p.5-7), to find effective solutions to the social crisis connected with rising youth unemployment and to ensure that Basic Skills (BS) of numeracy and literacy were acquired. The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was launched by the MSC the same year (1981), to help support this 'renaissance', and through the report: *Foundation Training Issues,* the Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS), backed the NTI central theme; to strengthen young persons' versatility and employability in a rapidly changing job market (Payne, 2000, p.356).

An IMS job's study identified a series of 'generic', 'transferable' competencies they considered capable of being taught across a range of occupations. The MSC followed this survey with a Core Skills (CS) project (Payne, 2000), and launched the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in 1982. Hyland (1999), Benn and Fairley (1986, p.12) and Kelly (2001), all maintain that it was at this juncture that the relationship between the state and the education service entered, *'a new phase,'* reflected later in 1985-86, with the MSC taking control of 25 per cent of work-related, non-advanced further education in the post-compulsory sector (Hyland, 1994, p.4).

[1] National Occupational Standards (NOS) are produced as a suit of units for each occupational area. The unit structure allows for easy identification of the relevant NOS for a particular role. NOS have been developed for the majority of industrial and occupational sectors in the UK. NOS are statements of the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in employment and clearly define the outcomes of competent performance (QCA's definition).

[2] NVQs have an agreed statement of competence, which should be determined or endorsed by a Lead Body with responsibility for defining, maintaining and improving national standards of performance in the sectors of employment where the competence is practiced (NCVQ, 1991, p.1). The Lead Bodies are responsible for developing industry-defined standards of occupational competence and approval of a framework for new NVQs.

The Further Education Unit (FEU) was the other central player in the skills debate at this time (Payne, 2000). Established in the 1970s to help the FE colleges cope with a flood of unemployed youth (Silver, 1988), the FEU produced a document *Basic Skills* (1982), the first to actually *set out* two guiding principles for today's KS, generic-ness and transferability (Kelly, 2001, p.26). A description of four core areas of skills for the YTS followed; number, communication, problem solving, and practical/manual dexterity, all taken from the 103 identified earlier by the MSC in 1984. The FEU endorsed the NTI, but distanced itself from the more extreme stance of the MSC (Payne, 2000), arguing for BS to be broad-based and transferable, as opposed to the MSC's harder edged 'specific and job-related' BS, and for them to include a range of social and life skills (FEU, 1982b, p.2). The FEU's ideas of a skills-based curriculum with a relevant vocational focus for pre-vocational students, led to the Certificate of Vocational Preparation (CVP) in 1986, and later the GNVQs. The list of common skills it incorporated included:

- language: reading, writing, speaking and listening
- number: calculation, measurement, graphs and tables
- manipulative dexterity and co-ordination
- problem solving - everyday coping
- interpersonal relationships
- computer literacy
- learning.

(FEU, 1982b, p.2)

New government initiatives were spurred on by commonly held assumptions that the solution to Britain's poor international productivity and economic competitiveness was through increasing its workforce's skills and qualifications. The White Paper (DoE, 1986, p.1) *Working Together-Education and Training* set out government's clear commitment to, '*achieve radical modernisation of our vocational education and training system.*' The 1988 White Paper *Employment for the 1990s* repeated what had now crystallised into a conventional policy wisdom (Payne, 2000, p.358) that economic competitiveness would, '*depend on our ability to update the skills and productivity of all those in our workforce.*'

The CBI had, for some time been calling on government to promote and inculcate positive social attitudes to industry and the 'wealth making' process into national educational materials, an act considered to be *'exploitative of young people'* by Bates

(1984, p.202). Despite being unconnected with *any* established academic discipline, the CBI, through its influential document *Towards a Skill Revolution* (CBI, 1989), further recommending the development of CS within *all* VET, and building 'skills' (and knowledge) acquisition into the *national* curriculum (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.31; Kelly, 2001). The CBI recommendations later gained official blessing.

Following the Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI, 1989) paper supporting CS, the then Secretary of State urged the curriculum and qualifications regulatory and advisory bodies to report on *which* CS could be incorporated into programmes of study for 16-19 year olds following A-levels and other courses and how they should be implemented. The DES (1989) proposals that followed, defined and have permeated the skills debate ever since, according to Kelly (2001, pp.26, 27).

The National Curriculum Council (NCC), NCVQ and the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) developed specifications for CS in six areas:

- communication
- application of mathematics
- information technology
- problem-solving
- personal skills
- a modern foreign language.

The planned CS were to be integrated into established programmes, formally assessed and form a transferable system between vocational and academic awards. The NCC (1990), NCVQ (1991) and SEAC (1990), proposed CS be incorporated into all A-level syllabi as well as other courses, but these ideas were rejected by government, who did not want any interference with the gold standard that was A-level (Kelly, 2001). The recommendations that CS be reported on separately in their teaching, assessment and testing, was accepted. There was also clear support for what were being termed as 'generic skills' to be developed in programmes for 16-19 year olds, skills of problem solving, personal study, communication, numeracy and IT.

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) had established a new National Curriculum, increasing the remit of the DES, and thus central government control, marking the culmination of a process of political change, the consequences of which, has been seen as a breakdown of consensus over educational values, an abandonment of

consultation between government and educational professional bodies, and a lack of concern for formulating policy on the basis of that consensus and consultation (Simon, 1998; Haviland, 1988). A new settlement became established over post-compulsory education and training that encompassed a diverse group of players; government, opposition, the CBI and various government departments (CBI, 1989; Whiteside, 1992). Collectively, they called, again, for reform of Britain's weak VET system to create a, '*highly skilled, adaptable and motivated workforce to aid Britain's ability to compete in the high-tech, high value-added markets*,' that loomed on the horizon (Payne, 2000, p.358).

Political support for core, generic and transferable skills intensified, spurred on by international comparisons of productivity and competitiveness (DES, 1985, OECD, 1985), which constantly gave credence to the ideas that a better skilled and qualified workforce would increase national prosperity. The assumption was that these generic, transferable skills, acquired within the formal education and training system, *'would then transfer into the workplace'* (Fernández and Hayward, 2004, p.6). However, there were a number of technical issues that needed to be overcome to develop all post-16 qualifications (SEAC, 1991), not least in respect to maintaining the gold standard of the A-levels. The shift away from the idea of initiating CS for *all* post-16 programmes to mainly developing them for the vocational route, began at this point, according to Hodgson and Spours (2002, p.31). The general consensus that CS had become associated to a greater degree with VET than with the more prestigious academic track was compounded by the fact that by 1992, three of them[1] (communication, numeracy and IT) had become mandatory requirements within GNVQs.

Thus, GNVQs, as set out in the White Paper (DfE/ED/WO 1991) '*Education and Training for the 21st Century*', signalled government's determination to preserve separate pathways within a maintained divided post-16 qualifications and curriculum structure (Payne, 2000, p.359). It was the CS developed years earlier in the Business and Technology Educational Council (BTEC) programmes that were reconstructed as CS units in GNVQs, and it was here that the national policy drive to develop CS was to have the greatest impact (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.32). The association and clear placement of the CS 'entitlement' *inside* the vocational and *outside* of the academic routes was to have an effect on how the tutors, students and higher education viewed

[1] There were three additional skills introduced, but they were not mandatory - problem solving, a modern foreign language and personal skills.

the KS2000 and its qualifications from the day of its inception (Hodgson and Spours, 2002).

Britain's first National Targets for education and training (NTETs), those that had arisen out of the CBI recommendations (Hyland, 1994, p.5) were now set in place and modified in the Dearing Report (1993) *The National Curriculum and Its Assessment.* The 1993 Education Act responded to Dearing's recommendations, with the DfEE setting up an employer-led body, the NACETT (1998), as the principal advisory body to the government on *what* National Targets (NTs), there *should be* in the future.

Taking its cue from the White Paper (1994) *Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win*, in which the government called for more hard working people with high skills and the knowledge and understanding to use them to the full, the NACETT (1994) review of NTs, subsequently launched new targets for education and training, *'to take us into the 21st century.'* The White Paper (DfEE, 1995) *Competitiveness: Forging Ahead,* endorsed them, supporting their particular focus on education and training efforts, thus giving them *'credibility'* in the, *'drive towards higher levels of attainment on which our future prosperity depends,'* (NACETT, 1995, p.1). The scene was set for government to standardise and impose accountability and increase state involvement in VET (Lum, 2003, p.2), and launch its new *'Enterprise Education'* (Hayward and Sundnes, 2000, p. 3).

The Gatsby Charitable Trust (GCT) that supports, *'improvement in educational opportunity in the UK for a workforce which can better apply technology for wealth creation,'* conducted its own major project *16-19 Coherence Project,* the same year (1995). Through consultations across education and training providers, ABs, business federations, industry representatives and trades unions, the GCT's full report in 1996, focussed on six key issues, two of which were lower-attaining students and CS (referred to later in that report as KS). The main points reported that CS were, *'seen as important for employment and life-long learning.'* Concerns were expressed about the deficiencies in numerical and communication skills of low-attaining students leaving school (*and* of those in higher levels of education), and a need for these skills to be transferable, which the GCT believed was *not guaranteed* by the existing qualifications, GCSEs amongst them. These concerns reflected those expressed earlier by the CBI (1995).

The Dearing Report (1996) *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 year-olds,* and the GCT report, both considered coherence and breadth of study post-16, and the CS of GNVQs. CS were further engineered by Dearing and came out of the process being *wholly* redefined as KS (Bolton and Hyland, 2003), a *cusp* in their evolution, according to Kelly (2001, p.32). The major difference between the two reports appears to be that the GCT was still concerned with, *'education and vocational training,'* specifically *for a job*, whereas Dearing went wider, reiterating and reinforcing the central importance of education and training to the prospect of earning a good personal standard of living (Kelly, 2001), *and* the necessity for society to have an adaptable and well-trained workforce to compete with other economies. It was a subtle shift in emphasis, but one that some maintain has been used by government to increase political control over education, according to Kelly (2001).

Dearing re-examined vocational qualifications and discussed the division between education and training, again recommending a single national framework of qualifications for three types of courses: (i) the academic, (ii) the allied courses in schools and colleges, and (iii) the vocational courses in the work-place. As a consequence, the School Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA) and the NCVQ were merged in 1997, and the new department became the QCA.

New Labour came to office in 1997, and showed their commitment to the now recognisable, political skills agenda, as confirmed in the White Paper (DfEE, 1997) *Excellence in Schools* which maintained that, *'in the 21st century, knowledge and skill will be the key to success...economic prosperity and social cohesion.'* The new government accepted many of Dearing's recommendations on introducing KS nationally. However, amidst fears and *'widespread concern'* that the *'timetable of reforms'* to implement a new national framework of qualifications would be *'too tight'* (Mager, 1997, p.30), the government delayed the operation by a year, to allow piloting *'at a manageable pace.'*

Caroline Mager, Head of Curriculum and Qualifications at the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), felt there were issues which needed to be raised during this one-year, *'critical period of consultation'*, (Mager, 1997, p. 30), not least in regards to the three main KS, of which it was noted, because of their ability to be externally assessed, were therefore being promoted over the three *'harder to assess'* skills, the WKS, regarded by many as the most important (Mager, 1997a, p.10). Mager also makes the point that the CS have simply been renamed KS, and, *'there has been little*

attempt to identify if these are the essential skills to assist transferability and to provide the basis for lifelong learning.' In fact, FEDA did not support, *'the introduction of separate tests for KS in GNVQs,'* (Mager, 1997a, p.11). The NACETT (1997, p.71) *Skills for 2000*, confirms that *'the units'* of communication, application of number and IT in GNVQs and NVQs were used to, *'set the national standard.'* However, some months later, another report came out of FEDA, which appeared less critical, concluding that, *'KS are an essential vehicle for developing skills for future employment needs, and should be reviewed to fulfil that role,'* (Hughes, 1997, p.8). The new qualifications agenda (Munday and Farady, 1999) undertaken by FEDA, then began its KS research projects and pilots in nine colleges across Britain.

The NACETT (1998, p.5), further reviewed NTET, setting out eleven main conclusions and recommendations in its report *Fast Forward for Skills.* Their primary purpose was reiterated; to make Britain more competitive internationally and play a vital role in promoting social cohesion, by reducing dependency on the State and make work pay. One of their recommendations was for a, *'challenging national target'* for KS to be set by government, as being essential and vitally important for success at work and life generally. As two of the new targets would relate to 16+ year-olds, the post-compulsory VET sector was a good place to begin. The NACETT (1998, p.7) further recommended that KS, *'should be embedded in normal programmes of study,'* but be assessed separately. Government's Green Paper (DfEE, 1998a, pp.9, 65) *The Learning Age* followed, and consolidated the view that, *'the key to success'* was through the *'employability skills'* of literacy and numeracy, and the skills needed to gain entry to the labour market, were technical, managerial and the KS.

A new National Skills Task Force was set up by the DfEE (1998b, 3.2) to assess these, *'future skill needs'* for the economy, and in 1999, Stephen Byers, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was addressing the CBI National Conference, telling them that the economy and society is driven by globalisation, knowledge, technology and innovation and that, government's role, *'is to equip its citizens with the skills they need to succeed in the modern economy,'* (Byers, 1999). It was maintained that government had established new National Learning Targets (NLTs), to raise standards and attainments across the board and would be introducing a new qualification the following year (2000) for KS. Thus, the *'solution'* would be solved by *'policy magic'* (Ball, 2006, p.72), or what Stronach (1993, p.6), calls, *'witchcraft'*: *'a form of reassurance as well as rational response to economic problems.'*

Figures 2-1 (1944-1987) and 2-2 (1988-2000) show timelines of the major developments leading to KS2000.

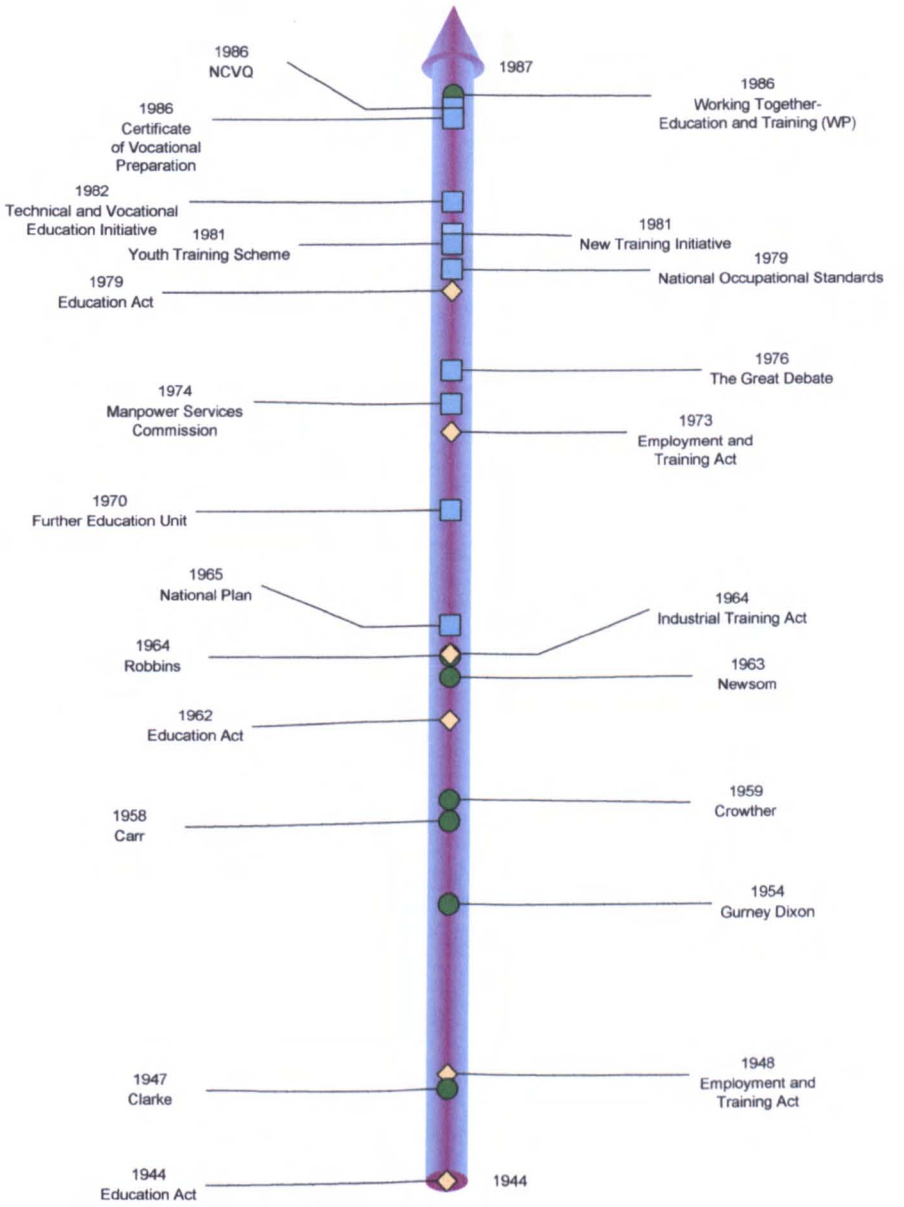

Figure 2-1 Timeline to KS2000 1944-1987

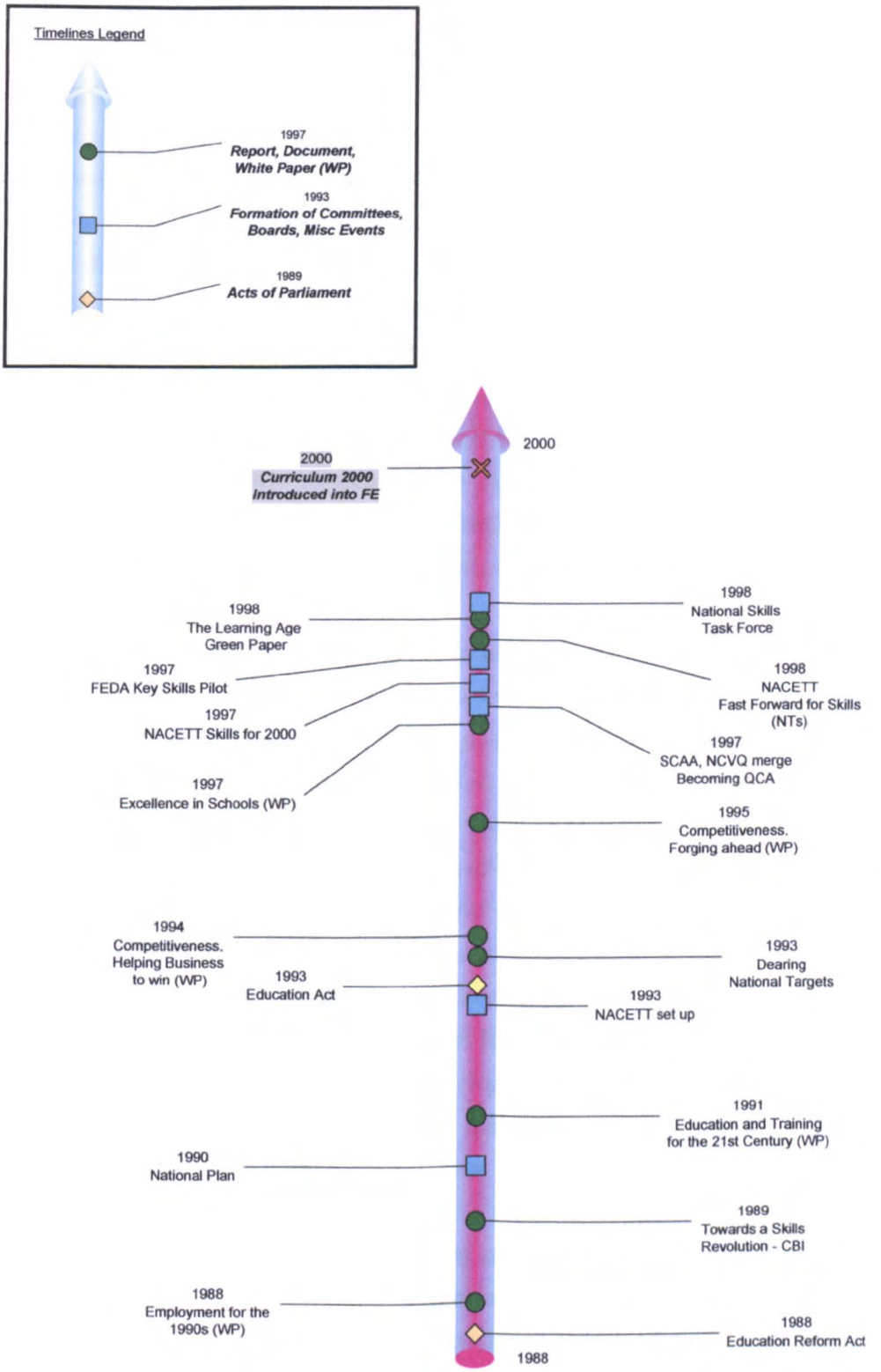

Figure 2-2 Timeline to KS2000 1988-2000

2.2 The skills 'gap'

It is argued that Britain has lost much of its industrial and manufacturing base and with this many low-skilled jobs. Unemployment is deemed highest among those with low levels of education (Crouch *et al*, 1999, p.1). The prevailing concern (internationally) appears to be that this group will be left at the mercy of global labour competition if they do not acquire high levels of skills (Crouch *et al.*, 1999; Keep, 2003). It is this perceived need for a higher skilled, flexible workforce that has fuelled successions of policy changes in VET, a pattern of, *'intervening on the supply side of the skills equation through education and training policy,'* according to Fernández and Hayward (2004, p.4) that has historically been the government's socially and politically acceptable way to be used to raise the economic competitiveness of organisations, whilst *'ignoring the demand side.'* However, questions arise concerning the actual effectiveness of such policies and their value for those who most need them, the currently low-skilled, and least-well academically educated amongst us.

It is also suggested that the problem of unemployment is more often one in which school-leavers are *over-educated* for the low-level skills needed by many employers (Finn, 1991). Furthermore, Finn (1991) argues that the industrial decline that fuelled the *political crisis* of youth unemployment was transformed by government into an *educational crisis,* with education being made to take the responsibility for economic forces beyond its control, and school-leavers being *blamed* for their own unemployment, diverting attention from the low-quality, low-pay and declining number of jobs available. Some writers hold that unemployment is being defined as the un-normal condition of ignorance, bad attitude and deficiency of BS, instead of what really lies behind this state, a lack of motivation to earn low wages in boring jobs with poor career prospects (International Labour Organisation, 1977, p.2). It is *'important to recognise,'* according to Hayward (2005, p.5), *'that the education and training system cannot create more interesting and well-paid jobs.'*

To correct this *deviant* condition in young people, employers have been increasingly given a greater voice in the management of the educational system, *'to ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses'* (NIACE, 2003, p.1), amongst them, the skills of cooperation, communication, and a positive attitude towards business and industry (Noah and Eckstein, 1990, p.61; CBI, 1984, p.117). Whilst this may not be a particularly *negative* development, some question

employers' commitment to the process themselves. Dale *et al, (*1990, p.27) refer to employers', '*well-documented educational conservatism and frequently expressed view that education is the job of the teachers,*' that make, '*for a reluctance to get involved anyway.*' In contrast, Noah and Eckstein (1990, p.76) maintain that business and industry feel that *it* has special expertise and interest in VET, and therefore *should* be its main provider, their 'exclusion' being the fault of the general education system.

Government (DfES, 2001, p.8) however, has increasingly empowered employers, encouraging government agencies and education institutions to, '*bring influence to bear on schools, colleges and higher education across the whole spectrum of academic and vocational provision.*' Employers are now placed in the lead, at least by the rhetoric. What is noted, is the confusion that some employers express over the complicated array of 'skills' now apparently required for maintaining a successful economy, or, looked at another way, perhaps they are, '*simply not required*' by them (Keep, 2003, p.20).

Winch (2004, p.31), maintains that VET is still viewed largely as an immediate preparation for comparatively low-skill[1], *not* high-skill work[2], therefore the assertions that there is a direct link between VET and economic performance is questionable. There are still 6.5 million jobs that need no qualification, which represents some 27% of the workforce. Low-skill jobs constitute 40% of the total number of jobs in Britain, which means that many British employers are actually dependent on low-skilled, low paid, easy-come, easy-go armies of workers, and this trend is rising (Newton *et al,* IES Report 433, 2006, p.1). According to Parrott (2003, p.25), employers positively *'relish workers'* who can be quickly *'trained'* on the job and even more quickly *'released'* when necessary and many small and medium sized businesses are placing less value on human capital than their predecessors did in previous generations. Parrott (2003) maintains that Britain's low-skilled economy has actually done better than many of its rivals in recent years.

[1] The definition of low-skilled work varies according to studies. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (2006) definition is:- low-paid, low-skilled workplaces are characterised in the main by low quality competitive strategy, few development and progression opportunities, poor human resource management practices, high staff turnover, and a lack of a union presence (although there are exceptions to this pattern).

[2] It is in the high-skill employment sector where there is the greatest need for increased skills' levels, not in the majority of current low-skilled jobs, such as hairdressing and shop work.

Finn (1991, p.49) maintains that there is actual evidence (Blackburn and Mann, 1979) on the skill requirements of many working class[1] jobs, which shows that their educational demands are very limited. 85% of the workers could do 95% of the jobs surveyed. In reality, Finn (1991) argues, the skills required across a very wide sector of the labour market are relatively easy to acquire, and are well within the grasp of most workers.

Others hold that government statistics, constantly telling us of a huge lack of skills in our workforce are *'inflated'* and *'should not be used in this way,'* (Frank, 2003, p.18-19). Also, comparisons of economic performance made between Britain and other countries in relation to the 'low' skill of our workers, are *'not a comparative measure of poor basic skills,'* between the countries examined, because each educational system is assessed on different criteria. The measure is therefore deemed *'deficient'*. The NACETT (1998, p.17) itself recognised that international comparisons of skills levels are not easy and cannot be precise, because qualification frameworks in different countries are seldom directly comparable.

Alan Wells, Director of the BSA, as reported in the *Independent*, 25th January, 2005, (Wells, 2005), believes the public has been *'bamboozled'* by flawed research and misled by government's seriously over-estimated claims that 82% of adults cannot read or add up properly and that these statements have actually *damaged* our international reputation. He dismissed government's assertions that millions of potential employees lacked adequate *'skills'*, as *'obviously total nonsense,'* as these were perfectly competent adults.

The NACETT (1997, pp.14-29), using as its source the survey *Skills Needs in Britain* (a survey of over 4,000 employers) reported on the progress towards the NTs, and maintained that 83% of employers thought that skill needs were increasing in the UK overall, reiterating there was a *'skills gap or lack'* among all of their employees. The survey noted that fewer larger employers thought this in 1996 than had done so in 1995. However, out of the 83% of employers, only 20% said that there was a gap between the skills of their *current employees* and the skills *needed* to meet their business requirements. Of those 20%, the skills they rated as the *highest* that needed to be *'improved upon'* were stated as being *'management skills'* (66%), *not* literacy and numeracy (rated the lowest at 28%). It was these skills (the 28%) that the NACETT

[1] The term 'Working class', in this sense, meaning low-status jobs, with low-skilled and low qualification requirements.

(1997, p.39) reported as those KS, '*employers consistently rate and value highly.*' Surveying the young employees alone, the percentages do change, but employers still rated practical skills[1] highest at 72%, then personal skills at 70%, before literacy and numeracy at 41%. According to Dearing (1996, p.51), there was also little concern being expressed by employers about the need to raise standards in the use of IT.

These early anecdotal reports of what employers said were the skills they sought in young people, could, according to Hayward and Fernández (2004, p.119), be criticised for being '*ideological*', because little was actually *known* about the level of demand for these skills at that time. According to Dale *et al* (1990, p.27) however, getting employers to specify what their *needs* actually were, was difficult to begin with and Finn (1991) argues that employers' educational needs during the 1980s were ambiguous, contradictory, confused or simply unknown.

However, even by 2000, in the extensive *Employer skills survey* (Hogarth *et al*, 2001), only 7% saw IT skills as a problem, 7% literacy, and 9% numeracy. Such results hardly speak of the overwhelming importance and perceived gap of generic (core or key) skills to employers at that time, as was assumed by policy makers (Hayward and Fernández, 2004, p.121). Skills required by employers are diverse and highly polarised. High level analytical and conceptual skills and knowledge required from industries, such as pharmaceutical and engineering differ from those required in the service industries, such as punctuality, speed and a good telephone manner. Even certain forms of behaviour (ability to smile whilst answering a telephone call for instance) are now dignified as *skill* (Keep and Mayhew, 1999). This reinforces what Finn (1991, p.49) describes as the difficulty for individual employers to translate their *needs* into a coherent set of demands on the state, and thus the state's resolution in certain policies to satisfy those requirements.

A DfEE report (1998b, p.13) however, suggests that skills shortages *are* capable of being identified and exist where there is, '*genuine lack of adequately skilled individuals available in the accessible labour market,*' and where, '*employers feel that their existing workforce have lower skill levels than necessary to meet their business objectives.*' The *skills* referred to in the report are all encompassing *generic skills*, which include KS, but also cover reasoning skills, work process management skills, and personal

[1] In this sense, 'practical skills' are the vocational, not academic skills.

values and attitudes, such as motivation, discipline, judgement, leadership and initiative (DfEE, 1998b, p.15).

Hayward and Fernández (2004, p.121) point to the analysis of two '*Work skills in Britain*' surveys by Ashton *et al.* (1999) and Felstead *et al.* (2002), which show that even *generic skills* needs across different occupations are very complex and indicate strongly that the *types of skills* required in different sectors of the economy vary widely (Dickerson and Green, 2002, pp. 9-10). Thus, what particular skills are required from general education and training (Finn, 1991, p.49), vary too.

The *2004 National Employers Skills Survey* (LSC, 2005[1]), which claims to be the largest and most comprehensive source of information on the current skills issues affecting employers in England, recognises that skills shortages vary greatly for different employers, are relative to employment, and are largely reported to be in the *skilled* sectors, these being technical and practical skills (LSC, 2005, p.12). Communication skills appear to rank the second highest (40%), but what these actually are is not clear, and given that the sector reporting the greatest need is the sales sector (63%) that seems unsurprising, given that sales *is* largely about communicating. Team working (32%) and problem solving (29%), are the next skills gaps reported, classified in this report as *generic* skills. A noted inclusion was the higher incidences of literacy and numeracy shortages being reported by employers, but no statistics were presented for these.

The survey findings show that the majority of skills gaps (35%) resulting in recruitment problems, lay within the lower, elementary occupational groups (cleaners, shelf fillers, etc), but it is not clear precisely what *skills* these groups required in order to do the jobs. The main *cause* for skills shortages overall, as reported by employers, was employees' lack of experience (75%), their own (employers') failure to train staff (27%), and staff motivation to train themselves (27%). The training provided to employees (the survey showed some commitment by employers to fund training), was largely job related (90%).

The acquiring of skills (generic included) per se, have long been deemed beneficial, because it is believed there is a financial return to obtaining them. This makes them an *investment*, either by the individual, employers or society, and this concept is heavily

[1] The 2006 LSC employers' survey is not due to be completed until 2008.

sold by government as the benefits and desirable results of up-skilling. However, '*as with any other asset,*' if the demand for it is, or becomes uncertain, the resulting market equilibrium may be nowhere near the socially desirable outcome (ILO, 1977, p.19) and young people, being first and foremost realists, model their ambitions on the opportunities given them. MacIntosh (2003, p.16) states that national employment rates are *raised* with *skills* qualifications, but they do not necessarily have a large effect on wages. In contrast, academic qualifications appear to show wage increase for those who hold them. Fernández and Hayward (2004, p.27) confirm that the labour market returns to academic qualifications (and the higher L3 vocational qualifications), remain positive, whilst returns to lower level vocational qualifications (where KS L1 reside), '*appear to be zero.*'

Past education of the masses could be described as being distinctly utilitarian (Dewey, 1964, p. 312) and the coming of industry created an imperative for a technical and practical preparation for most professions. Some argue that education has become an adjunct to manufacture and business and that VET is being interpreted in theory and practice as '*trade education,*' as a means of securing technical efficiency in specialised future pursuits (Dewey, 1964, p.316). Certainly, education for the masses was always seen as a major tool in supplying Britain's employers with what they needed, and today's education system has been clearly charged with the role of being the main, '*vehicle for delivering a more highly skilled cohort of young entrants to the national workforce,*' (Keep, 2003, pp. 2-7).

However, given the significant government-funded support to improve their businesses, a rise in funding education of some £23.3 billion since 2000-01 (CIVITAS, 2007), there appears to have been a distinct lack of enthusiasm by employers for this *skills* revolution. Policy-makers might well be disappointed with such reaction to their efforts, which will primarily benefit the employers, who appear to see little compelling economic case to fund this up-skilling themselves within or without the workplace, preferring it all, '*to be supplied by the education system and in the classroom,*' (Keep, 2003, p.11). It might be fair to say however, that the reluctance of employers to invest in improving employee skills is understandable given that they do leave, taking their skills with them, thus giving a logical case *for* government intervention in skills training (Hayward and Fernández, 2004, p.124).

There still exists two points that we need to be clear about however, (i) what 'skills' are, and (ii) a possible mismatch between the skills the vocational students are expected to

acquire and the *'right kind of skills'* required by employers (Fernández and Hayward, 2004, pp.18, 29), given that there might be *'aggregate imbalances'* between qualifications supply and the labour market demand.

2.3 The meaning of 'skill'

Princeton University's WordNet (2006) defines *skill* as being an:

> *'accomplishment, acquirement, acquisition, attainment (an ability that has been acquired by training).'*

According to Chambers on-line dictionary (2007) *skill* is:

> *'1. expertness, dexterity. 2. a talent, craft or accomplishment, naturally acquired or developed through training. 3. (skills) aptitudes and abilities appropriate for a specific job.'*

The FEU report *Basic Skills* (1982, p. 2) acknowledged that, *'the concept of skill has now spread on to a much broader canvas and is used for training and education.'* Parrott, (2003) believes the nature, meaning and connotation of skills has subtly changed over the last two decades and is now almost an attractive *substitute* for the complex and ambiguous term 'education'.

Griffiths (1987, pp. 204-5), maintains that most people do not use the word 'skill' in one narrow, well-defined sense, while others highjack it for their own purposes by using it in another. As Griffiths (1987) points out, political and educational goals are often one and the same; both are considered to have the aim of improving life. Their association with skills, although coming from a different perspective, is that skills also contribute to a *good*[1] improved life. This association is currently being heavily promoted in the government's 'Skills for Life' (SfL) agenda.

The simple meaning and idea of skill as being a physical and practical activity involving manual dexterity and hand-eye co-ordination (making and playing), is getting lost in the current multitude of skills, knowledge and understanding. The list to date includes BS, KS, SfL, WKS, personal skills, thinking skills, behavioural skills (discipline, punctuality and presentation (Payne, 2000, p.361)), employability skills, technician skills, management skills (DfEE, 1998b, p.65), including the latest - Functional Skills (FS), which *'will be available for specialised diploma candidates from September 2008 and*

[1] The word 'good' here is applied to the practical activity (skills in the conventional sense), creative producers, builders and technicians.

for all by September 2010,' (LSN, 2006, p.11). Keep (2003, p.12) adds - personal qualities, attitudes, characteristics or predispositions, such as leadership, motivation, politeness, compromise and respect, reliability, stability of work record and responsibility. These are all bound together with the '*universal glue of another skill - flexibility*,' (Payne, 2000, p. 360), now chiefly taken to mean an ability to work long and unsociable hours (Parrott, 2003, p. 25; Salisbury and Lane, 2000, p.86), as well as to get youth into work (DoEd, 1988). It has reached the point therefore, according to Payne (2000), where *skill* has undergone such an epic transformation that it means whatever employers and policy makers want it to mean. However, it remains unclear just what skills *are* (Griffiths, 1987, p. 203).

Bolton and Hyland (2003) believe that extending the concept of skill to aspects of education and training *outside* the field of the physical and practical domain, has caused confusion. This certainly created enormous problems when KS were introduced into FE, a sector traditionally providing practical training. In fact, few outside of the KS personnel (and some within it) actually fully understood what Key 'Skills' was. However, the confusion turned to rejection by the vocational staffs, once *they* decided KS were basic maths and English education, not practical training.

The government's own National Skills Task Force (DfEE, 1998b, p.13) observed that the term 'skill' is used inconsistently across educational, academic, commercial and governmental publications, resulting in often contradictory data, rendering comparisons and analysis of those data, highly questionable.

This skills bonanza has, as its centre, the historical model of vocational education in Britain and the tools it uses, apprenticeships (Kelly, 2001). Before the 1970s, policymakers tended to hold a traditional view (Payne, 2000, p. 354) that acquiring a skill involved either high-level educational qualifications *and* analytical capacities, what the Carr Report (1958) referred to as '*skilled craftsman,*' and the Crowther Report (1959) as, '*craftsman, scientist, technician and technologist,*' (Payne, 2000, p. 361). Barrow, (1987, p.190) maintains that philosophical enquiries also point out that the roots of 'skill' are in physicality and practice, the psycho-motor dexterity, and experience from training and practice, especially in using the hands or body.

It is now *de rigueur* for all policy documents to contain references to skills (Bolton and Hyland. 2003, p.16). BS and employability skills underpin Welfare to Work and Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), thus *skill talk* is on the increase. Government's insistence that

the acquisition of skills is the panacea for creating the effective and successful workforce for the 21st century is criticised by academic commentators in the field, and there is a consensus that this aspect of prevailing policy orthodoxy is both *'myopic and deeply flawed'* (Payne, 2000, p. 359).

A further issue is the matter of transferability of skills. Jonathan (1987, p. 93) maintains that it is a common error to make the first move from identifying features common to *different* skills and, from this, inferring the existence of a *common* skill. Dearden (1984, p. 78), echoes this view, stating it does not follow that across vocational areas[1], it is the same skill which is present in each case. Hyland and Johnson (1998, p.170) maintain that, *'belief in transferable skills is based on wishful thinking'* - that transferable skills hold out the promise of producing a flexible and adaptable workforce and solving problems associated with training people for an uncertain future. On the basis of the available evidence, drawn from many different disciplines, they believe that the pursuit of such skills is a *'chimera-hunt'*, an expensive and disastrous exercise in futility.

Barnett (1994, p. 56), maintains that we cannot simply *teach* skills, we have to specify the skill we have in mind, as the types of skills required in different sectors of the economy vary widely. This questions the concept of effective *transferability,* defined by the DfEE (1998b, p.15), as those skills which can be used across occupational groups. Dearden (1984, p. 60), further argues that generic skills may not be common across activities or disciplines or be trained, free from any particular context. Bolton and Hyland (2003, p.18), maintain that the generic skills[2] defined by the DfEE, CBI or GNVQs, have little or no philosophical foundation, and that *'transferable skills'*, in themselves, also mean very little taken out of context. Given the time-consuming debates and disagreements surrounding what are now termed *skills,* it is arguably more sensible to return many of them to their former status - education.

2.4 Education or training?

Given the debate concerning education and skills-training, it is useful to examine what constitutes *education* and what constitutes *training*, because they have traditionally been viewed as being different.

[1] Dearden (1984, p.78), is referring to the vocational area of 'performers'.
[2] Generic skills in this context contain the current KS.

2.4.1 Education

Mosley (2006) quotes Michael Oakeshott, as stating that, *'education is part of a slow and sometimes painful process of learning to be human.'* According to Moser (2006), education can mean practical or vocational training. It can mean getting any old qualification for earning a living. It can mean a child discovering who he or she really is, or it can mean the business of transmitting our culture and civilization from one generation to the next. In other words, it can have many meanings.

Encarta (1999) states that educating is primarily, *'the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution'* and knowledge is, *'the knowledge or abilities gained through being educated.'*

According to Britannica (2007), education is, *'learning that takes place in schools or school-like environments (formal education) or in the world at large; the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society.'* The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (Columbia, 2007), maintains that education is, *'any process, either formal or informal, that shapes the potential of a maturing organism,'* but that *'Formal education is a conscious effort by human society to impart the skills and modes of thought considered essential for social functioning.'*

Education therefore appears to be *knowledge*, borne out by Encarta (1999), which lists the word as meaning *'information in the mind, specific information and all that can be known.'* It is synonymous with learning (acquired knowledge), wisdom (enlightenment and learning and the ability to apply it), erudition and scholarship (advanced academic learning of a specialised nature), and information (data and facts).

Quay (2004, p.3) discusses the two ways of *knowing* that Ryle (1949) draws attention to, one reflected in a more practical knowing - *how*, the other in a more theoretical knowing - *that*.

> *'Knowing how to do something is a practical, everyday way of knowing. Walking, talking, reading, eating - knowing how to perform tasks, actual doing, is described as a knowing how. Knowing that something is the case is a more theoretical, even scientific way of knowing. The world is round, my name is John, chickens lay eggs, knowledge of this or that truth is described as a knowing that.'*

According to Stroud (2000, p. 98), the philosophical study of human knowledge seeks to understand what human knowledge *is* and how it comes to be. Williamson (2000, p. 21), maintains that our initial presumption should be that, *'knowledge is merely a state of mind,'* a mental state of a subject, including love, hate, pleasure and pain. Furthermore, mental states incorporate attitudes to propositions, believing something is so - conceiving, desiring, intending, hoping and fearing that it is so and wondering whether it is so. Knowing something is so is also propositional knowledge - the knowledge that something is the case, that a certain proposition is true (Bonjour, 1985, p. 3[1]).

However, according to Williamson (2000), philosophers distinguish between *knowing* and *believing truly*, and ponder as to whether or not believing truly is a mental state in its *own right* or merely a kind of sense-impression. Then it would be a non-mental state. At the other end of the scale, are those who consider believing truly to be a state of mind with duration.

Knowing, as a mental state, has been associated with the opposing views that knowing entails *not* believing and that knowing *does* entail believing. Others argue that knowing is consistent both with believing and with not believing. Whatever the view, it cannot be disputed that the concept of *knowing* matters and that the difference between knowing and not knowing is very important to us. Even unsophisticated curiosity is a desire to know (Hardy, 1992, p.15).

2.4.2 Training

Training is termed the process of teaching or learning a skill or job, as opposed to 'learning', which is the acquisition of *knowledge* or *skills* gained through education, the *action(s)* of imparting such knowledge and skills. The term *learning* itself however, is referred to a variety of mental events that make it impossible to have a single precise definition (Howe, 1999, p.2). As discussed in section 2.3, acquiring a skill means

[1]Bonjour (1985, pp.3, 4) asks 'what conditions must be satisfied in order for a cognitive state to constitute a genuine instance of propositional knowledge?' and offers a venerable answer that he maintains is at least approximately correct. For a person *A*, to know that *P*, where *P* is some propositions, three conditions must be satisfied: (1) *A* must believe confidently that *P*, (2) *P* must be true and (3) *A's* belief that *P* must be adequately justified. Basically, *A* must confidently believe (be thoroughly convinced) that *P*, a tree for instance, is really a tree, without serious doubts or reservations. Then *P* must be true - the tree must actually be a tree in reality or in truth. According to Bonjour (1985, p.4), such a view of truth is largely taken for granted by most of the philosophical tradition and by common sense, and is indispensable to the very enterprise of critical epistemology. Also, that such a conception can be adequately explicated and defended.

becoming particularly adept at something and gaining a specialised ability over a period of time.

The word 'training' clearly contains within it the overall *meanings* attached to the concept of acquired knowledge (learning), such as information in the mind, specific information, all that can be known and learning, and wisdom. In philosophical terms however, there appears to be differences and distinctions made between a *state of mind* sort of knowledge, as described by Williamson (2000, p. 21), and other kinds. Training falls into this other category, historically and commonly described as the, '*practice – doing kind of knowledge, as opposed to the theory – knowing,*' (Dewey, 1964, p. 324) sort.

Training appears to lean towards the grounded knowledge end of *reaching a knowing* – the scientific, practical education. Dearden (1991) describes training as instruction and practice aimed at reaching a particular level of competence or operative efficiency. The opposite to this, at the 'thinking' end, is where thinking is connected more with philosophy and is seen as being somewhat remote from practical, grounded knowledge and nearer to the perceptive, understanding type of 'knowing'. Looked at another way, thinking is an idea of what is possible. Training, or more precisely, the results of training, skills acquisition *are the demonstration of it*, a record of accomplished fact.

Dewey (1964, pp. 333-335) maintains that in the theory of knowledge there are a number of dualisms, one of which is described as *activity* and *passivity*. Purely empirical and physical things are supposed to be known by receiving impressions. Physical things somehow stamp themselves upon the mind or convey themselves into consciousness by means of the sense organs. Training appears to fit in here. On the other hand, rational knowledge and knowledge of spiritual things is believed to spring from activity initiated within the mind. Dewey (1964) describes a further dualism of *intellect* and *emotion*. Intellect is the mind turning outwards and emotion is private and personal. Generally, it has been the intellect, which is deemed to be the work of pure intelligence in apprehending *facts and truths* that has been traditionally venerated as the highest order of education - the *thinking,* academic end of the scale. At the other end, there is the *training,* a grounded, practical knowledge and knowing that is to be found in the FE vocational training sector.

Dewey (1964) regards the division in education between subject matter and method, as an educational equivalent of separation and dualism. Here, Dewey (1964) describes

what is known - the subject matter, as external, objective knowledge, whilst the act of drawing from it, learning - the method, as knowledge or knowing of an internal, subjective, even psychical nature.

Dewey (1964, p. 337) does not appear to draw heavily on these dualisms as divisions or differences between education and training however. He uses the term *continuity* to describe the process of training and learning a skill. It is one of building on, constantly reorganising of activity so as to maintain its continuity. It makes modifications in and for future actions, as they are required, because of what has already been done. Dewey (1964) argues that *knowing* has much to do with re-organising activity, it is not something isolated from it. As activity becomes more complex, co-ordinating a greater number of factors in space and time, intelligence also plays a more and more marked role. It is a case of one experience being built on, modified, reflected on, improved, accepted, rejected, 'learnt from', so to speak, and then being made available to other experiences for future and subsequent activities.

The DES (1979) recognised, that for many years, the terms 'training' and 'education' have been commonly used as a rough and ready means of distinguishing learning to perform specific vocation tasks (training) from the general development of knowledge, moral values and understanding required in all walks of life (education). Winch (1995, p. 315) argues that training is fundamental to many forms of human learning and Dearden (1991) maintains there are circumstances where the same learning sequence may satisfy the criteria for both training and education and therefore they may not be mutually exclusive.

These ideas are of course not new. The psychologists Pavlov (1849-1936) and Thorndike (1874-1949)[1] described models of learning that incorporated different levels and experiences and *conditioning* that build on our learning, albeit from different viewpoints on responses and responses to stimuli.

[1] Pavlov and Thorndike's scientific studies of learning gave rise to ideas of 'behaviour' in learning, conditioned and/or forced by the environment. The behavioural conditioning or 'training' was considered to be the way we learned something. Pavlov's stimulus was food (in his theories to simple learning) and Thorndike's *stimuli* were anything that gave an effective response to achieve the goal. Watson (1878-1959) later added to the behaviourism theories and included certain responses such as the emotions of love, fear and anger. It was Watson who gave psychology the notion that instincts and inherited traits should be discounted when studying learned behaviour and stressed the importance of conditioning. But it was Thorndike's work in particular that a large part of scientific psychology in the twentieth century has been based on, or directed at (O'Connell, 1973).

Today, the word *conditioned* is frequently used with rather sinister overtones often associated with political indoctrination (O'Connell, 1973). This is considered by Winch (1995, p. 315) to be unhelpful and has added to an historic view of training being in some way authoritarian and that authority is viewed by some as harmful. Training is not considered to involve a free, conscious thinking as education does, and the act of being trained *limits* independent judgement. Hyland (1993) also believes that the concept of *training* has suffered because of its association with behaviourism and consequently the role it has played in education has been undervalued. Generally, this association has been applied to the low to medium vocational training, believed by some educationists as having impoverished models of training (Winch, 1995).

It would seem that a number of educators believe there is a difference between what has historically been classified as education (knowing), and the acquisition of skills via training (grounded knowledge). Here, a problem appears to arise from the view that low to medium skills training are in some way a type of *habitual learning, conditioning* or *indoctrination* to which the higher orders of mind must not be subjected.

However, in the latter half of the 20th century, changing attitudes, social arrangements, policy shifts and broadening of institutional learning all contributed to a lesser distinction being made between training and education. The move towards coupling training with education within FE, such as NVQs and KS, are examples of this. Dearden (1991, pp. 85, 86) however, suggests that there is a case for retaining a distinction between training and education.

Training plays a significant part of our formalised education and schooling. Much of what is learned pre-school has been acquired by conditioning learning (Williams, 1999, p. 192) and training, as well as what might be termed *education*. The process of formal education, beginning at the age of five, builds on these vital capabilities, including language and the numerous items of knowledge already gained through the development of our intelligence, perception and understanding and thinking skills (Winch, 2004). What we apply in a post-16 situation, such as when training for a vocation, therefore must rely on what has been acquired pre-school *and* throughout our years of compulsory education.

2.4.3 Vocational training

Moodie (2002, p.1) maintains that there is no single characteristic which adequately identifies *'vocational education and training'* across jurisdictions and across historical periods, but observes that vocational education and training's identity has been founded on four characteristics: epistemological, teleological, hierarchical and pragmatic[1].

According to Encarta (1997), a 'vocation' means someone's job or profession, especially a type that demands commitment. Collins (1975) also states it to be a *'profession.'* According to Dewey (1964, p.307), a vocation, in educational terms, means a, *'direction of life activities as renders them perceptibly significant to a person, because of the consequences they accomplish, and also useful to his associates.'*

In order to enter into a vocation or profession, one has to learn, develop and acquire the necessary skills to do the job. Historically, this would have been a relatively narrow training, such as that given from father to son, from master to apprentice, or on a larger scale, people would have acquired the skills necessary to carry out one or two specific tasks (as in assembly line work within a factory). Dewey maintains however, that educating individuals to only one line of activity and creating restricted specialists is impossible, as no one person is, or can be that exclusive in their acquisition of knowledge.

According to Dewey (1964, p. 306), there is an historical *'antithesis of vocational and cultural education,'* in the learning and acquisition of skill and knowledge needed to become and remain employable through paid work, as opposed to learning for the sake of it. This results in a narrowing down of the range of skills to focus on 'employability', rather than real personal development for cultural aims and as an aid to community participation. Historically, this has always presented a problem to both education and training providers (when is training *education*...when is education *training?*). Lavender (2003, p. 6), believes the direction in which we seem to be going (skills training for employability) is wrong, because, *'we cannot afford to have a society where the only skills are those for making and getting.'*

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[1] 1. Epistemological – ways of knowing, ways of learning and as a field of knowledge.
2. Teleological - training for an extrinsic purpose compared with cultivation for intrinsic worth, training for work: education for life, training for work directed by others, education for self-directed work.
3. Hierarchical - By occupational level, educational level and cognitive level.
4. Pragmatic – not elsewhere included (such as the training provided by the FE sector).

According to Parrott (2003, p.25), the '*English opinion formers and policy makers have never grasped the concept of an education that could be simultaneously liberal and work-related, assuming that there has to be two distinct routes - the broad and the academic (education), or the narrow and vocational (training), whereas some continental systems of education and training successfully deliver a liberal education with an effective vocational preparation*'. Dewey (1964, p. 308) however, appears to favour the retention of a clearly defined division between 'education' and 'training'. He believes that the, *'only training for occupations is training through occupations,'* and does not see education as necessarily a preparation *for a vocation*, preferring to see knowledge (not training or skills acquisition) attained through a broad range of subjects.

Traditionally, there has been a deep, underlying problem with the division between the world of education and that of training. The words 'vocational' and 'professional' are not readily interchangeable now and have come to mean quite different things, still requiring different education, 'higher' and the 'other' types. The English education system was built on foundations that encouraged and embraced distinct divisions between these two worlds, distinctions upheld by a few members of society through class and the original purpose of educating the masses (Griggs, 1979, p. 95).

Dewey (1964, p.316) maintains that education has become an adjunct to manufacture and business and that vocational education is being interpreted in theory and practice as 'trade education', a means of securing technical efficiency in specialised future pursuits. Crouch *et al* (1999, p.6) voice concerns that employers are using an improved educational level amongst the young as a device to identify the best qualified of a cohort of potential recruits to take an *existing* array of jobs, not as an opportunity to *increase* the number of jobs requiring higher ability. For employers, this seems like a win-win situation. They do not have to pay for any education and training, but can harvest the products of a progressively larger and improving crop of workers. Clearly, government training policies have to address the general problems of the current labour market, but as Crouch *et al* (1999, p.30) maintain, *'all policy approaches embody flaws, tendencies to entropy and potential capture by vested interests; all need frequent renewal.'*

However, it is still the *educationally successful* who tend to be the occupationally successful, a result of the competitive process (Crouch *et al*, 1999, p.6). Hyland (2002, p. 293), considers Silver and Brennan's (1988) advocacy of '*liberal vocationalism*' as a breath of fresh air, because it is not exclusively about high quality 'skills' (vocational)

training, but also about high quality 'education', which might mean that the two should *not* be kept (conceptually at least) separate from one another. This may serve to challenge the prejudice towards vocational training and raise its subordinate status in relation to general academic studies (Hyland, 2002, pp. 287, 290), with all the practical consequences in terms of curricular stratification and differential values which disfavour the vocational.

2.4.4 Skills training

Government's 21st Century Skills strategy *Realising Our Potential* (DfES, 2003) maintains that KS are, '*essential competencies and vitally important qualifications for the world of work*,' (NACETT, 1998), whilst ensuring that employers have the right skills to successfully support their businesses (NIACE, 2003, p.1). Parrott (2003, p.24) maintains however, that a,

> '*strategy that aims at "realising our potential" is by definition "educational", and all the difficult, controversial educational issues connected with vocational preparation i.e., training, will not simply disappear just because the more neutral vocabulary of skill is used.*'

This de-focusing and merging of VET with the academic had the potential of being successful in removing historical divisions between knowledge and skills training, academic and vocational learning, different subject boundaries, and theory and practice (Young, 2000, p. 108). There was an opportunity for government to synthesise the traditions, to dispel the commonplace-held distinctions between the acquisitions of mere skills (Griffiths, 1987, p. 205) and the learning of high status mental reasoning and knowledge, as discussed in section 2.4. Dearing's approach to CS/KS undoubtedly constitutes a break with the past (Hodgson and Spours, 2002), by attempting to relate KS with *all types* of programmes for 16-19 year olds, rather than exclusively with vocational qualifications. But government lost this opportunity when it took the CS, embedded them into GNVQs (and later some NVQs) and thus associated them with employability. NVQs have themselves been criticised for their preoccupation with certification of demonstrable low-level competences, outcomes, and functionality. This, according to Payne (2000, p.361) renders NVQs, '*ill-equipped for the task of upskilling*,' to government's aspired levels of student knowledge attainment and economic prosperity.

The NVQ model, seen as inadequate in terms of bridging the vocational - academic divide during the 1990s (Hyland, 1994, p.134; Green, 1998), has however, over the last decade, been slowly edging towards the academic route. The inclusion of KS breaks from the competence, evidence-based accreditation and experiential learning concept of the original NVQs, principally designed to be taken up by the least academic, more practical amongst us.

However, KS, in essence, still remain largely outside of the academic, and function as a '*poor proxy*' (Payne, 2000, p.359) for vocational students who have C- GCSE grades. KS qualifications do not have as much currency as GCSEs with which to progress in the academic streams, and as Green (1998) points out, this preserves academic elitism. Employers, some students, and many universities, still set a premium on the consistency and familiarity of the GCSE and A-Level qualifications (Dale et al, 1990, p.36) over, and against the vocational and KS qualifications.

The problem with the way that skill is currently being applied is that it has been,

> '*elongated to such an extent that in some peoples minds it could already embrace the entire enterprise of education and training, with one issue of concern - in the real world, education remains the larger and more important category,*' (Parrott, 2003, p.25).

Continental Europe takes it as given that post-school VET is to be constructed on a solid foundation of broad educational achievement (Green *et al*, 1999), an assumption that prevailed in Britain until the last two decades, when education, pre-sixteen, was not found to be equipping significant numbers of next-generation workers with adequate levels of literacy and numeracy. The traditional belief that school provided a *general education* has been seen by policy makers as a failure (Hayward and Fernández, 2004, p. 127; Ryan, 1999). An '*influential*' current (Dale *et al*, 1990, pp. 25-6), presented the view that Britain's economic decline and problems of youth unemployment could be attributed to failures within the educational system, educational processes, and institutional structures.

The early core skills (CS), the forerunners to KS, were criticised as being developed with, '*no common understanding of what they are or how they can be learnt,*' (Hayes *et al*, 1982, p. 22), their early construction showing, '*no degree of certainty about whether they contained any teachable content at all,*' (Jonathan, 1987). CS also came to be viewed as '*impoverished*' teaching that did not adequately deliver '*the basic skills*

associated with effective general education,' (Green, 1998, p.40). The later, sophisticated *generic* CS, developed out of a wide range of empirical evidence (Hayward and Fernández, 2004, p. 131), provided a clearer definition of skills to be learnt and assessed. However, they remained within the assessment framework of the NVQs in which they were embedded, and although this was meant to add clarity for teachers and learners, the opposite occurred - they were buried under a landslide of detail which resulted in greater, not lesser confusion (Oates and Fettes, 1997). By retaining the method of assessment as in the outcomes, competence-based model of the NVQs, the principal objectives of the CS initiative, the transfer of learning, the adaptability of transforming existing skills and knowledge to perform effectively in unfamiliar tasks (Oates and Fettes, 1997, p.3), failed to achieve to any significant degree.

The CS previously required of vocational students were tailored to particular courses and possibly not to a very high level. Many would agree with Hayward and Fernández (2004, p. 131), that the approach to skill development embedded in NVQs was doing little to remediate the low level of general skills in numeracy and literacy. Given that the basic design of the CS initiative was being questioned thus, it could be asked why those same CS were simply renamed and presented as KS.

In 2001, the Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) introduced a new national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy, entitled 'Skills for Life' (SfL) and teacher training programmes to develop a professional SfL workforce and a whole-organisation approach to VET[1]. The SfL main thrust was to give *access for all* by taking the current KS curriculum and converging it with BS to form a *continuum* (see section 1.1.3), as opposed to two separate identities, although differences remain in teaching methods, assessment, and learning materials. SfL was introduced to reduce the stigma that has attached itself to BS[2] of being significantly below even the L1 of KS and thus appearing *remedial* and low-ability learning.

2.5 Remedial education and the deficit agenda

KS became associated with BS and employability skills very quickly after its launch in C2000 for a number of reasons. Firstly, much of C2000 targeted vocational students in

[1] This initiative was further extended in 2004-5

[2] The Basic Skills Unit, now often referred to as 'Read Write Plus' are not responsible for Skills for Life, Primary or Key Stage 3 strategies, or for national examination frameworks, SureStart or workplace basic skills training. They do contribute to raise standards in basic skills.

FE, predominantly the average to below-average level learners (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.36). In taking the approach of addressing problems of low standards in maths and English, KS was guaranteed to be confused with BS acquisition (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.34). This confusion was compounded by the fact that whilst KS were *not intended* to be equivalent or comparable to GCSEs, C+ students are made exempt from the L1 exams. The latest KS and BS convergence initiative only adds to this remedial association.

Although KS were originally associated with all types of programmes for 16-19 year olds (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.34), instead of broadening out their range, they were inevitably narrowed because of their focus on employment, another reason why KS became associated with remedial education, a deficit agenda, rather than with advanced skills. The connection was further compounded by government's NTI agendas for action, such as those reported by the DoE (1982, p.7). This *'modernising crusade against welfare dependency,'* (Payne, 2000, p.361), set out to ensure that the BS of numeracy and literacy were acquired by unemployed youth for their successful adaptation to the world of work (DoEd, 1988), reinforcing links between BS, KS and unemployment.

Whilst being promoted as major building blocks in the development of a high-skilled, high-value-added industrial and commercial strategy that would create a future, *'skilled workforce comparable to any in the world,'* and a, *'successful economy,'* (Bennett, 1993, p.5), in reality, government's newly created *'opportunities to acquire skills'* (DoEd, 1988, p.9) through ambitious and intensive training and re-training systems, now appeared to target those most likely to be reliant on the state during their life due to unemployment, the low academic, low-skilled in our society. According to Dale (1985b), part of the new ideology about education and training is aimed much more at the lower two-thirds of the ability range than those who take the more traditional academic curriculum.

The Dearing Report (1996, p.50), states that although skills need to be *developed* in post-16 education, because skills deteriorate unless used, the main response to the concerns of employers, FE and higher education (HE), *unquestionably* lay in education *before* 16. In spite of this, particularly during the last decade, the acquisition of KS has become a major focus in post-compulsory vocational education and training. It would appear that *'concentrated effort and funding has been given over to 'infiltrating educational discourse with a skills discourse,'* (Parrott, 2003, p. 25).

To address the *'immediate problem'*, Dearing (1996, p. 50), recommended developing three main KS for those between the years of 16-19, across all three education pathways (A-level, GNVQ and NVQ). In effect this was to be a commitment to *'KS for all'* (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p. 34). Dearing suggested this might be done through the GCSE examination itself, having considered a recent survey showing the CBI attached importance to the GCSEs when recruiting young people (Dearing (1996, p. 51). Dearing recommended further developments to improve KS, building them *into* A-level subjects without distorting them. One idea was to create a new AS in KS (for A-level and GNVQ students to take up if they wished to), and for all GNVQs to incorporate the NCVQ units of the three KS as a mandatory requirement, assessed using simple-to-use tests, *varied enough to meet a wide range of interests.*

The Beaumont Report (1995), referred to by Dearing (1996, p. 53), had shown a slightly different picture. Beaumont felt that any requirements for students on NVQ courses should be set at the discretion of the employers only. Beaumont (1995) reported that employers were broadly *content* with the CS already incorporated in the NVQs. There was also a strong argument *against* compulsion, particularly at the lowest levels (where many NVQ students reside), an argument that had been based on various concerns, the cost of provision across such a large sector being one of them.

Dearing's (1996, p. 54) final recommendations were directed at all publicly funded education and training bodies, that they should provide opportunities for 16-19 year olds to develop the three main KS, all young people on programmes funded at public expense should *'be required'* to take advantage of those facilities, and that the programmes and their assessments should be a priority for monitoring by the appropriate regulatory and inspection bodies. Universities and employers should make it clear to candidates that the acquisition of the new AS in KS or NVQ equivalents, would bear on their recruitment decisions and teachers should receive staff development to enable them to provide KS opportunities at all levels.

KS were now put firmly on the agenda in government's *Qualifying for Success* (DfEE/DENI/WO, 1997), but *not* developed into an AS or included in advanced certificates or diplomas. They became the free-standing KS qualifications, mandatory for most GNVQ, NVQ and Modern Apprentice (MA) NQF and some NVQ courses. The spirit of the Dearing idea of developing a common approach to KS for students with a range of abilities from both the academic and vocational programmes rapidly

evaporated. Instead, KS targeted the least academically able and thus consolidated its remedial status.

2.6 The Key Skills tutors

With the rapid pace at which KS came into operation within FE, most staffs found themselves working with a system they did not fully understand. The difficulties this caused were recognised by Tomlinson (2004, section 26, p.14). KS training was negligible. Most tutors taught themselves about KS and developed their own lesson contents and methods of delivery.

CS, the skills that KS replaced, had generally not been valued in themselves, either by the vocational tutors or by many students undertaking NVQs and were viewed mainly as a means to an end (Griffiths, 1987, p. 205), that end being to get the vocational qualification. KS suffered the same fate. Vocational staffs appeared to be uncooperative with the KS tutors, making it hard to organise the KS provision across hundreds of students, all on different vocational timetables and programmes.

The first KS tutors were enlisted from various places. In my own experience, none were engaged from the vocational areas and most were unfamiliar with NVQ and GNVQ systems and ideologies. Many were not specifically qualified in the maths and English subjects they were delivering either. As reportedly recognised by B. Brooks (2004), deputy director of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU), of the few teachers in literacy, language or numeracy, the qualifications they held were generally low-level.

However, in spite of government initiatives from 2001 (LSC/QIA, 2006), to up-skill *all* teachers in these subjects, the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC), reportedly appeared surprised to find from an exploratory study in 2002-03, the low levels of personal numeracy and literacy among both practising teachers of many years experience *and* new entrants to teaching (Jones, 2004). Tutors were said to have no subject knowledge in grammar and the problem was worse in maths. Some groups of trainers surveyed were not qualified beyond GCSEs.

The lack of skilled teachers is considered to be a problem by government agencies. It is currently being blamed for the continuing difficulties with effective implementation of the SfL strategy. These shortages, according to Ofsted (2005, p.1), are jeopardising the government's skills policy because the strategy has yet to deliver significant

improvements in the quality of education provision in FE. However, it was not until 2002-03 that the expertise of literacy and numeracy in teachers were formally recognised by government (Pember, 2002), and it is *not* common for teachers to be experts in both maths and English. KS tutors have never been required to be qualified and their training is left to the discretion of colleges themselves, which often relies on available funds. Ofsted (2005) maintains that even specialist teachers with extensive *knowledge* do not necessarily have the *teaching* skills, and teaching students needing high levels of support is, in itself, a specialist job.

The British Educational Research Association (Hodgson, *et. al.* 2006) reports a high staff turnover in this sector, which adds to problems of managing KS provision. One reason for this situation is that KS, new to FE, are something in between a traditional skills training and an academic education, at the same time being *'mechanical'* (Murphy and Wilmut, 2001) in its assessment. Delivering KS requires a lot more than merely fitting pupils to curriculum slots which suit their imagined vocational destinations (Pollard et al, 1988. p. 48), a misconception of those early KS staff without full understanding of the vocational ethos.

Also, KS specifications do not consider *'context'* (Raffe, 1985, p. 68). KS were supposed to be embedded into vocational courses, thus making the portfolio evidence be collected in a *'naturally occurring'* way, like their CS predecessors in NVQs (Hayward and Fernández, 2004, p. 133). Instead, KS are delivered separately, and any links they have to students' vocational courses are largely instigated by the KS tutors. In general, this can only be done partially, as some specifications are considered incapable of being sensibly embedded into vocational coursework. Evidence required for portfolios is not competence-based and looks decidedly academic - reading, writing, and arithmetic. Assessment by examination does not fit with NVQ/GNVQ ideology either.

Resistance to KS2000 from vocational tutors (VTs) increased as KS unavoidably encroached on their lesson time; leaving them feeling they were losing authority over their own curriculum area (Kell, 2001, p.6). VTs became antagonistic towards KS tutors and relationships deteriorated. In the middle of this were the students.

Added to this, confusion regarding KS requirements, that *all* portfolios presented for moderation needed to be of a pass standard or *none* could pass, many students who had produced the correct evidence, were being failed by the Awarding Bodies (ABs),

compelled to operate within official guidelines. This situation annoyed VTs whose students were passing their vocational programmes but not achieving their full NQF, because of failed KS portfolios. It took three years for the QCA to change this unfair moderation process. Students' portfolios are now assessed on an individual basis.

A major problem that unfolded for KS tutors was students' lack of basic knowledge in maths and English. Rather than *delivering* KS to students with sufficient underpinning knowledge to do portfolios and exams, as was *supposed* to be the case, tutors are *teaching* specialised subjects of maths, English and IT to students who require high levels of learning support (Bolton and Hyland, 2003). Tutors are often untrained in learning support methodology and therefore unable to deal with them effectively.

Tutors experience problems with both the portfolios and exams, which had been anticipated (DfEE/IEO, 2000). The tests are considered to be too difficult for many students (Hodgson and Spours, 2002), particularly the less academic, who find them hard, but are still 'made'[1] to sit them. According to Lignon (in TES, 2006), this *'tyranny'* of examinations ignores personal goals and styles and *'set the most vulnerable learners and their teachers, to fail.'* Some tutors feel that students who might benefit from skills development are actually being de-motivated to complete the qualification (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p. 38). An issue with *portfolio* specifications, particularly in Comms, is their call for a level of accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling *not required* for GCSE English.

A further problem for KS tutors, is coping with students' behaviour during lessons. Of all the activities which comprise the role of a teacher, *'effective classroom discipline is one of the most significant'* (Lewis, 1998, p.1), because without it, *'there is very little opportunity to instruct students in any subject'*. A study by Edward *et al* (2005, p.6), describes difficulties tutors face in coping with challenging behaviour in the classroom from students who, after an unsuccessful school career, are often unconfident, unfocused, and disruptive. For KS tutors there is the extra burden of mandatory re-sitting of exams in hated subjects students failed at GCSE. Inevitably, students react, at best with apathy and poor attendance (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.36), at worst, with bad behaviour and even violence, usually directed at tutors, *'who are expected to respond with care and humanity,'* (Akhter, 1998, p.10).

[1] 'Made' in the sense that if they did not sit the KS exams, they risk losing their place on the vocational course, even where KS are not a mandatory qualification for their vocational course accreditation at NVQ L1.

There is a large body of work that discusses numerous factors considered to be significant in determining students' behaviour in classrooms, described by Ingersoll (1996, in Lewis 1998), as the most potent *'lived experiences'* that children have at school (which are carried into FE). Students' beliefs about the way they wish to be treated are considered to be an important factor in behaviour (Lovegrove *et al,* 1983; Lewis and Lovegrove, 1987). The 1999/2000 IOE/Nuffield Research Project (Hodgson *et al*, 2001), foresaw difficulties with convincing students to take the KS qualification, but nobody anticipated the scale and intensity of student resistance and the support they would receive from their parents (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p.37). Students think KS are a hassle, pointless, without much currency and with little use or exchange value.

Many tutors believe that KS are a second opportunity for young people to remediate previous educational failure, borne out by the fact that students undertaking KS at L1 are those with C- GCSE grades. Amongst these groups now, are large numbers of unemployed 16-18 year olds, pressured into vocational training and attending mandatory KS lessons in FE or lose their job seekers allowance. This practice is argued against by NIACE (2003, p.10), as *'compulsion is not an effective educational strategy.'* The *'new training initiative'* agenda from the DoE (1982, p.7), which is government's modernising crusade against *'welfare dependency'* (Payne, 2000, p.361), requires the unemployed to have numeracy and literacy levels to give them successful adaptation to the world of work (DoEd, 1988).

Coping with the changes of KS has had a draining effect on many tutors and there is more to come (Edward *et. al.* 2005, p.7-8), the, *'seemingly endless succession of newly devised or reconstructed qualifications,'* as described by Abbott (in TES, 2006). Some tutors leave rather than cope with the demands (Edward *et. al.* 2005). Dealing with continuous stress in lessons has led to serious de-motivation, loss of energy and health problems with some tutors, who are not only at the receiving end of government short-term policies, procedures and target driven funding (Gregson, in TES, 2006), but are expected to deliver *and* achieve success. In effect, they are required to jump through hoops (Hafez, in TES, 2006).

2.7 The Students

Many students entering VET have little or no educational achievement[1], subsequently, these students were unable to do the KS they are presented with.

The FE sector has traditionally prepared the less-academic, more practical young people for the world of work through vocational training. However, over the last two decades in particular, increased numbers of young people with very poor levels of basic knowledge in maths and English are entering VET streams. Government's initiatives to capture 75,000 school leavers with no qualifications who are not in work or training (Blunkett, BBC announcement, November 3rd, 1998) has had some success. With no other sector in which to place these youngsters, FE has been charged with educating, as well as training these young people, many of whom are actually *not* there by personal choice (NIACE, 2003, p.10). Thus, FE faces having a large intake of C-students, some being compelled to be there, and is then tasked[2] with providing an education, one in which many students have already failed.

2.7.1 Motivation

Over the past 50 years much literature has been produced on the subject of motivation, the results of which have had, *'relatively little impact on classroom practice,'* (OECD, 2000, p.27). Indeed, on close inspection, the concept of *'motivation'* appears to be vague, imprecise and unsatisfactory, a general catch-all rather than a precise construct (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991), and a *'psychological jargon'* word that we *'could usefully do without,'* according to the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE, 1973, p.6). Ecclestone (2002, p.32) considers the *'ideas about motivation'* to be *'confusing at all levels,' 'from qualification design to implementation and external inspection.'*

Definitions of motivation seem wide. Pintrich and Schunk (1996, pp.4-5) maintain it is the act of *giving* somebody a reason, goal or incentive to do something, Maslow (1987), defines it as interest or enthusiasm that makes somebody *want* to do something, or something that causes such a feeling. Crookes and Schmidt (1991, p.480), maintain that motivation has been traditionally equated with and measured by proficiency and as producing engagement in and persistence with, the learning task.

[1] Educational achievement in this sense being less than the required five GECS A*-C grades at 16.
[2] The word 'tasked' is used here, because, it is not *mandatory* for FE colleges to provide KS unless the students' vocational qualification (as in some NVQs) specifically demand them.

Although it would appear that no common unifying theory or agreed principles have yet been created about motivation (Biehler and Snowman, 1997), because it can only be inferred rather than observed directly, what has emerged from the body of literature are debated theories on various factors thought to affect students' motivation levels and why some are more likely to want to learn than others. These include, amongst others, cultural attitudes towards education (Evans, 1975, Entwistle, 1977), economic and career factors (OECD, 2000; Ecclestone, 2002), examination systems (Harlen and Crick, 2003), and assessment policies (Tunstall, 2003; Ecclestone, 2002).

Dewey's (1975, p. 55) exploration of the educational factor of motivation, describes and compares a task that requires *effort* to overcome difficulties as *educative*, because such a task supplies an indispensable stimulus to thinking and reflective inquiry, with a task that *'has no interest, makes no appeal, is wholly alien and hence uncongenial.'* This latter type of task signifies nothing but *'sheer strain, constraint, and the need of some external motivation for keeping at them.'* It is therefore considered *un*educative, because it fails to introduce a clear consciousness of ends and a search for proper means of realisation, and *mis*educative, because its completion depends on external pressures (tutors and examinations) and inducement (sought-after reward).

Moreover, research conducted by the OECD (2000, p. 28), suggests that once such controls, reinforcements, inducements and rewards stop, children revert to their original behaviour of minimal effort to achieve, unless their efforts to learn are grounded in a desire to do so (Illeris, 2002, p.18). A complication that arises from this is the idea that children will not learn without outside rewards and penalties, which usually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to Holt (1984, p.113), *'if we treat children long enough as if that were true, they will come to believe it is true,'* and that *'is the creed of the slave.'*

Dewey (1975) identifies two means by which educational aims are achieved as *intrinsically,* through interest in the subject, and *extrinsically,* through examination pressure. However, there are problems with both. Intrinsically, requires the development of interest in the subject, which itself is a non-cognitive aim of a very high order and one that students normally do not achieve unless they start by being well motivated in the first place, and extrinsically, which generates a process that leaves the student so mutilated that, once passed through it, he or she is *'capable only of achieving cognitive aims of a low order'* (SRHE, 1973, p.76).

The OECD (2000, p. 29) maintains that impressions young children form about their abilities, based on messages from school and family, can strongly influence their motivation to succeed and the accumulated *'fear of failure'* that results from these early impressions, can later actually become a barrier to learning. Extrinsic *'rewards and punishments'* have been identified as linked to children's sense of *'fear'* and *'failure'* in learning environments (OECD, 2000, p. 29; Holt, 1984, p.107). However, the practice of using extrinsic motivation; rewards, performance goals and punishments, is, *'deeply entrenched in teachers' and students' assessment practices and experiences,'* (Ecclestone, 2002, p. 37). Extrinsic practices are also traditionally used as an effective way of controlling (OECD, 2000, p. 29).

Ecclestone (2002, p. 37) highlights pressures on teachers in both compulsory and post-compulsory education to *'get as many pupils as possible through external tests'*, and *'maximise students'* achievement in order to give them the best chance possible in difficult socio-economic circumstances, whilst minimising the de-motivation of *'those who do not succeed.'* However, it is the latter group that are in the greatest need of motivation and some sense of actual achievement (Atkinson, 1964) because it is believed that it is this group who face the greatest difficulties in a knowledge-based economic climate.

The SRHE (1973) suggest that creating *'interest in the method of work,'* and involving the student through some form of active self-study that will achieve cognitive aims, might improve their motivation. However, reaching that point is the issue with many students. Small-scale research on disaffected students and their motivational patterns conducted by Soloman and Rogers (2001, p. 334), concluded that most students interviewed were not *interested* in any form of FE, either relevant or practical. They thought themselves academically competent and saw *effort* rather than *ability* as the major determinant of success or failure (theirs included) and as they were not making an effort, they might be considered to be de-motivated. In a National Foundation for Educational Research study (Moor et al, 2004, p. 52), students found KS to be repetitive of GCSEs with little current or future relevance. Research by Tuckman (1999, p.1) suggests that low-achievers do not spend the necessary time and effort, or apply themselves in the necessary way to get the information they learned in classes into their long-term memories, and that what they lacked was not intellect or skill, but *drive*. However, whilst improving his own students' *attitude* and *strategies* towards their work, Tuckman (1999) found he could not improve their *drive*.

Using an avoidance technique (Atkinson, 1964) of disinterest and disengagement, avoids failure (Rabideau, 2005, p. 4), and effectively hides students' perceived lack of ability and intelligence (Nardi and Steward, 2003, p. 4) and the subsequent negative feelings of non-achievement.

The KS subjects are the same as those taken in school, where any psychological need for achievement (Atkinson, 1964) may have already produced *a fear of failure* in the less academic student. As Glasser (1990) argues, for people to succeed in life, they need to experience success in at least one important aspect of their lives, and school is one of the earliest and most prominent life experiences we undergo.

The traditional academic approach of exams to evaluate learning has been installed into KS, for which it cannot be argued, *will* allow some students to achieve and feel successful. However, that may come at the cost of the self-worth of those who fail (again), *'the sacrificial lambs, those most vulnerable'* (Roderick and Engel 2001, p.221).

Putting the, *'choice into the hands of the learner,'* is one way of motivating students, according to Greany (2003). This is very difficult with disaffected students, who may choose not to do *anything*, as Soloman and Rogers (2001, p. 334) suggested. Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, p.172) point to a study by Grolnick and Ryan (1987), which found that when assessment is perceived as *'an attempt to control rather than inform, meta-cognitive processes are short-circuited.'* According to the OECD (2000), motivation is said to increase if students are asked to assume greater autonomy and control over their lives and learning, and that when disaffected students regard what they are learning as personally meaningful and relevant, they are naturally motivated. However, *reaching* that point is the issue with KS subjects. It is also the case that students might think KS are relevant and useful to them in some way, yet *still not* be motivated.

Learning would appear to be a desire-based function, which becomes apparent when students are pressured into learning what, *'others want them to learn and which they themselves do not feel an urge to learn,'* (Illeris, 2002, p.18). With the decision to learn or not is made by others (society, educational and training institutes), perhaps it is not surprising when students' attitudes and behaviour reflect dissatisfaction. Harlen and Deakin Crick, (2003, p.191), maintain that interest and effort are related and students will put in effort and practice in tasks that interest them. Institutional learning, that which

is usually directed by others, for a significant number of adolescent students, can become too demanding, boring and tiresome. The fact remains, motivating students is *'a major problem for teachers,'* in general (O'Connell, 1973, p.109), and considered to be a *'key'* to successful learning and teaching. Without motivation, it is generally believed that learning will not take place.

Adolescence is the age when humans begin to display a burgeoning desire to make a life, however seemingly marginal to others, on their own terms (West, 2003, p. 31), and, at times, their protests can manifest themselves into self-induced de-motivation. Seeing a future benefit plays a part in motivation and the young adult, according to O'Connell (1973, p.135) is *'capable of planning the future and the remote'*. O'Connell (1973) further maintains that at the adolescent stage, students have an increased understanding and organising.

Applying Piaget's work[1] to education, O'Connell (1973) lists three areas for consideration:

(i) when certain content or subjects should be taught
(ii) what content or subject matter is most important
(iii) how it may be best presented to the pupil.

The success of Piaget's application however, appears to depend on the cognitive development of the individual and the level of skills accumulated and acquired. It is assumed that our schools adequately fulfil the first two through the NC. There seems to be a constant search for the third area that O'Connell considers, especially in formal learning situations for those young adults who are *amotivated* – some lack any direction for motivation and are variously indifferent or apathetic (Ecclestone, 2002, p.33).

There are issues for adolescent students who are considered to be low (academic) achievers, in regard to re-connecting with school experiences and their self-esteem and identity (West, 2003, p. 31). These factors can then become major contenders as barriers to motivation and confidence, without which, *'learners will not participate,'* (Greany, 2003, p.15). Again, fear and control are two words associated with school and education (Holt, 1984), and are heavily linked to two other equally destructive words, *'incompetence and worthlessness.'* When the work fails, when the child cannot do the

[1] Piaget is not an educational psychologist and some developmental psychologists also have other views entirely (Howe, 1998, p.21).

problem, no matter how hard he or she tries, the concept of the *'smart and good"* child enters the scenario again.

As highlighted by the OECD (2000, p. 29), *'failure that follows great effort can be much more damaging to the self-concept of ability than failure that results from minimal effort.'* Holt (1984) believes that the idea of success and failure is educated *into* our children and this in turn creates a fear of being stupid, a word historically equated to *'ignorance'* (Holt, 1984). Such fear is a habit first developed in the classroom and one which persists into later life, destroying intelligence and capacity and a *'scared learner is always a poor learner,'* (Holt, 1984, p. 93). As observed by Holt, released from these *'fearful'* restraints, children can *'cut up, get bold and sassy and they try to give a hard time to those adults who for so long have been giving them a hard time.'* As an ex-KS teacher, this sounds *very* familiar.

2.7.2 Effort

There is a common view in England, that *'success'* is achieved largely through *'effort'* (OECD, 2000, p. 34; Ecclestone, 2002, p. 33), and not, *'discredited notions of innate intelligence,'* (Ecclestone, 2002, p. 31). Interestingly however, this view is not common across all cultures, particularly from Russian teenagers (OECD, 2000, p. 34), who believe that *'being clever'* rather than *'working hard'* is more important for success in schoolwork. This appears to contradict the view that children are more likely to be motivated and reach higher attainment levels if they believe that *effort,* rather than *ability* is what matters most (OECD, 2000, p. 34). However, if students believe they possess ability already, then success would be attributed to effort. Research carried out by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that 93% of English 14 year olds believed they were doing well in the subject (OECD, 2000), even though they scored *below* the international average. There are also differing views on the idea of effort itself. Dewey (1975, p. 49) describes the mental experience of effort as being a, *'peculiar combination of conflicting tendencies of desire and aversion.'*

There are many methods of coping with fear and anxiety in a learning situation, avoidance of having to do the work through bad behaviour, commonly being one of them. Ecclestone (2002, p. 33) points out that theories of motivation rarely acknowledge the emotional and traumatic effects of formal learning on adult students' identities and sense of self. Having the *'confidence to succeed'* and *'derive benefit'*

from effort *'rests on a complex web of factors'* including *'school experience, self-esteem and identity'* (Greany 2003, p.15). O'Connell (1973, p.109) maintains that *'the level of attainment required must be adjusted to the individual's ability and level of aspiration, which are often related to a childhood past experience of success and failure in school,'* vital for the motivation of the *'less academically able'* student.

2.7.3 Achievement

According to the SRHE (1973, p. 48), in order to study achievement, the first thing to do is get a pure and tractable measure. You will then find that what determines student achievement is ability, the willingness and capacity to study without external sanction of examinations and a high degree of academic single mindedness. Howe (1999, p. 87) maintains that *'the children who make the most progress in school are those considered to be "cleverer than others," who seem "brighter" and are "more astute", able to grasp ideas more quickly.'* Howe also maintains that *'there is wide agreement,'* that there *'exists a trait of general intelligence,'* and that *'a child's intelligence level'* is *'a major ingredient of school successes.'* However, this is solely success in academic subjects and as all of the intelligence testing has been historically based on school-related capabilities, this kind of testing must therefore be limited. Indeed, *'it has not proved possible to define intelligence in terms that show precisely how it is to be measured,'* (Howe, 1999, p. 89). Thus, defining intelligence itself seems problematic. Howe (1999, p. 92) cites studies by Flynn (1987) and Scribner (1984), that show not all persons with high level IQs become successful and that many with below average IQs do, and that success in demanding tasks involving arithmetic, complex calculations and managerial abilities were not related to their intelligence test scores. Perhaps success requires a far more complex set of abilities and intelligences than we fully recognise, or would like to recognise? It could also be argued that the concept of *achievement* itself is complex and difficult to measure - one man's achievement is not another's, so to speak.

2.7.4 Assessment

Other obstacles to motivation and learning currently being debated are the assessment and testing regimes that have burgeoned in the past decade in Britain (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2003). Various assessment systems are being evaluated, including outcome-based assessment, considered by Ecclestone (2002) to be democratic and motivating, which judges, certificates and defines achievement and competences via

evidence based outcomes[1] and criteria. The introduction of the outcome-based assessment was to *'make vocational education more motivating for learners who might otherwise not achieve in formal education.'* One interesting effect that the introduction of this type of assessment has had is a greater study of learning and motivation implicit in such models. Ecclestone, (2002, p. 32) maintains however, that despite increased research into motivation, we still have *'no clear conceptual basis for understanding empirically the various types of motivation that learners may show or which may be embedded implicitly in assessment regimes and that theories of learning that underpin any assessment system are similarly implicit and confusing.'*

Tunstall (2002, p. 506) cites research carried out by Weiner in 1979 and 1994 that suggests certain types of assessment practice have significant effects on a person's achievement and that *what* people attribute success and failure to is said to be the most *significant* factor in determining their motivation, which takes us back to the question of achievement. This also returns to common held views of ability, effort, and task difficulty as major factors of motivation or de-motivation. These are echoed in Weiner's model of attributions, which contains the same three main causes but with one other, *luck*. Weiner maintains that an individual's *'need to achieve'* influences what they attribute to their own success or failure. Those with *'high achievement needs'* attribute outcomes to *'lack of effort'*. Those of low achievement needs name *'lack of ability.'* This was not the finding in the Soloman and Rogers (2001, p. 334) study however. Tunstall (2002, p. 506) adds that failure seen as, *'caused by lack of ability results in performance decrements,'* but *'perceived as caused by lack of effort, in performance increments, because something can be done about it.'*

There has also developed a notion of learning and performance *orientation* and a central concern of educational assessment discourse is articulation of the ways in which learning orientation can be developed. Motivational attribution theories have now been employed as an important part of their methodology and rationale to *empower* all learners and give them some levels of *control*, in the form of self-assessment of their own performance. This enables the blame of not learning to be shifted to the student - given so many *opportunities* to learn, how can they not?

[1] The outcome-based assessment presently appears to be the most desirable amongst educators, but is not without limitations, emphasising as it does the 'individual', which might exclude the social, cultural and family aspects of motivation, not to mention the impact of broader conditions such as changes in occupational structures and job opportunities both locally and nationally. However, it seems to be more popular than the traditional norm-referenced assessment, which graded and rank-ordered students as a basis for selection. The overall consensus appears to be that this system was 'de-motivating and exclusive, based on discredited notions of innate intelligence' (Ecclestone, 2002, p.31).

A study by Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003), shows that involving students with their own self-assessment can have a positive impact on motivation, because a *'student centred'* approach was all about their own *'needs and interests,'* and personal choice and control, and sense of purpose encourage a *'will to learn'* what is meaningful to them. Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003) conclude that we should be concentrating on learning rather than performance.

Ball (1990, p.124) regards the rising interest in *'motivation and assessment initiatives, as possibly reflecting a shift in the principles of social control or mode of regulation, embedded within the process of social reproduction from the 1980s onwards.'* These educational assessment initiatives are being established as part of pedagogical practices, themselves related to the *'social administration of the individual,'* (Popkewitz *et al*, 2001, p.314) and, according to Ball (1990) need to be *'challenged.'*

Some challenges *are* being made to the entire process of current assessment, including formalised tests, especially for the lower academically achieving students, for whose sake these assessments are often introduced (Stobart, 2003). There is growing international research that shows evidence of a negative impact of testing on this group of students (Stobart, 2003, p.139), and a negative impact on motivation and learning. Some assessment practices appear to be actually *'reducing motivation for learning,'* and this is *'clearly of concern'*, according to Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, pp.169-173). Moreover, they point to evidence that suggests the effect is greater for the less successful students and thus tends to widen the gap between higher and lower achieving students. Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, p.170) maintain this association of testing with a negative impact on motivation for learning, contrasts with a widely held view amongst politicians, parents and some of the education community, *'that testing raises standards,'* and cite Kellighan *et al* (1996), *'the USA and England now vie for the title of the most tested nation.'*

McDonald (2001 p. 98) believes that test anxiety *'potentially, considerably'* influences *'the number of children passing or failing an exam.'* The Assessment Reform Group (ARG, p.2), according to Lewis (2002), offers evidence that testing has a negative impact on low-achievers and their self-esteem, which conflicts with government's aim to promote lifelong learning, because it sets up a spiral of lower motivation, less effort and even lower results in tests. This negative impact *'caused concern'* (ARG, 2002, p.2), because low-achievers are *'doubly disadvantaged by tests.'* Labelled as failures

again, it reduces their future effort and success (ARG, 2002, paragraphs 9 and 14). Research by Torrance and Coultas (2003, p.34) also suggests that summative assessment and tests '*probably do more harm than good*,' with *'fear'* of tests actually precipitating student drop-out and can *'deter progress.'* However, Tuckman (2000) believes that testing is a means to raising levels of achievement and provides an incentive to learn.

Studies by Davies and Brember (1998 and 1999), as reported by Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, pp.187-189) showed a negative impact of national testing on the self-esteem of low academic achievers, which was one of lowering it even further, especially those students already '*at risk*,' who regarded the tests as *'some sort of official judgement of them,'* with the appropriate labels ready to be placed on them when the results were announced. Low academic achievers become overwhelmed by assessments and de-motivated by such constant evidence of their low achievement, according to Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003, p.196).

Research by Black and William (1998) provides evidence that formative assessment (assessment for learning), which focuses on helping students to learn better, suggests that they will be better motivated to learn and will achieve more, and that summative assessment should only be used when it is really necessary (ARG, 2002, p.10).

2.8 Summary

As was outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the research design of an Illuminative Evaluation, with its component of progressive focussing (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972), gave some capacity for theory-building. Used in conjunction with a grounded theory approach (section 3.5.2), the literature is to be treated as part of the procedures for the collection of data (Dick, 2005).

The first of the theories that emerged from the literature applied to the rationale for KS2000, the reasoning or principle that underlay its introduction. One reason quoted for KS2000 is to fill a skills gap. What emerged from section 2.2 is that there may not be a skills gap or, the skills in question are at a higher level and more technical in nature and not those currently specified within KS.

When looking at the meaning of skill, it seems that the traditional views of the word have been transformed, as with KS2000. The confusion over these changes was

discussed, especially for their impact on the FE sector, highlighting a need for clarity concerning these transformations and their usefulness. The debate moved on to the difference between skills as knowledge or skills as training, and whether they should be considered as a continuum or as separate functions requiring different levels of activity and ability. One argument that arose from the discussion around KS was that it is not *skills* training, as defined by government, but *education.*

Theories that KS have come to be considered as remedial in nature and used to satisfy a deficit agenda, emerged from the literature which examines their roots, composition, purpose, how and to whom they have been applied.

The literature that explored the KS tutors drew on anecdotal evidence from personal experience as well as those of colleagues. The study examined the problems tutors face - complicated KS specifications, a lack of support, inadequate training and coping with large numbers of poorly behaved students requiring high levels of learning support.

Regarding the students, the results of the EKS survey indicated that most felt they could do KS, but there was anecdotal evidence to the contrary. This raised questions around the self-worth and motivation of low-achieving students, given that research on formally testing these students is considered to have a negative impact.

The literature overall highlighted some serious issues relating to the coherence and viability of KS2000. Taking into account the five research questions (section 1.5.2), the emergent theories surrounding these questions formed the background on which the methodology was designed.

3 Research Design and Methodology

The aim of this study was to evaluate the KS2000 in the FE sector and its effects on students' motivation for learning at foundation level.

Five questions were identified as relating to the aim and objectives for this research:

1. What is the origin and rationale for KS2000?
2. What is the concept of 'key skills'?
3. What are the issues for tutors in their delivery and teaching of the KS curriculum?
4. What is the impact of KS on students' motivation at foundation level?
5. What is the coherence and viability of the KS2000 curriculum?

This chapter begins by revisiting the four phases of the research (as outlined in the Introduction) and lists the events of activities carried out in each phase. There follows a description of how access was gained to the colleges and of sampling participants. The issues which arose from these exercises are explored. Ethical considerations are examined next.

In section 3.5, the methodological principles and models that influenced the research are explained, along with the approaches that were drawn on. This is followed by a presentation of all methods of collections of data used in the study.

3.1 Phases of the research

This study was conducted in four phases, the framework for which is set out in Fig. 3-1. Each phase is divided into a number of parts, showing which research activities were carried out and when.

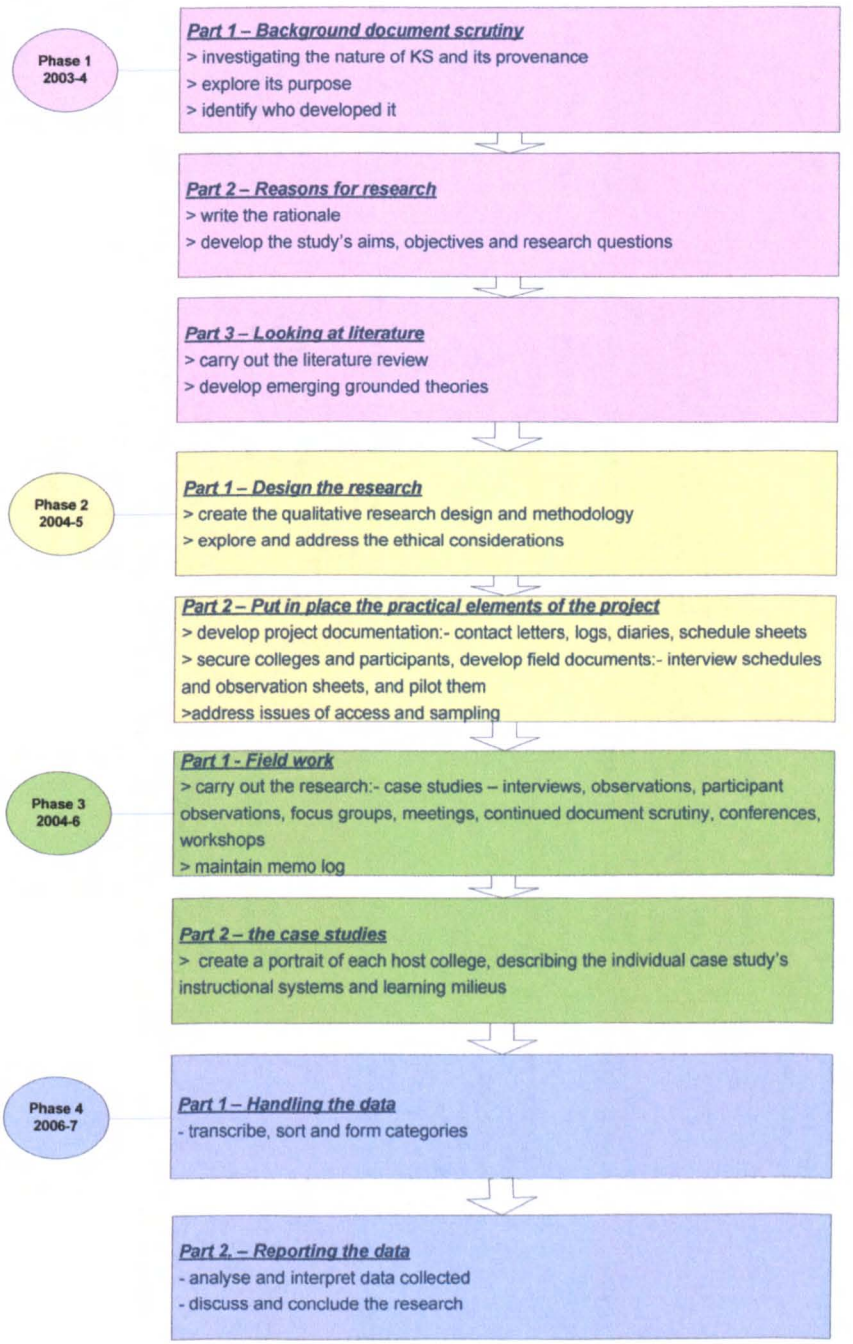

Figure 3-1 Research Phases

Table 3-1 Data Collection Summary Table over the four research phases

Date	Source of data	Data methods	Data collected	How the data was handled
Jan. 2001 Dec. 2004	*Own experience	*Experiential	*Anecdotal evidence	*Reflexive bracketing and reflective log used to define the research areas
			*Background knowledge	
			*Experience	
Nov. 2001-Feb. 2002	*Data from EKS Conference	*A national survey in which 35 FE colleges participated, using a simple questionnaire designed to identify their students' perceptions of Key Skills	*Quantitative - from the 30 colleges who responded and participated, with 5,000+ completed questionnaires from their students	*Statistical analysis was carried out by hand and summarised in charts, concentrating on the 10 main issues deemed to be the possible barriers to Key Skills. Presented at the EKS Conference open forum on 11th February 2002
		* Forum - discussing issues for KS staffs	*Anecdotal information from the FE college representatives, industry and business representatives, school and HE representatives	*Gave background information to the literature review and helped form some early grounded theories
Sep. 2003- Sep. 2004	*Official reports, research documents, White and Green Papers, Acts, Conferences, workshops and seminars	*Document scrutiny	*Background of the Key Skills 2000 curriculum	*Documented and discussed in the literature section
	*Literature review	*Notes and records	*Its conceptual underpinning	
		*Literary search	*Research, reports and evaluations carried out on KS	* Forming of some grounded theories
Nov. 2004-Nov. 2005	*Field work - case studies	*interviews, observations, participation observations, tutoring sessions, focus groups, meetings, discussions, memo notes, diary logs	*Qualitative data from interview recordings, observation sheets and recordings, notes, diary log notes, timetables, lesson plans, memo documents, and quantitative data from observation sheets	*Transcribed, sorted, ordered, categorised, recorded and analysed and discussed
		*Attending, note taking	*Developments and changes to KS2000	
	*Workshops, seminars, conferences			Background information to the analysis, conclusion and recommendations
Nov. 2004-Aug. 2007	*Documents and literature - reports, research, White and Green Papers, Acts	*Document scrutiny and literary search	*Current legislation and policy changes	*Informed analysis, conclusion and recommendations

Table 3-2 gives an overview of the collecting of data conducted in and across the four phases, showing dates, sources of these data and collection methods, what kind of information was collected and how these data were handled.

3.2 Access and sampling

3.2.1 Colleges

The KS policy is applied differently across each country in Britain therefore the research was narrowed to the provision of KS2000 in England.

The process of finding samples for the study began in 2003. An Internet search was conducted to identify suitable FE colleges from which fifty, across thirty-six counties, were selected as potential case-study sites. The criteria for the selection were:

- *General FE colleges*[1] - no specialist colleges
- *Provision* – all provided KS for foundation L1 students age 16+[2]
- *Area* - they were situated in different parts of the country so as to include a socio-economic range, a gender and ethnically mixed student base, and offering different vocational courses[3]
- *Size* – a mixture of large colleges (averaging 15,000 students), medium (averaging 10,000 students), and small colleges (averaging 1,000 students).

The original plan was, that from the initial survey, twelve colleges would be selected in which the field documents[4] would be piloted and refined. From this group, a range of 6 different types of colleges would be chosen as case-study sites.

3.2.2 Sites

Fifty colleges were contacted between December 2003 and January 2004. An introductory letter, outlining the intended study and its purpose, plus a simple questionnaire (Appendix D) was sent or emailed to the KS coordinators in each college. The questionnaire was used to confirm the colleges' KS provision and as a tool to indicate their interest by completing and returning it.

[1] This study was intended to provide a generalised view of KS provision, which it was believed specialist colleges may not have provided. Also, as a researcher, I had no personal experience of how a specialist college operated within the FE sector and with restricted time in which to conduct the study, could not factor this extra research into the research programme.
[2] This research was looking at post-compulsory education at age 16+.
[3] This was to give the study a sufficiently broad selection of tutors and students.
[4] The field documents comprised of interview schedules and observation sheets at this stage.

KS coordinators were contacted first, as opposed to managers or principals, because they were considered to be the *'gatekeepers'* of the KS provision within their colleges and I was acknowledging their status (Seidman, 1998).

The response to these communications was very disappointing. Of the fifty contacts made, only two replies were received in two months. I had assumed (Bell, 1993), that it would be relatively easy to enlist colleges for the study. There appeared to be no clear reasons for this poor response, although subsequently, I found that others had experienced similar problems researching within the FE environment as, *'it is one that is not necessarily sympathetic to research,'* (Flynn and Dean, 2004, p.16-17), and often disparaged as, *'irrelevant HE research,'* (Barnes, 2004, p.15). It became clear that my original plan of having twelve colleges to choose from was unrealistic and, concerned to secure the colleges needed for the study, I changed my strategy.

Over the following months, I attended KS workshops, seminars and conferences to network and meet with college coordinators and managers. This approach resulted in my meeting representatives from a number of colleges and subsequently more joining the study. Management from a Sixth Form College, a type not previously considered as a potential site, agreed to participate, a decision which proved interesting for the research, as it widened *'the institutional landscape'* (Stasz and Wright, 2004, p.18). By the end of June 2004, after much effort, I had secured *eight* case-study sites; six required for the research and a safety-net of two others.

Letters of introduction, outlining the proposed study (Appendix D), were sent to each college principal asking for permission to conduct research in his or her institute and meet with their KS staff.

As I received agreement, I visited the colleges to confirm their suitability and either met with coordinators or managers, depending on which party controlled their KS provision. A number of meetings generally took place to strengthen relationships and discuss the research in detail. At this point I noted how the organisations ran in general, their cultures and attitudes, resources and KS operations. After considering all of the factors, I decided on the suitability of each college for the study. Although under pressure to enlist every one seen, because of limited numbers, I still needed to satisfy the criteria set down in section 3.2.1.

Every college presented a different, *'particularity of the case,'* (Stake, 1995, p. 39), and numerous visits were required to secure the right staff members[1], identify each persons' *'interests'* (Ahern, 1999, pp. 408-10) and make sure all KS management *'bought into'* the study (Barnes, 2004, p.15). From these meetings, *my* credibility, knowledge and integrity were also under scrutiny. Clear documented ethical considerations provided evidence of my good intentions, a copy of which was given to every principal for their records. Having secured the managerial staff, the next stage was to enlist a KS tutor from each college and his or her cohort of students.

3.2.3 Sample tutors

Some tutors joined the study after being introduced to me by coordinators or managers and a small number came from an internal mailing of my request letter. One tutor was previously known to me. Meeting tutors face to face in staff rooms proved to be the most effective way of securing them for the study. Appendix D contains the tutors' letter and consent form.

Once I found willing tutors, the process of visiting, discussing and general relationship-building happened. It took some weeks to finally secure them for the study. Their concerns needed to be addressed during the early discussions regarding their involvement in the research. It was obvious that for some, participation, *'presented them with difficulties and threats,'* (Barnes, 2004, p.15). A small number appeared apprehensive, and most were concerned about any extra time and work their involvement would mean. One agreed to participate, but only if his name was not recorded anywhere, and others, who had initially agreed, later withdrew for various reasons. The entire process of securing the tutors required much sensitivity to their needs, and agreement only happened through taking a series of *'small steps'* (Flynn and Dean, 2004, p.16-17). In some cases it took months to gain their confidence and in general, it was difficult to abstract a final, unequivocal 'yes' from them.

Three factors, as reported by the tutors, helped finally secure their agreement to participate. These were:

(i) My being an ex KS tutor. We had a shared experience and I was considered to be one of them

(ii) The research would give them a voice

[1] Some staff wanted to participate, but their students were not 1st year foundation level, others were holding classes for ages 14-16.

(iii) The study was not being undertaken by government agencies or anybody from within their own college

Before that summer term drew to a close, I consolidated on 8 colleges to ensure everything was in place to begin the fieldwork the following September (2004). Altogether, 13 KS tutors were enlisted in 12 separate case-studies. Two case-studies had two KS tutors in each. The next stage was to secure the students. This could not take place until the beginning of the new term, as timetables were not in place until then.

During this period, the field documents, observation recording sheets and interview schedules, were designed and piloted with a non-participating tutor and her cohort of students. From the feedback received, some minor changes were made to these documents.

3.2.4 Sample students

At the start of the autumn term, tutors began identifying potential groups of students for the study. The criteria for this selection were:

- *Access* - I had to ensure the classes did not clash with one another across the college sites
- *Age* – the students needed to be 16+
- *Foundation level groups* – containing students working at L1 KS
- *KS and vocational subjects* - students undertaking different KS[1], some of which were one of the three main KS, on a variety of vocational courses[2]

Eventually, all potential student groups were identified and the tutors and I agreed I would introduce my research to them in a short class presentation followed by a letter to each student (Appendix D) setting out the study in simple terms and a consent form for their signature.

The first group of 15 students I presented to were on a foundation, pre-course 'catch up', study year, all males between 16 and 17 years old. These students had either no GCSEs or C- grades, some taking BS, others, L1 KS. I met the class just before their lesson began and introduced myself. Within minutes, I was subjected to loud heckling,

[1] Students undertaking different KS subjects were required in order to give a full and diverse picture of KS provision across the case-studies.
[2] By recruiting students on different vocational courses, the case-studies would include different vocational KS requirements being examined, a variety of KS instructional systems and provision could be studied, different assessment systems looked at and a range of leaning milieux could be researched.

which continued throughout the entire 5 minute presentation. By the time I asked for their consent, students were being verbally abusive towards me, which felt menacing. There was no attempt by the tutor, who sat at a desk behind me the entire time, to check or control this behaviour. Needless to say, none of the students gave their consent and I retreated from the classroom to louder verbal abuse, paper missiles being launched at me and laughter.

Shaken by this response, I left the college feeling very low, which was later compounded by the tutor withdrawing his participation. Weeks of effort, trying to enlist another tutor at that particular college, proved fruitless. Thus, after months of work, I lost that site. With 7 colleges remaining however, I was still within my 6-college requirement and now had 12 tutors and 11 case-studies.

The next two groups of students I visited were similarly aggressive. I stopped further presentations and encounters in order to recover and think. I was losing hard-won college sites, along with valuable opportunities to enlist scarce student groups, as well as my will to continue.

I contacted the tutors involved to explore what *they* thought about their students' responses, looking for something I could focus on. These talks were useful, as the tutors themselves were experiencing problems with their students' behaviour, but no one provided any answers as to how to gain their students' consent.

A study of relevant literature unearthed very little that described the exact situations I faced. Students in other studies were generally not from FE and of those that were, many had been conducted within the researchers' own organisations. I contacted a number of researchers directly and asked how they managed to secure their student respondents. The general reply was that they either knew them, or knew somebody who knew them, who organised these samples on their behalf. Or, as one researcher candidly told me, they doubted if they would have been able to secure the students for their study either.

Whilst interesting, this exercise left me no nearer to finding solutions for my own research problem. From experience, I understood the students I was attempting to secure were at the 'difficult' end of the behavioural spectrum, but I had not expected such vitriolic responses, or being called '*a middle class* ****,' so, '*why should they*

******* *help me?'* Some wanted to know *'what they would get out of it,'* and asked for money, or *'I could just **** off.'*

My nervousness as a researcher possibly made the situation worse, unwittingly presenting a vulnerable target at which these students could vent their anger, frustration, or whatever else. On reflection, I also realised I had avoided teaching such groups over the years, simply because I could not cope with their behaviour and, although the circumstances were different, the students were not. Two things needed to be addressed - my personal reactions to the situations and finding a different way through to the students.

The reflexive bracketing methods of Ahern (1999, pp. 408-10) helped me establish a certain *'attitude of mind'* (Robson, 2002. p.10), and crystallise the *'character'* I was playing in the research process, accepting that, as a researcher I had limitations (Robson, 2002). Although needing to develop better coping mechanisms to manage any given situation, as the classroom control was *not* in my hands, I decided I would not include any cohort of students unless their tutor could and would control them. Conditions for participation in the study were discussed honestly with each tutor.

A route through to student groups happened more by accident than design, whilst visiting one particular college. On my arrival, the coordinator I went to interview had to cover a KS lesson for an absent member of staff. I offered my services as a tutor and took the 2-hour session. At the end of the lesson, I was able to discuss my research with those students and gained their agreement to become my case-study group at that college.

As this strategy worked, I decided to try it with other groups and contacted every tutor who ran formally structured KS lessons[1], offering myself as a classroom assistant with a view to regularly supporting them in their teaching. Each tutor accepted and I subsequently gained college clearances.

Re-entering the classrooms containing the badly-behaved students as their new *teacher assistant*, caused some initial bemusement, but they soon settled down to what the tutors described as 'their normal behaviour'. Some rules were placed on the

[1] Not all case-study tutors ran formally structured lessons. Some ran a system of tutorial groups, others operated individual tutorial sessions.

students because of my presence in class, largely in the form of showing me respect[1]. During these early sessions, I did not mention my research or make any reference to our previous encounters.

These lessons were successful and I used this strategy in 6 case-studies where access was a problem. After a number of weeks working as a classroom assistant, the students and I developed relationships to the point where they all consented to participate in the study. I then began to formally conduct participation observations, and as students' attitudes to my research softened further, I was able to carry out interviews.

The students were by far the hardest of all the participating groups to enlist initially into the study and then to interview. During the fieldwork, many were consistently unreliable in turning up for appointments. In addition, they were not very responsive to my interview questions. Students' general attitude towards my research, although improved from the inauspicious beginning, remained largely apathetic - *'can't be bothered miss,'* vaguely cooperative - *'all right, but will it take long?'* or in some cases, slightly interested - *'yeh, ok'*. Most students were loath to give up any free time. Supplying refreshments in exchange for the interview time overcame this problem. I obtained the interviews and students got their refreshments for free. This incentive was considered to be within the ethical guidelines of BERA (2004, paragraph 20), in that it was, *'commensurate with good sense.'*

Other factors which helped secure and then maintain student participation, particularly for interviews, were time and effort from the KS tutors, and patience, perseverance and good humour on my part.

3.2.5 Sampling

There were no limits set on the number of participants, interviewees or other sources of data. I interviewed as many participants as I could to gain the maximum understanding of the instructional systems and learning milieux in every college and to obtain the views, opinions and issues concerning KS from all parties in the study.

[1] The respect was in the form of any kind of abuse - sexual, swearing or aggression. These had been set down as conditions for the groups' participation in the study and had been jointly agreed between myself and the tutors. If these conditions did not prevail, the case-study would have been abandoned.

Interviewing a, *'purposeful selection of a sample in the initial stages of the study,'* (Coyne, 1997, p. 625; Patton, 1990), began consolidating the grounded theories formed from the anecdotal evidence and literature searches. The first interviewees were with, *'significant individuals'* (Baker *et al.* 1992), such as coordinators and managers because these *'good informants'* had a broad general knowledge of the topic and setting (Morse, 1999). Whilst the study focus was more on tutors, their experience of KS was considered to be confined to the issues surrounding its provision within their own colleges. They were not necessarily experienced in the *wider*, social process of the policy implementation. KS management were believed to have had this broader understanding.

Given the limitations of time and resources for this study, whilst information was acquired from a concentrated sample of case-study participants (Morse, 1999), other significant individuals were also included, such as vocational staffs, support tutors, and administrators because they contributed to the organisational and classroom systems.

The scope of study stayed open to all available information, even if subjective, anecdotal or impressionable, thus reinforcing the notion of flexibility. All sources of data were considered to have added to the richness and reality of the real world under investigation.

The participants did not enter the study at the same time, which allowed the observations and interviews to evolve steadily and naturally as more people joined. However, the *core structure* in the field documents was not fundamentally altered, whilst the incoming information from participants honed the focus of the research questions and explored subsequent collections of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

Key members of the government's policymaker groups[1] were interviewed early in the study to validate general theories concerning the KS2000.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethics are a critical factor in any study and were, *'high on the research design agenda,'* (Mason, 1996, p. 29) in this research because the age of the students began at 16. Whilst ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality and avoidance of harm applied to each component of the study - the organisations, staff and students

[1] These were Key persons within the QCA.

within them, as well as other interested parties outside, it was the students' involvement, given they were the most vulnerable, which called for the application of particularly stringent ethical safeguards.

The research was guided by the British Educational Research Association code of conduct (BERA, 2004) for education researchers. There were four relevant ethical principles that were observed throughout the research. These were:

(i) Respect for the Person

(ii) Voluntary Informed Consent

(iii) Detriment arising from Participation in the Research

(iv) Full Disclosure Certification and other safety considerations.

Appendix E shows the full ethical considerations in relation to the person or persons who participated in the study, with the action that was taken to ensure full compliance to the BERA code.

3.4 Methodological principles and models influencing the research

The reason for conducting this inquiry was to tell the story (Patton, 2002) of KS2000 and its effects on KS tutors and their students. The time-frame for carrying out the field work was set at one full academic year, to show a beginning, middle and an end. A qualitative approach was adopted because it contained the features and models that would facilitate such an enquiry, principally that of *evaluation*.

The qualitative approach allowed diversity (Punch, 1998, p.139), flexibility (Mason, 1996, p.3), and theory verification (Hammersley, 1992), as well as offering a site of multiple methodologies and research practices (Punch, 1998, p.139). Although this type of inquiry made significant demands on me as a researcher (Robson, 2002, p.167), my personal qualities and skills made me best suited to conduct this kind of investigation (Hammersley, 2002, p. 98). As Ball (1993. p. 39) points out, fieldwork is more directly related to the researcher's social-relations skills and is crucial to cultivating key informants and therefore the collection of data.

Using a qualitative inquiry enabled me to delve into the workings of the colleges and the relationships of their participants, and experience, perceive and describe the significance and meanings they generated (Mason, 1996). The findings from these

evaluations illuminated the people (Patton, 2002, p.10) and increased an understanding of the whole picture because, as insiders, their perspectives gave *power* to the qualitative reporting (Patton, 2002, p. 8) and capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how KS2000 was working universally. Thus, the study could connect context with explanation, resulting in the production of some cross-contextual generalities.

The challenge of conducting this type of qualitative research, as Mason (1996, p.1) expresses it, was to ensure that it was not carried out in a casual or unsystematic way and therefore avoid criticism of it being 'merely' anecdotal.

The *evaluative model* was chosen because it is a practical type of research, concerned with understanding the value of innovations, such as KS2000 and with determining whether or not the programme's objectives were being achieved (Anderson, 1990. p.112). Its purpose was to gather information and generate findings that could be considered useful, practical, ethical, accurate (Patton, 2002), and of *'value'* (Jones, 1986, p.122), value in this sense being relative to something else, therefore this evaluation inquiry was also a comparative exercise. There were two comparisons - that between the case-studies, and that of comparing the expectations of government with the reality of what was happening in the learning milieux.

Jones (1986) makes the point that education values are not only relative but are not constant either, they are informed by philosophical and political considerations and change over time. That is why the context in which this evaluation took place was significant, because the outcome of the evaluation itself could be influenced. As Jones (1986) further highlights, it is difficult to ignore prevailing social norms. Timing, context and social norms were all considered to be major factors that could affect the results and outcomes of this evaluative study, particularly if, as appears to be the case, KS2000 was introduced for socio-economic reasons. The audiences for this research are therefore those concerned with such issues and their links to KS education.

The research began, *'with an abstract wonderment of what was going on,'* (Glaser 1992, p. 22) and some early theories, grounded and formed from personal experience, the EKS Conference survey findings and anecdotal evidence from the forum. These informed the literature searches, which further contributed to the formation of theories. As stated by Hammersley (2002, p. 90), *'one can never start with a blank sheet.'*

An analytical log was kept right through the study to reflect on the results of the field work as it was conducted, code responses and build theories as they emerged. Ozga and Gewirtz (1994) put forward the view that researchers of educational policy have tended neither to be explicit nor reflexive about the values or theories which inform or inhere their work and that we need to be reflexive about relationships between, *'value positions and theory,'* as there is, *'no question of divorcing theorising from data collection.'* The analytical log fulfilled this function.

An audit trail was used throughout the study to show the research was not biased (Robson, 2002, p.176). It comprised of raw collections of data from interviews and observations, field notes, research journals and the analytical log, which recorded details of my coding and these data analysis. Robson (2002, p.176) further adds that the employment of an audit trail shows trustworthiness, ensures thoroughness and provides evidence of care and reliability.

The study used elements of four approaches based on traditions within qualitative research (Robson, 2002, p.178). These are:

1. Case-study
2. Illuminative evaluation
3. Ethnographic studies
4. Grounded theory studies.

3.4.1 Case-study

Case-study[1] was used because, as Cook and Campbell (1979, p. 96) argue, it is, *'particularly relevant to a real world inquiry,'* it uses different sources of evidence gathered, and multiple methods of data gathering. Robson (2002, pp.179, 185) maintains that case-studies show what is taking place, *'at particular times in particular places with particular people.'* There is also uniqueness, particularity, complexity and commonality of the cases (Stake, 1995, p.1). Their defining characteristic, according to Robson (2002), is a concentration on each particular case studied in its own right.

It was appropriate to study more than a single case (Robson, 2002, p.183), in a small number of colleges. Where more detail was required on instructional systems operating within a specific organisation, or questions arose concerning the cases, a second one

[1] Case-study is defined in this research as a group of one tutor and his or her cohort of students.

was carried out within the same college, but with a different tutor and a different cohort of students[1].

The case-study framework of Yin (1994, p. 64) was used as a model because it provided some general rules used when conducting multiple cases. The framework included:

- An overview of the case-study project (objectives, issues, topics being investigated)
- Field procedures (credentials and access to sites, sources of information)
- Case-study questions (interview schedules)
- Structured observation sheets
- A guide for case-study reporting (outline, format for the narrative).

Case-study and generalisability

Cases were initially selected where the theory would suggest that the same result would be obtained e.g., typical FE colleges[2]. It was understood from the outset however, that colleges' instructional systems differed, which meant that their KS outcomes might differ also. However, different outcomes would be as important, data-wise, as those which were similar. One exception was made *'outside'* of the *'typical case'* (Stake, 1995, p.2), with the enlisting of a sixth form college. This involvement illustrated some matters that could not have come from the typical college cases and added new dimensions to the study, for example, their not providing L1 KS (AoN and Comms) but putting students through GCSE re-takes.

3.4.2 Illuminative evaluation

Illuminative evaluation (IE) was the leading approach of evaluation used in this study, having been selected for its open-ended techniques, such as focus groups and progressive focussing, which saw the series of interviews informed by the ongoing observations and other interviews, thus focussing down on to the *'real'* problems and issues (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, p. 69). The IE approach is an intensive study of a programme as a whole, its rationale and evaluation, its operations, achievements and difficulties. Through IE, the innovation of KS was examined in what are its two central concepts (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, p. 61), (i) the instructional system (IS) and (ii) the

[1] Two case-studies were conducted in four of the seven host colleges.
[2] There were no specialist FE colleges enlisted for the study, as their KS provision may have been unique in some way to their particular vocational specialism.

learning milieu (LM). Due to its distinction in this study, Illuminative Evaluation is discussed and set out in greater detail in Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Ethnographic studies

The research borrowed (Wolcott, 1994) some aspects of ethnographic inquiry, using a *'general style'* (Robson, 2002, p.187), of observations. The process was one of, *'getting into the field and staying there,'* to experience and gain as much information as possible from the learning milieu within each college and develop an understanding of the participants and their points of view (Punch, 1998, p.157). The liberal activities of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, pp.1-10), were taken up - chatting with students over breaks and running errands for tutors - as well as the more structured activities (Punch, 1998, p.157), such as assisting in teaching, asking questions and describing what happened.

The participant observations carried out within some groups were more closely linked with the process of ethnographic study (Robson, 2002, p.187). In my role of an assistant, I blended in (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.166) with the classroom setting. Working individually with students enabled me to assess their underpinning knowledge at close hand, as well as win their confidence. I was also able to get a good sense of the tutors' perspectives on the events and actions as they occurred within the lessons. However, participant observation was physically demanding and it was sometimes difficult to judge how much, if any, one was affecting the natural classroom setting. My presence in the classes certainly helped the tutors in a physical and supportive sense, and unquestionably changed the students' behaviour in some respects[1]. These were however, considered to be an imperative for my conducting the research and are discussed fully in section 5.5.3.

3.4.4 Grounded theory

The credibility of grounded theory (GT) has been well documented in the literature (Cutcliffe, 2005, p. 425) and a *general* GT *approach* was used because its flexible design was suited to the purpose of theory development and generation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theories were generated by these data as they emerged from the literature and field work (Patton, 2002, p. 63). This approach proved useful (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 3) when the categories that emerged were readily applicable to collections of data under study, were meaningfully relevant and able to explain

[1] The rules that were applied for my being in the classroom, i.e., students were not allowed to be abusive, at any level, were enforced by the tutors, thus changing the classroom settings.

behaviour (Cutcliffe, 2005, p. 422). The flexible approach of GT was also adopted to make changes to the research as the study progressed.

Researchers' prior knowledge, beliefs and experiences, when applied to a study, are considered by some to, *'contaminate their representation of reality'* (Cutcliffe, 2000, p. 1479). However, Turner (1981) sees prior knowledge as advantageous in GT. My earlier experience was invaluable for undertaking this research, given the complex nature of KS2000, because I recognised, and was able to discuss and qualify emerging theories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 208). To ensure against sullying the research however, attention was given to all lines of enquiry and methods followed.

Grounded theory approach and the use of literature

Whilst theory is most likely to be grounded in data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), *both the document scrutiny in Chapter 1 and literature review in Chapter 2 were considered as part of these data in this study*. The former filled gaps in my own knowledge and the latter consolidated the rationale for doing the research and helped determine the methodology (Hutchinson 1993), as well as strengthen the theory development. Official documents were studied and new bodies of literature were examined throughout the research as theories emerged from interviews, observations and other collections of data.

Precision within grounded theory

The three main standards of rigour proposed by Beck (1993) of credibility, auditability and fittingness, as interpreted by Chiovitti and Piran (2003), were followed for this inquiry.

3.5 The methods

There were three main formal methods used for collections of data and a number of other, more informal methods used, such as catch-up chats:

1. document scrutiny and literature search
2. interviews
3. observations
4. informal methods

3.5.1 The document scrutiny and literature search

Official documentation on KS2000, produced by government and its agencies, were examined to give background to the study and explore the important aspects surrounding KS, which were:-

- The NQF
- The NC
- The KS continuum
- Where did KS come from?
- What is their purpose?
- Who developed them?

The background information to KS2000 formed a foundation upon which the literature was reviewed. The literature widened and developed these aspects and explored them further. From these, evaluations were made and some theories emerged and were recorded in the analytical log. The literature looked at seven main areas:

1. The origins and rationale for KS2000
2. The skills 'gap'
3. The meaning of 'skill'
4. Education or training?
5. Remedial education and a deficit agenda
6. The KS tutors
7. The students

3.5.2 The interviews

An interview framework (Appendix F) was developed. The interviews set out to obtain as much in-depth knowledge, information and understanding from the participants as possible and at the same time record it accurately and in an unbiased manner. The interviews were largely recorded using a small recording machine, but on a few occasions, were hand-written. The sessions were then logged in a field diary. For each case-study, the interview process had its own starting date which was dependent on circumstances at the individual college.

Semi-structured interviews were developed as a starting point in an evolving process of inquiry. Examples of interview schedules are shown in Appendices G and H. These schedules were based on a relatively small number of open-ended questions, the answers to which, as described by Payne and Payne (2004, pp. 131-2), were probed

for elaboration or change of direction from the general questions to the more specific ones. Occasionally, some extra exploratory open-ended questions were used to delve into new areas that events in the observations had initiated.

3.5.3 The development of the interview schedules

The early interview schedules were piloted on a non-participating FE KS tutor and her cohort of foundation level students working at KS L1, and subsequently, changes were made, largely to the KS terminology used with the students.

The interview schedules were designed to answer the research questions and provide detail and participants' descriptions from which grounded theories would emerge. In keeping with a flexible and progressive focussing approach, they were modified during the course of the field work as data accumulated, but the core of the questions remained constant throughout.

3.5.4 The recording of interviews

Although largely recorded, interviews were hand-written when students refused to be recorded, when the recording machine did not function properly (twice), and where the interviews were short, such as catch-up meetings. Every interview was logged in the field log diaries and colour coded for easy reference. The general outcomes of the interviews were reflected on and coded for theory development in the analytical log.

3.5.5 The interview participants

Interviews were conducted with staffs representing all areas of the KS provision:-

- Heads of KS departments
- Mangers of KS
- Coordinators of KS
- Case-study KS tutors
- Case-study students
- General KS tutors
- Internal verifiers of KS
- Vocational curriculum managers
- Vocational tutors
- Support tutors
- Administrators

Apart from the informants *within* the FE colleges, other figures of relevance (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p. 66) were interviewed, such as personnel from within government

agencies, employment vocational agencies and universities. *These data provided background information to the study.*

3.5.6 The contexts of the interviews

The interviews were conducted in face-to-face settings (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.129), in different locations and lasted varying amounts of time. All senior managers, heads of KS and vocational curriculum managers, and their administrational staffs were interviewed in a formal manner in their own offices. Interviews with coordinators and internal verifiers were carried out in refectories and interview rooms.

Case-study KS tutors, general KS tutors and support tutors (ST) were interviewed in empty classrooms, either before the scheduled lessons or afterwards. On some occasions, when the tutors had to vacate the classrooms, interviewing them became problematic, as alternative areas had to be found. This was not easy in a busy FE college. General staff rooms or shared office rooms were not generally used, to avoid creating issues with their colleagues. With limited choices, tutors were interviewed in corners of refectories, which, although noisy, did prevent the conversations being overheard. One tutor interview took place whilst walking across a car park to lessons in other buildings. In a small number of cases, interviews were conducted by telephone.

Some serious issues arose during the interviews with KS tutors that required delicate handling. One example is of a respondent disclosing disturbing personal childhood experiences. Another is where a tutor expressed dislike of a colleague. Both interviews were dealt with sensitively and these data were subsequently edited out of the transcriptions.

Students' interviews presented the greatest challenges, as with no specific area in which to interview them, they were largely conducted in refectories, which suffered from extreme background noise levels. Apart from the noise, students were also easily distracted by other students in the room. Some interviews were carried out in classrooms without the tutor being present. A number of students would not be interviewed unless a friend sat with them or they were in a group. This situation did not present any ethical dilemmas, as each student understood the confidentiality aspects of the research. However, extra care was taken for students not to divulge any personal information in these joint/group interviews.

The vocational tutors (VTs) were interviewed in their offices and often within hearing distance of their colleagues, potentially posing some ethical questions. However,

having been treated to the same ethical considerations as other respondents, the VTs found this acceptable and appeared to share a certain camaraderie, which at times led to them joining in with each other's interviews and answering questions collectively. One VT was interviewed in an empty classroom after a lesson had finished.

Interviews with informants outside of the colleges were conducted at various locations. One respondent was interviewed by telephone.

3.5.7 Phasing of the interviews

The phasing of the interviews was different with each group of participants. All KS *managers* and *coordinators* were interviewed, where possible, in two phases - at the early part of the study, to identify and record detail of the colleges' instructional systems (IS) and near to the end of the field work, to:

- discuss changes in the KS2000 and any effect these may have made on its provision
- report to them on how the research had gone[1]
- secure authority to obtain their organisations' KS data

Their *administrators* were also interviewed in two phases - firstly, to add some further details to the IS in operation and secondly, to obtain KS results from the case-studies.

Case-study tutor interviews

The case-study tutor interviews were carried out where possible, in three phases over the year - at the beginning, during the middle period and at the end. The first interviews, which took place before any contact with students, allowed tutors to tell their own personal stories and so present experiences grounded in their past, as well as adding details to the IS operating within their department. It provided the foundations of tutors' overall understanding of KS2000 and their relationships with colleagues and students. This began the process of building information on the learning milieu (LM), looking at a reconstruction of their day-to-day teaching and what they hoped to achieve with their students. The information helped illuminate the subsequent class observations, teacher-assisting sessions and interviews with students.

The second interviews consolidated information given in the first and looked for any changes in the learning environments. They were also informed by events and issues that arose from the field work. This followed the process of *'progressive focusing'*

[1] Some managers specifically requested information on how the research had gone.

(Parlett and Hamilton, 1972), which helped reduce the breadth of the enquiry and concentrated on emerging issues.

By the third interview, a whole picture of the tutor, their relationship to KS2000 and to their students was gained, thus applying Parlett and Hamilton's (1972), concept of a *'holistic, illuminating'* evaluation approach, in which the individual teacher's characteristics are part of a network of variables that are considered to affect the IS and LM, and thus affect the innovation itself. The final interviews included tutors reflecting on experiences over the past year. Results of their students' KS achievements were discussed at this time.

Case-study student interviews

Students were, where possible, interviewed in two phases - at the beginning and end of the academic year. The first interviews began casually with open-ended questions to settle students into the process. These were followed by more structured questions, designed to gather information about their vocational course, aspirations and relationships with others. Students' perceptions of KS were explored, their likes and dislikes, ability, motivation and participation.

The second interviews qualified earlier *'tentative'* findings (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) of responses given in the first interviews, specifically re-examining those appertaining to their interest, motivation, ability and final qualification in KS. Second interviews were primarily designed to track students' understanding, practice and knowledge of KS. As with the tutors' final interviews, certain questions could only be asked at the end of the year, such as those concerning portfolio completions, exam passes, full qualification and their reflections on the year's experience of KS.

Some student interviews were terminated early, where behaviour became uncontrollable or where it was proving difficult to engage them. Where appropriate, interviews were conducted along the lines of a chat, rather than formally.

The vocational personnel interviews

One interview was conducted with the vocational personnel (both managers and VTs), whenever the opportunity arose, which differed in each college.

Support tutor interviews

STs were generally interviewed once, depending on their profile within the case-studies e.g., one ST provided extra maths classes to the case-study students and her lesson was also observed.

Other informants

The interviews with respondents outside of the colleges were conducted as one-off interviews.

3.5.8 The exercise of on-going evaluation that shaped the progressive focussing

Data gathered from each interview were either fully transcribed shortly after their collection or, given the limitation of time during the field work period, significant items were noted from listening to the recordings and the general field notes. These were written up in the analytical log used throughout the study for noting overall impressions and understandings from the information as it came out of the field work. As themes and patterns emerged from these data collected in each case-study across the colleges, ideas and theories were developed and recorded in the log. These were tested in subsequent interviews and observations. An example of this was obtaining views of VTs on KS to test their reported resistance towards them. Once tested and seemingly confirmed, these laid some foundations for the theories of cultural divisions within FE.

3.5.9 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were used with some groups of students. These were employed for various reasons. They created opportunities to communicate with individuals within the group who were reluctant to be interviewed and also offered a channel to investigate issues that had emerged during observations. They also generated more research questions. Concerns of validation were not an issue, as the focus groups were intended to *support* other methods, not replace them. The discussions were guided and had set boundaries according to the study's ethical framework.

3.5.10 KS results

For the most part, the KS exams and portfolio assessments took place at the end of the year. The lists of passes and fails, which were complied on a college database over the following year, were requested in order to track students' KS outcomes.

3.6 Observations

The advantage of using observation as a technique was its directness. I watched what the participants did and listened to what they said, which added valuable information to such a real-world study. The interviews were open to discrepancies between what people said they did and what they did in actuality, *'saying is one thing, doing is another,'* as Montaigne observed over 400 years ago (Robson, 2002, p. 310). Observation methods were used in this study as a supportive and supplementary method to collections of data that complemented and set in perspective these data obtained by the other means. Their employment particularly helped overcome issues of reliability and validity concerning information gathered from the interviews.

The emphasis of use of observations was different in each case-study, but in general, they were always used to explore, test insights, to build theory and record events as they occurred in the classrooms (Robson, 2002), thus removing elements of *'the artificial.'*

General information of the learning milieux i.e., levels of in-class support, students' attendance, programme materials and lesson tasks, were logged at the beginning of observations.

3.6.1 The observation participants

Two groups were observed in the lessons (i) the case-study KS tutors and (ii) the case-study students. Other people present in the room, such as STs, were noted, but not included in the observations.

(i) The tutors

Tutors were observed in a very *general* way, covering areas such as:-

- what they planned for the session and hoped to achieve[1]
- teaching methods used group work, individual work etc
- language used in lessons
- lesson control and dealing with students' behaviour
- dealing with different student ability

Tutor observations were recorded in note form and separately from the students' observation notes. No pre-recording sheet was initially devised to use with the tutors. The intention was to leave these observations very open. However, as a general

[1] A number of lesson plans were collected from the tutors, but as they did not always reflect what actually occurred in the lesson, these were not used as data.

pattern of tutor behaviour emerged, a simple observation recording sheet for the tutors was created around general areas listed above.

(ii) The students

The observations included every student in the room other than in one case, where a student explicitly asked *not* to be observed, but still participated in the overall study. A seating plan was drawn up at the beginning of every observed lesson and each student was allocated a number on the observation sheet. This made it easy to identify the student and their subsequent activities/behaviours, given that once seated, they remained in those seats. General notes were made separately from the recording sheets.

3.6.2 The context of the observations

The observations (and participation observations) mostly took place in designated KS classrooms, within specific areas e.g., computer suites, learning centres etc. Some groups were also observed in a vocational setting (e.g., hair salon). Each group was observed at regular intervals across an academic year, mostly at two weekly intervals, at various times of the day. In the majority of observed lessons, students worked at individual computer stations for either the entire lesson or most of it. Observations were carried out in classrooms without computers when students were working at AoN. The observed tutorials (see tables in section 4.4) also took place in designated KS rooms.

The numbers of staff present in each lesson varied considerably. Most had one KS tutor, but four members of staff (KS tutor, a VT and two STs) were recorded in one case.

The age of the students in each observed group was 16+ and the majority were in the first year of their vocational course. No students were allowed to examine or read the observation sheets or the notes made during or after the lessons, nor did any ask about their content.

All observations were carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines and every student was given the opportunity to be excluded. Observations were conducted discreetly and with minimal disruption to the lessons. There were some issues that arose from this method of collections of data and are discussed fully in section 5.5.3.

3.6.3 Methods of observations

Two methods were employed for classroom observations (i) systematic observation - a quantitative method of tabulating behaviour and (ii) ethnographic, qualitative observation – describing events. This system worked well. As stated by Croll (1986,

p.8), *'qualitative and quantitative techniques are not mutually exclusive and may be complementary.'*

The systematic (Croll, 1986), *'structured observations'* (Robson, 2002, p.310), were used to record and classify the classroom events which could be reported in numerical and quantitative terms and formed the basis for some simple statistical analysis. They helped provide an overview of how often selected features of activities and interactions occurred in the lessons, such as talking, and with some description of them, such as the noise level of the talking. The results of the systematic observations provided an objective account of what was *generally* happening in the classrooms and were designed to inform the qualitative interview data.

Ethnographic observational techniques were used to provide information that might otherwise have not been noted or could not be recorded in any other way. The unfolding and evolving nature of these observations allowed conversation between me and the participants and for relationships to develop (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p.66). This technique helped in the understanding of interactions between the KS tutors and their students in lessons. These data formed the basis of the field-notes and accounts of selected incidences recorded in the analytical log, from which some grounded theories were formed. According to Hamilton and Delamont (1974), while such a qualitative approach can be unreliable and subjective, ethnographic observations can pick up on things that are of the most importance in the classroom.

3.6.4 The observation recording sheet

The observation sheet (Appendix I) contained a list of fifteen selected events and levels of behaviour and interactions within the classrooms that the observations were designed to record, termed 'events' in this study. The contents of these sheets were developed with the help and advice of two case-study KS tutors who believed that the fifteen events listed, constituted the most encountered behaviours of students and interactions between themselves and students in the lessons.

1. Noisy	6. Disruptive behaviour	11. Completed task
2. Co-operative	7. Leaving the classroom	12. Appears motivated
3. Talking	8. Using phone etc	13. Stated inability to do tasks
4. Argumentative or rude	9. Refusing to work	14. Ignored tutor
5. Aggressive behaviour	10. Late	15. Stated confusion

The design of the observation sheet was piloted in two different FE colleges on foundation KS L1 students. From these pilots, no changes were made to the fifteen selected events but the layout of the sheet was modified to make it more practical to record them. When it became clear that some *participation* observations would be carried out as well as *pure* observations, I re-piloted the sheet in a *participation* observation. It proved to be equally effective therefore no further changes were made.

In line with a systematic observational approach, the level of an event, was measured on a simple scale of 0 – 5[1] (Appendix J). Using *talking* as an example, level 0 was *not talking at all*, level 3 was *an acceptable level* and level 5 was *not acceptable* - the student was verbally warned or sent from the room.

3.7 Summary

This chapter began by presenting the four phases of the research in a chronology, showing the activities carried out in each phase. The process of gaining access to colleges and sampling participants was described next, along with the issues that arose from this exercise. Ethical considerations of the study were outlined. The methodological principles and models that influenced the research were explored, followed by an explanation of the approaches that were drawn on to carry out the study. The methods used to collect data in this research were then set out.

For each case-study, the collection of data began with researching the instructional system and learning milieu within the framework of the *illuminative evaluation* approach (IE). The next chapter describes this IE process in greater depth and presents two portraits as examples of the eleven case-study portraits produced in this research. The purpose of these descriptions is to place the interviews and observations, as discussed in the later Chapter 5, in context.

[1] As with the *events*, the simple *scale* of the events – from 0-5 were also agreed jointly between the pilot tutors and myself.

4 Instructional Systems and Learning Milieux

This chapter re-visits the aims of the study and explains why the method of illuminative evaluation was adopted. The framework of illuminative evaluation is discussed and how it was applied to this research. The two central concepts; the instructional system and the learning milieu, are presented separately.

A description of the three components of the instructional systems operating in each college is given - those within the organisations, the departments and the classrooms. There follows an exploration of the three components to the learning milieux. The flow of governance, control, legislation, and influence of the instructional systems over the classroom learning milieux is illustrated in a diagram.

There is an overview of the participating organisations showing the general characteristics of each college, followed by representative portraits of two of the colleges and the case-studies carried out within them. The portraits describe the KS systems operating at each of the three instructional system levels *and* the three learning milieux levels.

4.1 The framework of illuminative evaluation

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the KS2000 curriculum, particularly how it has been applied in FE and what the issues are for KS tutors and its impact on their foundation level students. The five research questions identified as relating to the aim and objectives are set out in section 1.5.2.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, illuminative evaluation was used in this study because of its suitability to evaluate educational programmes such as KS2000, one of its features being open-ended interview techniques and progressive focussing. By adopting this approach, the interviews, informed by the ongoing observations, constantly focused down on to the real problems and issues thus, *'enabling the collecting of rich, qualitative data,'* as described by Parlett and Hamilton (1972, p. 69). Such focussing, as highlighted by Draper (1996), helped me to focus on the, *'right questions,'* as well as test and develop theories and ideas as they emerged.

Illuminative evaluation provided the framework in which the intensive study was carried out on the KS programme as a whole, its rationale and evaluation, its operations, achievements and difficulties. KS was examined through the two central concepts of illuminative evaluation - the instructional system (IS) and the learning milieu (LM) (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p. 61).

4.1.1 The KS instructional systems

The instructional systems operating within every college, in effect, were an empty box into which a wide range of policies, procedures, rules and information were placed and then applied throughout all parts of the colleges. The overall *content* of these systems was controlled externally by two major forces, (i) the government, who are the authority who set and control national policy and (ii) UK employer bodies and vocational groups[1], who advise government on what that policy should contain. These government controls were regulated by several external agencies, the QCA[2] and LSC[3], who work jointly with the DfES, and the National Training Organisations (NTOs)[4].

The colleges themselves, whilst being regulated by the QCA/LSC and guided by the NQF, had some control over which KS and at what level they provided them to their students, particularly where their NVQ/GNVQ qualification did not actually *depend* on KS[5]. Colleges also had control over *how* they delivered KS to their students. As described in Chapter 1, section 1.3, when KS2000 were introduced into FE, the QCA/NQF set out *what* KS should be achieved, at *what level* and by *which age*. It was left to each college however, to take the specifications, interpret them and then incorporate KS into their existing programmes. That is why the seven colleges in this study, although sharing the same external KS controls and regulations, developed their own individual IS over the last five years. For example, in one college, AoN L1 exams

[1] The employer bodies are those such as the CBI (see the discussion in Chapter 2, section 2.2). The various vocational groups, through a complex maze of one hundred Awarding Bodies (ABs), such as the Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQ), offer their own vocational qualifications in tandem with national awards. The VRQs are a variety of different awards that have been accredited by the QCA and have a vocational focus. The title VRQ is given to qualifications developed independently by individual ABs rather than a specific national award.

[2] The QCA and LSC, applying national government policy, regulate the KS policy and its implementation. The LSC are the funding body for KS. The specifications and qualifications of KS are guided by the NQF (which the QCA developed). The control and guidance of the national policy on the KS instructional systems within FE colleges is discussed in depth in Chapter 1, sections 1.1 to 1.6, and in the research literature in Chapter 2, section 2. 2.

[3] The Learning Skills Council (LSC) is the body responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England.

[4] The NTOs set the standards for NVQs and GNVQs, and are required by the QCA (QCA website, 2007: The story of NVQs), to sign-post KS to the National Occupational Standards (NOS), from where they became mandatory core skills within the NVQs and GNVQs. The NQF set and regulate the vocational related qualifications. The influence and control of the NTOs on the KS instructional systems within FE colleges is discussed in depth in Chapter 2, section 2.4.

[5] Not all NVQs and GNVQs have mandatory KS attached to them.

were taken by foundation students in their first year but they did not undertake portfolio work. At another college, AoN L1 was not taken at all in the first year (portfolio or tests). Students did AoN in the second year of their vocational course.

The IS within each college formed a complex network consisting of:-

- the management personnel
- sets of official principles and values - KS policies and college mission statements
- KS provision - requirements for a variety of programmes, e.g. first year MA students working for an NVQ L1 in motor vehicle repair (MVR), needed all three main KS[1] at L1, whilst other courses within the same college required one main KS at L1.
- qualification processes, portfolio and exam systems - internal and external verification and claiming of proxy qualifications
- staffing and timetabling across the college (if KS was provided centrally)
- inspection procedures and their cross-college requirements (internal and external, such as by Ofsted)
- funding specifications and arrangements
- staff development
- quality assurance systems

Taken together, these parts were organised into the IS, designed to set out what *ought* to happen throughout the colleges.

The IS within each organisation had two recognisable levels, organisational and departmental, that controlled and influenced the third, the IS within the classroom. In colleges where there was a specific KS department, the KS provision was carried out in accordance to the IS set out by the organisation, usually a senior manager. Where vocational departments were responsible for discharging the KS provision, although the organisations controlled the overall KS *content*, the vocational areas, those with employer links, operated an historical autonomy over their own students, and therefore, their IS. Thus were spawned more layers of IS[2].

[1] The three main KS – AoN, Comms and IT/ICT.
[2] The three layers of instructional systems comprised of external, official control, internal KS departmental and vocational departmental.

Managers with authority, control or significant influence over their colleges' KS IS were identified and, where possible, enlisted for the study. These comprised personnel from three staff divisions:-

(i) Heads of KS (HKS) (senior and middle managers) – who controlled KS at organisation level

(ii) Coordinators (Co) – who implemented KS at departmental level

(iii) Internal verifiers (IV) – who assessed and monitored KS at organisational and departmental levels

There were variations in the titles, roles and responsibilities of these managers from college to college, briefly described below.

Head of KS - The title and managerial level of people doing the job of HKS i.e., those with overall responsibility for KS provision, varied greatly across the colleges. The actual title 'Head of KS' did not exist in any of the colleges, although the role did. Those personnel with that job, whether they came from senior or middle management, are referred to in the study as HKS. If the person doing that job had the specific title of coordinator, they are referred to as Co+HKS, to distinguish them from other coordinators in the study who did *not* have overall responsibility for their college's KS.

In colleges A and C, the HKS were senior managers who oversaw the whole of their organisations' KS strategic operations (as well as other areas within their colleges). One senior manager HKS ran the college's KS operations centrally and delegated its day to day implementation to a team of middle-managers and a KS coordinator. The other senior manager HKS delegated the overall coordination of the provision to a team of two coordinators. In this college however, the VCMs controlled the KS provided to their own vocational students. Both senior managers remained in charge of certain elements of their operations, including setting college policy and systems, all aspects of funding, quality assurance and monitoring qualification levels.

College F had a manager who held the HKS position and was responsible for many aspects of college KS provision, but *not all of it*. In this college, each VCM controlled their own provision. In colleges D and G, where KS were controlled centrally, not through the vocational areas, the HKS post was held by KS coordinators (Co+HKS), who had overall responsibility for *all* of the provision.

In college E, the KS coordinator had most, but not *all* responsibility for the KS provision, as the VCMs largely provided their own. College B had no HKS, the VCMs

controlled their vocational students' KS and a coordinator oversaw its administration college-wide and also maintained quality control.

Over all colleges, the two senior management HKS, the manager HKS and one Co, did *not* deliver any KS, but two Co+HKS did.

Coordinator – there was a specified Co in all of the colleges. Their roles and duties within their organisations varied considerably and were possibly more complicated than those of the HKS. Four colleges had started their KS operations (in 2000) with a specific Co overseeing a central department. At the time of this research, only college D had retained that same role and department, with the same level of control and responsibilities. College G had retained the same Co's role and responsibilities, but without a specific KS department.

Six Cos and the one manager HKS coordinated a varied amount of provision for the whole of their college's KS. The Co in colleges A, D, B and G delivered KS for a certain number of hours (these include the two Co+HKS), as well as performing coordinators duties. Co+HKS from College G also taught other subjects and College C's Co did not teach KS but BS. Co+HKS from College E did not teach anything.

The Cos (HKS or not) carried out much (or all) of the organising of instructional systems (IS) involved with their KS provision. These duties largely depended on whether or not the responsibility for providing KS was in the hands of the vocational areas. In general, these IS duties included timetabling, monitoring quality, booking assessments and moderations etc, and liaising with the VCMs on what was happening in the curriculum areas. In Colleges A, B, C and E, where the VCMs were largely responsible for their own KS staffing, the Co allocated KS expertise (some KS Advanced Practitioners - KSAP) to the vocational areas to train, guide and advise their KS tutors.

Internal Verifier - as well as performing IV tasks, verifying assessed KS portfolios and organising external moderations, these staffs also held managerial posts within the colleges, which influenced the KS operations. The IV's roles also differed across the colleges. College A's IV worked very closely with the HKS on the IS, was a KS Advanced Practitioner (KSAP) and also delivered KS, whereas the IV in College E, had no teaching duties and was purely administration. The organisational, departmental

and classroom IS controlled, influenced and informed the second of the central concepts of Illuminative Evaluation (IE), the *learning milieu*[1].

4.1.2 The learning milieu

There were three components to the learning milieu (LM) within each college, which, although linked, were identifiably different. These are illustrated in Fig 4-1.

The first was the organisational component, which encompassed the cultural, social, institutional, and psychological variables of the colleges as whole enterprises, with all the controls, influences, restraints, responsibilities, problems and issues that involved. Parlett (1977, p.173) recognises that, *'we are profoundly affected by features of our education beyond the formal realm of the curriculum,'* considered as being, *'more vivid for context e.g. place, individuals and atmosphere, than for content.'* The organisational components of the LM were made up of a complex combination of connected and interrelated parts; the different and diverse mix of vocational and academic departments, each of which had their own cultural, social, institutional, and psychological variables.

The second component to the LM was the individual departments, which were different kinds of entities from the organisations in which they existed. Parlett (1977, pp.174-180) believes that it is important to study the milieu of departments because they provide, *'the human, social and intellectual milieu,'* in which tutors work and students study and acquire skills. Therefore, if looking at a student's educational medium, the, *'department is a good place to start,'* (Parlett, 1977, pp.174-180). The two types of departments included in this research were the KS departments and the vocational departments[2]. Their *'special features, marks of individuality and influence,'* according to Parlett (1977, pp.174-180) were revealed when looking at their personnel's attitudes, demonstrations of priorities and the key statements they made. The departments took their organisations' sets of official principles and values, interpreted them and then devised their own IS, which they subsequently implemented across their divisions and schools.

KS departments, as well as being new, in terms of their existence within FE, were unique as departments in two identifiable ways. Firstly, they did not operate in one

[1] The learning milieu is defined in this research as the 'whole' learning environment in each case-study, including the lesson's instructional systems, fabric of the building, the learning materials, and the participants.
[2] The vocational departments are included because this is where the vocational students 'belong'.

confined subject and vocational section; they functioned in every vocational and academic department across the colleges. Secondly, although operating within all other departments, KS were delivered, assessed, via a portfolio of evidence and examination, completely separately from those other subject areas. At the same time, the LM of the KS departments was greatly effected and reliant on the support and goodwill of these other departments, particularly the *vocational.* Added to this, although very different, both types of departments shared official college policies on KS and were expected to grant them the same level of value.

The information, understanding and knowledge gained from the organisational and departmental LM, informed the third component, that of the case-study classrooms. The classroom LM are the social-psychological and material environments in which students and teachers work together (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p. 63), where the two actors who are inseparable from their setting (Gordon, 1991, p. 371), experienced the *entirety* of the external control of government and employers, their agencies, the QCA, LSC, and NTOs and the cultural, social and psychological variables of the organisation and departmental IS and LM.

Everitt and Hardika (1996) maintain that the focus of IE is on evaluating practice in context and that it is an approach that recognises that tutors and students also personally affect the LM of the classroom. Everitt and Hardika (1996) point out that whilst tutors and students share the KS experience within the same LM, they may have had different values and expectations. These experiences were researched through the observations and interviews. Added to this Parlett and Hamilton (1972, p. 63), suggest that the experiences within the classroom LM were predisposed to faster, changeable possibilities than the organisations as a whole, including the different departments. The numerous factors within the classroom LM were more susceptible to their forms being arranged and re-arranged. Some of these changes were caused internally, such as student numbers falling and support staff leaving. Others were caused externally, as in changes being made to the NVQ KS requirements for MA students, half-way through their programme[1].

The dynamics of relationships, negotiations, positions and beliefs, as well as the responses of students to the way they were being taught, and the contents of their

[1] In College A, the modern apprenticeship (MA) course KS requirements changed over the 2004 Easter period, from being non-mandatory qualifications for progression to the next year and NVQ level, to being mandatory qualification requirements (Level 2 in three main KS), without which progression and subsequent qualification to full apprenticeship could not be attained.

lessons, were examined within each case-study. This was done over the period of an academic year because another chief focus of IE is to, *'connect changes in the LM with the student's intellectual experiences and then track what the consequences are in the intellect sphere from those experiences,'* (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p. 63).

Fig. 4-1 gives an illustration of the levels and flow of governance, control, regulation and influence over the LM in the case-study classrooms and how the three components of the LM are interconnected.

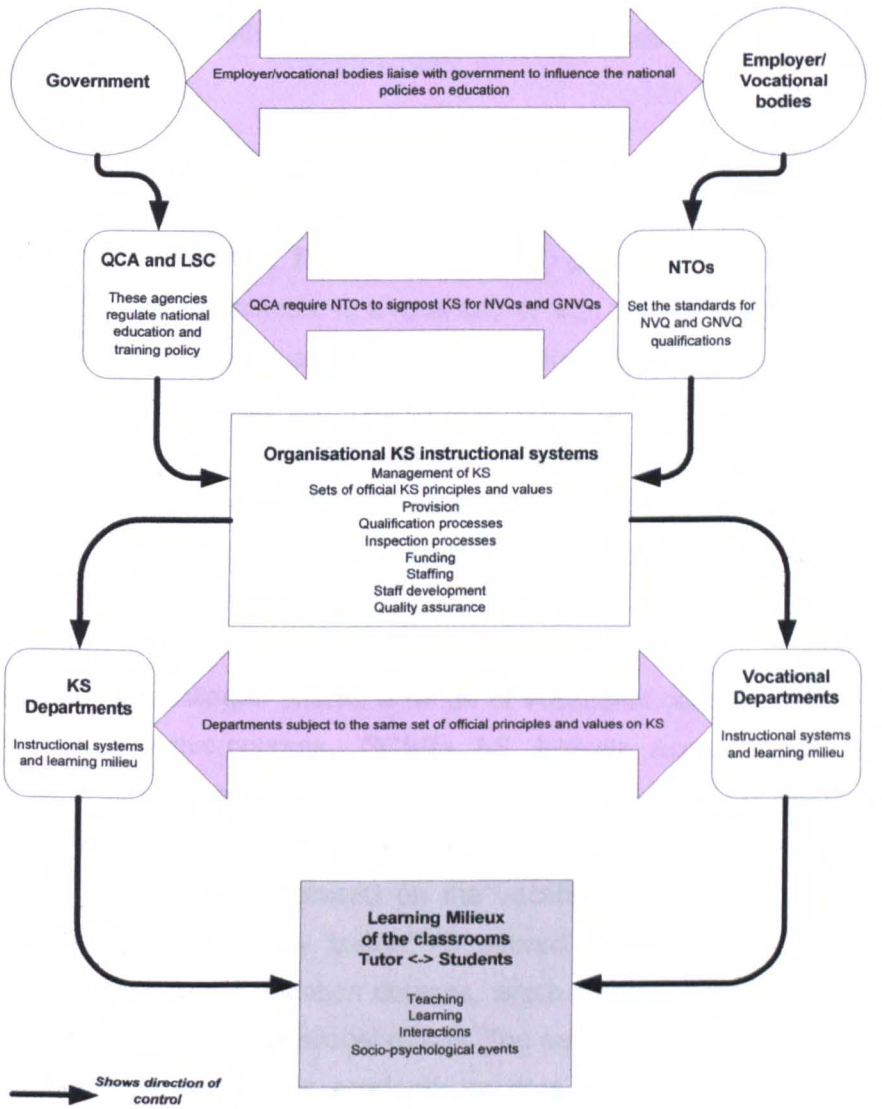

Figure 4-1 Interconnection of the three components of the LM

Figure 4-1 diagram illustrates how the flow of governance, control, regulation and influence begins with the government national educational policies and employer and vocational bodies who liaise with them to influence the KS policy. The agencies that

regulate and fund the implementation of these policies are the QCA and LSC. The QCA require the NTOs to signpost KS in their NVQs and GNVQs, the qualifications they set the standards for. These agencies have direct links to FE college management and supply the guidelines and information on KS national requirements, funding and targets. At organisation level, the IS were disseminated throughout the colleges via the KS and vocational departments, which were both subject to the same set of college official policies. It was each individual department's predisposition towards KS, their interpretation and practical employment of the organisations' IS that controlled, influenced and shaped the LM of the classrooms and the KS provided within them. As discussed, the variables within the classroom also influenced the LM.

4.2 Overview of all participating colleges

All of the organisations in the study were situated in the southern half of England, in different regions and counties. There were three city colleges in the study. One college was relatively new and positioned in a rural county with commercial and light industry. Another college was located in an 'old', large, industrial city (some heavy), and the third was in an historic city that had some light industry, and situated in a large rural county, popular with tourists. The other four colleges were located in towns of various sizes, with differing degrees of commerce and industry. Two had coastal sites. The colleges differed in size, from having one site to multiple sites and the intake of students across all organisations varied in number, gender and ethnicity.

Six out of the seven colleges offered a range of vocational courses - NVQs, GNVQs and BTEC and academic courses - GCSEs, AS, A-levels, Access to HE, and higher degrees. The provision and types of courses offered depended on the location (FE courses historically reflecting local employment) and size of the organisation (capacity and resources). Six colleges focused on the vocational route, although they were expanding their academic study bases. All offered KS with their entry level pre-vocational, vocational and foundation courses, which were designed to lead students on to either the academic or vocational routes. The seventh college was the sixth-form college, which mainly focused on academic courses. It did provide some vocational courses, and a limited number of KS programmes.

The seven participating colleges are referred to as Colleges A to G. Colleges A to F are traditional FE colleges and College G is the sixth form college[1]. As an aid to referencing, each college is colour coded to match those in the field log diary entries. These are:

College:-	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

Table 4-1 gives an overview of the colleges' profiles, colour coded to match the data recorded in the field log diary (fld).

Table 4-1 College profiles

College	Size (1000s)	Campus Sites	Location	Geography	Industry		Courses	
A	15	2	City	Metropolitan	Medium	Heavy	VET	Selective Academic
B	17	2	City	Semi-rural	Commercial	Light	VET	Selective Academic
C	13	1	Town	Semi-rural	Medium	Light	VET	Selective Academic
D	15	3	Town	Semi-rural	Medium	Light	VET	Selective Academic
E	10	2	Town	Coastal	Medium	Light	VET	Selective Academic
F	16	3	Town	Coastal	Medium	Light	VET	Selective Academic
G	1.5	1	City	Semi-rural	Light	Tourism	Selective VET	Academic

4.3 Portraits of the colleges

Colleges A and D were selected as representative of all seven colleges in the study. The portraits of the other five colleges are given in Appendix K. The portraits describe the instructional systems operating in the case-studies conducted within them and introduce the main participants in each case. Colleges A and D were chosen because their learning environments were very different, the KS management differed, KS tutors were unlike one another and their students came from contrasting vocational areas.

[1] Sixth Form Colleges are now part of the FE sector.

4.3.1 College A

General description

College A was situated in a metropolitan, medium to heavy industrial region and within the county's large City. It was a sizeable organisation and an established FE college serving a diverse mix of some 15,000 students. It operated across two main sites, which had recently merged, one within the City's centre, one outside of it, but still within the City boundaries. Both sites had a busy, pleasant, clean and organised feel about them. The college had plans and funding in place to improve its facilities and services.

Some of College A's vocational courses focussed on the region's industries and commerce, others on Access to HE courses. There was a strong tradition of apprenticeship and work-based training in the college. College A enjoyed successful, long-standing partnerships with both local and national companies and agencies that sent their apprentices there for vocational education and training (VET) and NVQ/GNVQ qualification.

Two case-studies were conducted in College A. The site where both cases were undertaken, stood on the outskirts of the City, in a large, well-furbished, purpose-built training centre within the college grounds. Student facilities were good, with large, clean, well maintained refectories and ample parking areas. The quality of the learning environment was of a relatively high standard. There were a number of rooms on the top floor of the training centre specifically allocated to the delivery of KS, some were well-equipped with new computers, and others set out as ordinary classrooms for AoN and Comms work. The IT room (Fig. 4.2), where most of the first case-study was conducted, was average in size with computer stations around its perimeter and a central isle. Once filled with students however, the room became a little claustrophobic and very hot in the summer. Each student had his or her own computer, but not a great deal of individual working space. The tutor worked at one end of a computer table.

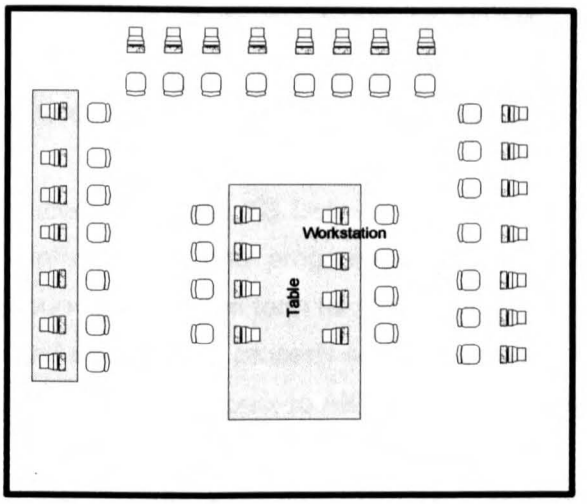

Figure 4-2 College A - Plan of KS Room

The KS computer room and its equipment were always in good order and appeared to be respected by students. The room in which the second case-study was carried out was not a computer room, but an ordinary classroom.

Overalls were barred from all KS rooms and college security was evident, with cameras positioned around the building. College rules (such as no smoking) were strictly enforced throughout. Very little swearing or bad behaviour was witnessed in the college corridors or student refectories and shops.

Staff facilities were very good. The college provided a separate staff restaurant in the main building that served freshly cooked food and could be used for relaxation.

The KS tutors' work area was shared with the vocational staff, but it was spacious and every tutor had his or her own desk, computer station and storage cabinets, which were of equal quality to those of the vocational tutors.

Organisation of KS

College A's skills provision, did not operate from one single department. There were three; KS, BS and Additional Support (AS), each managed by a different manager. Combining them was perceived by senior management to be complicated and impractical, largely because of the design of KS - their requirement for separately evidenced, logged off and cross-referenced work and separate tests and portfolios.

The head of the KS, referred to in this study as HKS/A, also managed other departments. HKS/A had been placed in charge of overseeing C2000 setting-up period and subsequently monitored KS quality assurance across all of the college's curricula.

In 2004, HKS/A introduced an Annual KS Delivery Plan (AKSDP), which outlines the following year's KS staff, delivery and programmes. The plan is presented to the college's Executive Group each autumn term for their approval and used to ensure that KS provision, people and delivery, are properly set in place and remain in place for the year, which had not always happened prior to AKSDP being introduced.

HKS/A line managed two coordinators, one from each site, who split their duties between them and dealt with the different issues that arose from each location. Prior to this recent development (in 2004), both coordinators had worked out of one site. They were supposed to liaise regularly across the two sites, but in practice this reportedly rarely happened.

The coordinator at the case-study site was *also* the Internal Verifier (IV), but to save confusion, in this study is referred to as IV/A. IV/A's job was to monitor standards across the college's courses, liaise with the external verifier (EV)[1] on KS moderations, reporting back to management on their outcomes and, as also a KSAP, support KS tutors in class, explaining technical terms and specifications. IV/A organised all KS staff resources.

College A's vocational curriculum managers, referred to in the study as VCM/A were responsible for their own KS provision, but could refer newly recruited part-time staff to the coordinators for extra training.

The vocational school in which the case-studies were conducted was Motor Vehicle Technology (MVT) and the vocational courses were in Vehicle Engineering (VE). The VCM heading this vocational department had a hands-off approach to KS. The day- to-day organisation, administration and implementation was carried out by the two members of KS staff working within the MVT School, a tutor, referred to as T/A1 and a vocational KS coordinator and tutor, referred to as Co+TA/2. The funding and exam data bases were administered by general administrative staff. Fig 4.3 shows the organisation of KS.

[1] External Verifier from the Awarding Body.

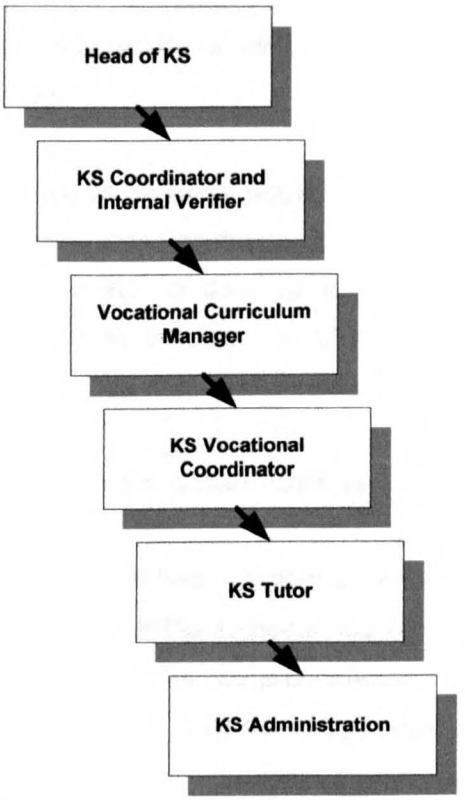

Figure 4-3 College A - Organisation

College A used the City and Guilds (C&G) Awarding Body (AB) for most of their vocational courses. However, the MVT department put the VE courses through a body called *The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI),* an Examinations Board, KS Regulatory authority *and* AB. The LCCI offered a package that linked the vocational NVQ qualifications with the KS, which reportedly made the process easier for the School of MVT. One reported benefit was that the LCCI had introduced the on-line testing earlier than other ABs. It was the job of IV/A to link up with the EVs from LCCI and ensure that the VE students' portfolios presented to them were of the required standard and had been internally verified.

Provision of KS

College A considered its KS provision to be in line with government policy. The level was pitched to that of the students' programmes i.e., foundation - L1, intermediate – L2, and advanced – L3. KS levels that students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades on college entry. Some re-sit GCSE courses were available (not visibly available in this study), but only for students who had left school with 'reasonable grades' (what these were considered to be was not stated). Students

entering with C- grade GCSEs were placed at L1 KS. Students with C+ GCSE grades were exempted from taking the L1 KS exams and a proxy qualification was claimed for them. However, in spite of good quality provision within College A, their KS results to date had reportedly been poor.

The college integrated their KS as much as possible into the students' main vocational coursework. With the vocational areas controlling their own KS provision, it was initially intended their VTs deliver the KS to their students alongside their main course. However, this did not happen in practice, as VTs had been reluctant to do so. Subsequently, VCMs had to engage non-VTs to implement their KS provision.

As reported by HKS/A, College A's departments rarely advertised a full-time, well salaried KS post, therefore most KS was delivered by part-time tutors. Recruiting sufficiently qualified tutors, full or part time, vocational or non vocational, who were able to deliver three demanding specialist KS subjects had proven very difficult. However, the MVT School, where the case-studies were conducted, had *two* full-time KS tutors (both of whom participated), which was considered by HKS/A as being unusual.

The college had no qualification requirements to become a KS tutor there. An *Open Study KS Certificate (*OSKSC*),* course was introduced in 2004, which the tutors were *expected* to attend. It was provided by a local university and run by IV/A. However, taking the course was voluntary and to date, it had experienced a low take-up (one person from each of the nine departments). Management encouraged tutors (VTs and KS) to do the course but offered no incentives, such as payment or paid time off work. Staff's timetables were arranged to accommodate attendance for those who did undertake the course however. Alongside their doing the OSKSC, tutors were also expected to qualify in KS up to L3 in all three main subjects.

College management felt they needed more government funding to adequately train their KS staff. They had taken up various external funding KS promotions, such as the Learning Skills Council (LSC) training of KS champions. However, funding lasted less than the year's programme and the college could not afford to continue sessions after that. Initiatives failed due to this lack of funding, according to HKS/A.

The KS staff

Apart from HKS/A, participating staff in the case-studies comprised two KS tutors, T/A1 and Co+T/A2 and IV/A.

All three personnel came from industrial or business backgrounds. IV/A joined the tutorial team over a decade earlier with a degree in economics and became the college's coordinator when C2000 came in. Co+T/A2 also worked at College A when KS were introduced and moved from delivering BS to KS in the MVT School. T/A1, a qualified engineer, moved from working as a technician (a vocational classroom assistant) in the MVT School, to the current KS tutor post.

Other college staff

Other staffs who participated in the study are listed in the data tables in Chapter 5.

T/A1 – the first case-study tutor

T/A1 was a KS lecturer for two schools, the School of Public Service Vehicles (PSV) and the School of Motor Vehicle Technology (MVT), delivering L1 and L2, IT, AoN and Comms to students from two 'streams', outlined in Fig. 4-4.

T/A1, a qualified FE teacher, was completing a degree in education during the case-study period. T/A1's day started at 7am and between 7 and 9am, he did his administrative duties, such as marking portfolios. This time was not paid work, but T/A1 maintained he could not function in his job without working these extra hours. T/A1 took on the post of MVT's KS lecturer when their KS tutor walked out of the job two years previously, having failed to keep any records or copies of the students' work. T/A1 subsequently had to sort the situation out, facing angry managing agents[1] who looked after the students *and* their employers.

T/A1 worked full-time, 37½ hours, 5 days a week as a Band 2 lecturer[2]. His classes began at 9am and he normally took three groups each day, although on Wednesdays he had an additional group from 5 - 7pm.

T/A1's experience of being a tutor had not been a particularly happy one. Some of this was due to a perceived lack of training from the MVT department when he joined it as a tutor, some due to bad relationships with the department and vocational colleagues, and the behaviour of his students, which at times had, reportedly, bordered on physical abuse. T/A1 was responsible for up to 200 students, many of which were early-

[1] Companies fund 'managing agents' to place (and finance) their apprentices in appropriate training and qualifying organisations, who then are answerable to them for a successful outcome for those students.
[2] The 'Bands' represented tutors' duties and salary levels.

leavers[1], across 3 year cohorts. TA/1 regarded this as a heavy workload, given that, after being screened[2], 79% were found to be in of need of learning support (LS), see Table. 4-2.

T/A1 saw himself as a facilitator and enabler more than a tutor. He tried to 'enable' his students to progress in their qualifications by assessing their ability and guiding them through the KS required for their portfolios. T/A1's students were achieving some success in their exams, success he put down to two factors (i) exams had been made available on-line through keyskills4u.com site, which meant he put the students in for L1 when he felt they were capable of it and (ii) exam preparation, where he had looked at individual problem areas, especially in AoN, and worked with them through examples and on-line practice papers. This enabled T/A1 to get a feeling of where each student was and identify areas of weakness.

That term, for the first time, T/A1 had been given in-class assistance with his students, from LS staff. This helped T/A1 better manage his groups in lessons, which in general, despite feeling abused at times, he maintained he did well.

When T/A1 first began delivering KS he was very enthusiastic about them, seeing their value as a second chance for students. However, T/A1 intimated he would leave his job because his negative experience of it had outweighed the positive, resulting in a serious loss of personal confidence.

Vehicle Service and Repair (VSR) course design and delivery

All courses ran from either the School of PSV or the School of MVT, and followed one of two qualification streams, as shown in Fig. 4-4 (1) employed and (2) unemployed.

Employed, constituted working part-time on block-release from employers or in an apprenticeship. The students in either school, from each stream had different qualification frameworks, even if following the same course.

[1] Early leavers meant students who left school without sitting any GCSEs.
[2] This 'screening' refers to a particular type of diagnostic test given to students on course entry to set their levels of KS and/or BS.

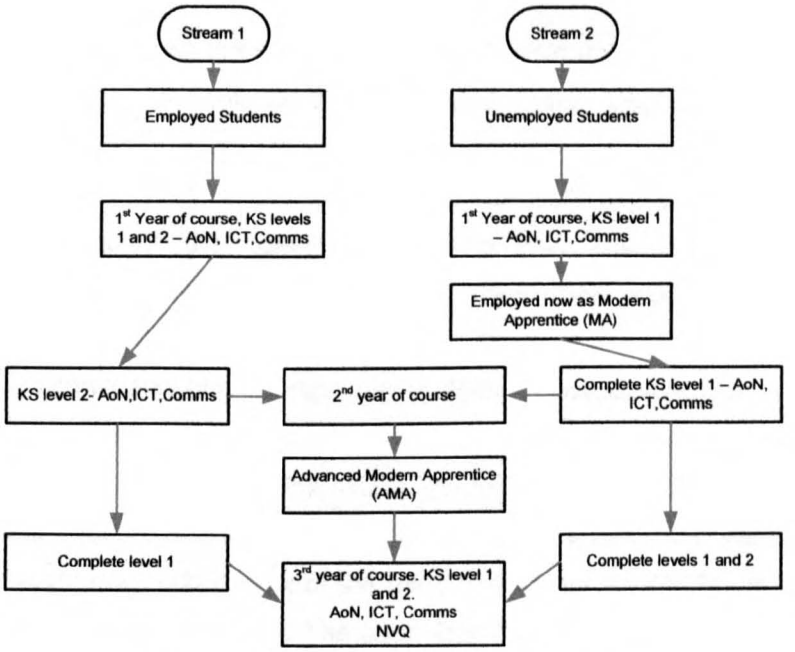

Figure 4-4 Qualification Frameworks

The three main KS were delivered in a formalised, combined way, which were set by the vocational area. The lessons were assignment-based and T/A1 referred to his lessons as 'Assignment Workshops', which as well as covering all the KS requirements, also included elements of the NVQ coursework, thus enabling the students to transfer the work they did for TA/1 into their course NVQ units. One such element was the Technical Certificate (TC), which was part of the vocational course and TA/1 did much of this work with his students.

An 'Assignment workshop welcome pack', was given to each student on college entry, describing what they would be doing over the following year. This formed the basis of T/A1s Scheme of Work. T/A1 developed the packs but they were quality-controlled and checked by the Co+T/A2, whose job it was to make sure that KS assignments met the college criteria.

The operation of NVQ programmes that ran across the MVT School had changed from the previous year, causing problems for both students and tutors. Students, who had initially been allowed three years to complete their L1 and L2 KS, had the time reduced to one year. All new students had to now complete KS in their first year of attendance, which was putting pressure on T/A1 to qualify the *existing* students *and* ensure the new intake did the work required to qualify in year one.

T/A1's students

T/A1's students were from the school of MVT in stream 2 (unemployed). They were a group of 10 first year students on a VSR course, which, after three years, led to an NVQ at L3. There were no course entry requirements (no GCSEs) and students were working at L1 AoN, IT and Comms. The group were *not* classed as foundation *apprentice* students. If they gained L1 during their first year and moved into employment through the college agencies, they then would be classified as apprentices. Twelve students had initially joined the course in September 2004, three had been withdrawn and one started later in 2005. Students attended college for 2½ days per week, which was classed as full-time study. 1½ hours was allocated to KS on what was called the *theory day*. The rest of the time they attended practical or theory lessons in their vocational area. Students' average age was 17 and they had all come to college straight from school. Six of the ten students had C- GCSE grades therefore needed to do both parts of the KS. The other four C+ students were required to do the portfolio only. Table 4-2 shows the screening results for literacy and numeracy of these six students, showing that they had all *failed* these tests. The table did not indicate which students, if any, were receiving LS.

Table 4-2 Screening results

Student no.	Literacy score out of 45 *Pass mark was 28*	Numeracy score out of 45 *Pass mark was 28*
1	18	9
2	21	11
3	17	9
4	21	13
5	17	13
6	19	10

For VSR students, the subject and KS level were mandatory and linked, through the LCCI, with the MAs and Advanced Modern Apprentices' (AMAs) NVQs and NQF. They could *not* qualify in their vocational course without achieving the KS. Students were allocated 20 hours in the first two years of their course to complete L1 and L2.

Co+T/A2 – the second case-study

Co+T/A2 was the KS vocational coordinator in the MVT/VE department. He also delivered AoN, Comms and IT at all levels to PSV, NVQ students on MA and AMA courses (years 1, 2, and 3).

Co+T/A2 had been an engineer and consultant to industry before joining the college BS team, teaching literacy and number to students entering the retail trade. During this time, Co+T/A2 acquired a 7306 (NVQ teaching award), and became a trainer. In 2000, after moving to the KS team, he qualified in a KS Delivery Award (coaching and tutoring) at L3. He later became the KS vocational coordinator, a post requiring him to deliver KS as well.

Co+T/A2 was technically T/A1's line manager, although it was not clear what the extent of his authority was over T/A1, as both tutors appeared to work completely independently of one another.

Co+T/A2 was near retirement and at the beginning of the year, reportedly *'loved'* his job. He had 240 students at that time, but predicted their numbers would fall to around 160 per year, following changes to the delivery of KS (as students completing KS). His students were allocated 20 hours to complete KS across the first two years of their course (1, 2, and 3, altogether). Co+T/A2 also felt the effects from the changes to the NVQ programme's KS in the MVT School. He initially welcomed them, but as the year progressed and he experienced problems with student resistance to the changes, he felt physical pressure himself with the extra work-load the changes entailed. His stress levels increased and his health deteriorated over the year. At one point, Co+T/A2 complained of having hundreds of portfolios to assess and not enough time in which to do this task.

Co+T/A2 managed to retain good relationships with his students however, although he got frustrated at their lack of ability to obtain and retain information in terms of what they had to do.

PSV course design and delivery

Co+T/A2, unlike T/A1, had inherited assignments he used with his groups from previous tutors, who had in fact been VTs. They had already developed various work sheets from units in their vocational assignments. With some slight modifications, Co+T/A2 used them to integrate some KS with sections of the NVQ courses. Two assignments in particular were used as evidence towards the PSV Technical Certificate, *Health and Safety* and *Equipment*, although only with some aspects of Comms and IT. Course assignments were not used for AoN. Co+T/A2 had plans to look at this in the near future and find ways to integrate AoN, if possible, with existing

NVQ units. Separate worksheets and assignments were currently used to evidence AoN.

Co+T/A2 referred to what he was delivering as 'essential skills' for trade, not KS. Instructional sessions were conducted in main classrooms where students were given their assignments in joint tutorials. Here, the work and specifications were outlined, issues discussed and questions taken from students. They were then sent off to complete their own portfolios. Co+T/A2 would help individual students on a one-to-one basis if they struggled, but the overall responsibility for completing their work was placed with them.

Co+T/A2's students

The students followed the same two streams of qualification framework as T/A1's students. Unlike TA/1's students, they were already MAs attached to employers. This was however, still their first year of a PSV course, attending college on a block-release system[1]. During these weeks, students attended PSV theory and KS sessions.

The students' GCSE grades ranged from C- to C+. They were required to gain L1 (or proxy) during the first year alongside the NVQ L1 of their vocational course. As MAs, they were answerable to their managing agents or employers, as well as to Co+T/A2 for completing KS work. Students understood they could not move to Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (AMA) status unless they qualified in KS.

[1] A block-release system means that they attended College A in blocks of four weeks, three times a year.

4.3.2 College D

General description

College D was a medium sized college, based across three sites. Two sites were situated within a large town, the third, in a smaller town. The area was semi-rural, with light to medium-sized industries.

College D provided KS in programmes ranging from entry, foundation, vocational and academic (higher degree), to a student base of around 15,000. The college had established partnerships with external organisations and participated in many government schemes, such as Learndirect, work-force development, and adult and distant learning. It had an apprenticeship scheme, which although largely business-orientated, also provided schemes for some light industrial vocations.

College D was a lively, pro-active organisation with a welcoming, pleasant and very attractive atmosphere. Student facilities were good. A large refectory served freshly cooked food and there was ample parking. The learning environment was very pleasant. Throughout the college, there was a sense of order and community and students appeared respectful.

Two case-studies were conducted in College D. Both cases were carried out in one of the town sites and within a very large computer room (fig. 4.5) containing rows of computer stations and a separate area of desks where students could work away from them when required. It was a comfortable, light room, although the noise levels were often high. Because of its size, the room was used by two or even three different groups and their tutors, simultaneously. This arrangement appeared to cause none of the tutors or students any problems however.

The equipment and room was in good order and seemingly respected by the students using it, who usually left it tidy when they vacated it.

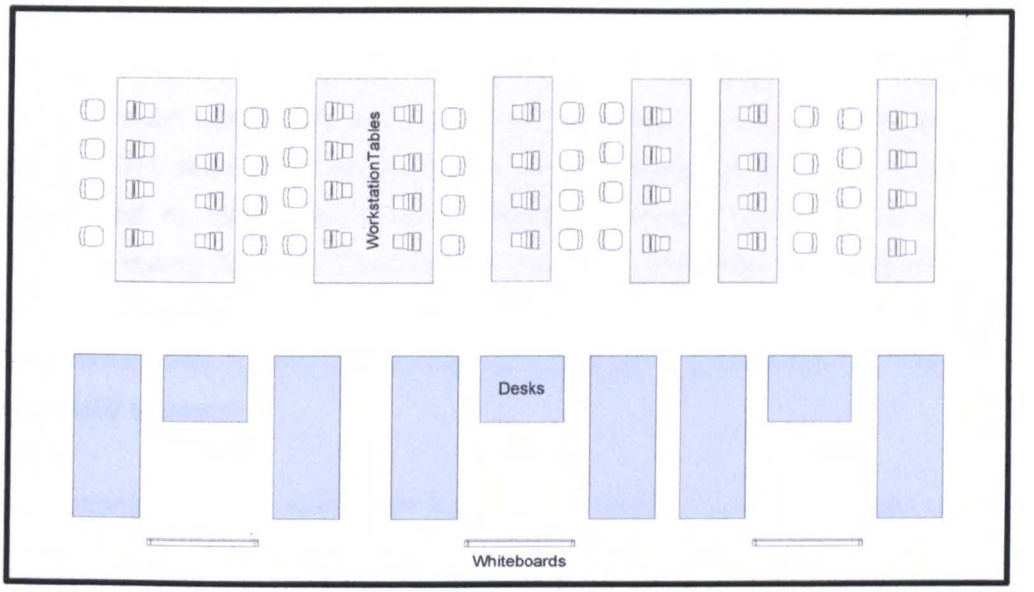

Figure 4-5 College D - Plan of KS Room

College D's security was not highly visible, but there was some on site. No swearing or bad behaviour was witnessed in the corridors or student refectory, which at times, was very noisy. The college provided for a substantial number of students with learning disabilities.

Staff facilities were also very good. College D made available a separate subsidised staff restaurant in the main building, which served freshly-cooked food and could be used for relaxation. It was well used and appreciated by the staff.

The main case-study tutor was agency staff and did not have a working desk at her disposal, but as she never worked at the college, she did not consider this a problem. The second tutor worked from his coordinator's office, which was quite small and felt under-sized and over-populated with two other staff members sharing it. The room housed all of College D's KS resource materials, which, because of lack of space, were stacked along the floor, adding to the room's sense of overcrowding.

Organisation of KS

The KS were not under the control of any individual curriculum areas. The coordinator acted as the overall HKS, and also delivered some KS. This member of staff, referred to as Co+HKS+T/D2, the second case-study tutor, ran the KS provision across the whole college, including engaging tutors and supplying the vocational areas with KS staff. LS and BS provision also went through Co+HKS+T/D2, whose line manager was the college principal.

Due to a reported lack of available KS tutors, College D engaged agency staff to fill its posts. The main case-study tutor, T/D1 was one such member. At the start of the research, T/D1 delivered IT and AoN to the Hairdressing group and the students' VT was required to build the students' portfolios, drawing the evidence from their coursework during the year. Towards the end of the academic year however, with no portfolios having been completed by the students with their VTs, T/D1 was asked to build portfolios very quickly for submission, which she attempted to do. This exercise was partially successful.

The vocational school in which both the main and second case-studies were conducted was Hair and Beauty (HB). The main case-study group was Hairdressing GNVQ L1, and the second study was Hair, Beauty and Media (HBM) GNVQ L2 - similar programmes, but with different VTs, different entry requirements and different KS tutors. T/D1 delivered IT and AoN L1 to the Hairdressing GNVQ group and Co+HKS+T/D2 delivered IT L2 to the HBM GNVQ group. KS were not mandatory for either group's vocational qualification at L1, but were in their vocational NQF. College D made KS mandatory components of both courses.

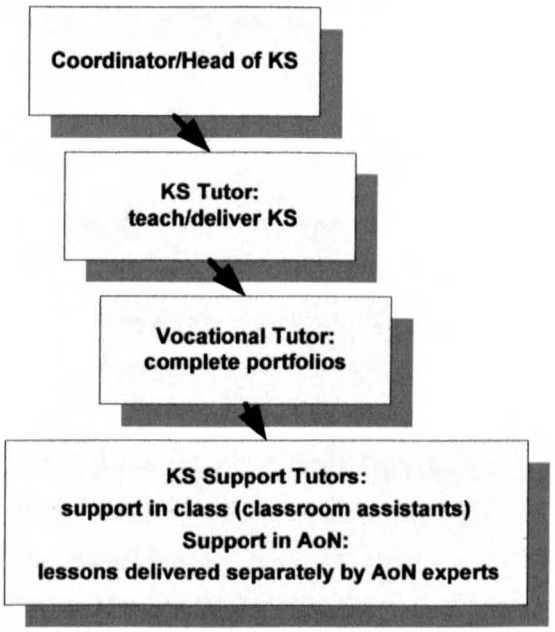

Figure 4-6 College D - Organisation

All students were given diagnostic tests on entry to College D and reportedly, a second and third diagnostic test, as they progressed with their skills-learning. VTs had sight of the test results and were given the opportunity to disagree as to the level of KS that their students were put on to, including if they should do BS instead. This was part of

College D's individual assessment regime for their students. However, T/D1 had not been given this information nor seen the results of these tests, and did not make decisions regarding the KS or BS levels of her Hairdressing students.

According to management, vocational and KS staff made contact twice a term to discuss and plan the students' KS, although it was not clear if this was actually the case, certainly not with T/D1, who maintained having a limited knowledge of her students' vocational tutors, with whom she did not communicate.

Although using agency staff to fill some of their empty posts, most KS staffs were part-time. Co+HKS+T/D2 maintained that College D required more permanent, qualified, experienced tutors in KS to improve achievement rates, but these were difficult to find. Of the tutors who delivered KS across the college curriculum, few were VTs. There were no qualification requirements to become a KS tutor, but they were expected to have an equivalent competency and *show* an ability to operate up to L3, although it was not clear what that comprised.

College D used the Edexcel AB for their qualification. It was the job of Co+HKS+T/D2 to link up with the EVs from Edexcel and ensure that students' portfolios presented for moderation were of the required standard and had been assessed and internally verified.

Provision of KS

The provision of KS was considered by Co+HKS+T/D2 to be in line with government policy. The KS level was pitched to that of the students' programmes, i.e., foundation – L1, intermediate – L2, and advanced – L3. The college provided three main KS, but no WKS. KS levels that students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades on college entry plus results from the diagnostic tests. Students entering with C- GCSE grades were automatically placed at L1. Students with C+ GCSE grades were *not automatically* placed at L2, but were exempted from taking L1 exams (but completed a portfolio) and a proxy qualification was claimed for them at L1. Some C+ students were entered at L2, depending on diagnostic test results.

A specialist maths support tutor (ST) was made available to provide T/D1's students with extra tuition in AoN. This was given in separate one-hour AoN sessions on a different day to other KS lessons and T/D1 assisted in these.

The KS staff

Those who participated in the research were T/D1 and Co+HKS+T/D2, T/D1's classroom ST, the AoN, ST tutor, and another general KS tutor.

T/D1 had a vocational and academic background and had taught BS before joining the teachers' agency and being contracted to work at College D. Co+HKS+T/D2's background was academic.

T/D1 – first case-study tutor

T/D1 was a part-time agency KS tutor, paid on an hourly basis by College D. T/D1 chose to be an agency tutor to remain in control of her working hours, because agency staff were not expected to do any KS administration, such as preparations, assessments etc, although T/D1 designed all of her own KS worksheets and assignments.

T/D1 delivered AoN and IT at L1 only to the HB curriculum area, having joined College D three years earlier with a business, vocational and educational background. She was a qualified BS tutor in literacy and numeracy and took IT courses on joining the college.

T/D1 believed KS to be a valid enterprise for students to do, although she found that many of her own students could not do any basic maths and half of them had poor language skills. This was considered to be a problem. T/D1 only had 1½ hours per week in which to teach this basic knowledge and TD/1 found this was insufficient time in which to do so effectively.

T/D1 enjoyed her job and got on well with her students and other KS staff, but had very little contact with the Hairdressing VTs, who were sited at a different location. Given students' poor underpinning knowledge, T/D1 had issues with some of the expectations placed on her as a tutor from the college and with the KS2000 curriculum.

Hairdressing course design and delivery

The Hairdressing GNVQ L1 course was allocated one and a half hours of IT and AoN at L1 per week, both delivered by T/D1, who combined the two subjects in her sessions. Although T/D1 used vocational language and terminology to add relevance to the KS, they were delivered in separate lessons and were separately assessed and examined. T/D1 was responsible for delivering the underpinning knowledge, but the

Hairdressing VTs, as stated earlier, were responsible for compiling the portfolios. One extra hour of AoN was provided by a maths specialist ST to some of T/D1's students who needed help.

T/D1 used worksheets and assignments she designed herself because they produced information *she* required. The KS classes were made mandatory by the college for all hairdressing students, but the Hairdressing GNVQ L1 qualification was not dependent on a KS pass. T/D1 had some problems with her students' VTs not doing the required KS portfolio building.

When the study began, many of T/D1's lessons had an ST, who attended more sporadically as time went on, finally not attending at all. This was partly due to a significant drop in student numbers and partly because of limited availability of support.

T/D1's students

The Hairdressing group originally comprised 13 students, but this number fell over the year to around seven. Students attended college for five days per week for a one and a half hour period per week to do IT and AoN and the rest for Hairdressing theory and practice at another site.

Students' average age was 16 and they had all come to college straight from school. The majority had no or C- GCSE qualifications. Some students in the group received extra support in AoN (delivered separately), and a small number received other one-to-one support outside of KS lessons

Co+HKS+T/D2 - the second case-study tutor

Co+HKS+T/D2 had been with College D as a Co+HKS and tutor, for 4½ years, since the inception of C2000, but had been involved with KS longer, having been a part-time Coordinator before entering full-time KS middle-management. He came from an academic background as was highly qualified in IT.

Co+HKS+T/D2 began the year enjoying his job and appeared very energetic, efficient, and thorough in his approach. He was in total agreement with the principles of KS and their being given to school leavers who needed to improve and acquire qualifications for their chosen vocations. Co+HKS+T/D2 had some issues with students' general education however and with the government's expectations of attainment. By the end

of the field work period, Co+HKST/D2 was experiencing some problems with the college and therefore his job.

Hair, Beauty and Media (HBM) course design and delivery

The HBM GNVQ L2 had course entry requirements of 2 GCSEs at C+ grades (in any subject). Whilst the majority of students had these grades, students without a maths and/or English grade C+ GCSE were required to do the L1 in Comms and AoN. All HBM students did IT at L1 or L2.

1½ hours of IT and AoN were allocated per week to the HBM students. The IT was delivered by Co+HKS+T/D2, who used worksheets to facilitate learning and produce the evidence for the IT portfolios. AoN was delivered separately by other KS tutors.

As with the main case-study, the KS was delivered away from the vocational course area in separate lessons and were separately assessed and examined.

The KS were made mandatory by the college for all HBM students, but the HBM GNVQ L2 qualification was *not* dependent on a KS pass.

Co+HKS+T/D2's students

The HBM group comprised 15 students, a number that remained fairly static throughout the year. Students attended college for five days per week. 1½ hours was allocated for KS, the rest of the week was HBM theory and practice at another college site.

Students' average age was 17. The group was a mixture of some who had joined college straight from school and others who had attended college the previous year on different courses and this was their second year. The group had varied GCSE grades. The KS were organised on an individual basis with this group, so they were working at different levels within the IT and AoN lessons.

4.3.3 Validating the instructional systems and learning milieux

The information and content in these portraits were validated by participating members of the management group in the colleges or, where this was not possible, by the main case-study tutors. A copy of the completed portraits was presented to the participants for them to comment on, correct, and corroborate. Any alternations were then made.

4.4 Summary

This chapter began with re-visiting the aims of the study and, in an outline of an illuminative evaluation framework, re-iterated why that approach was adopted for use in this study. The two central concepts, the instructional system and the learning milieu of the eleven case-studies conducted in this research were presented separately.

A description of the three dimensions of instructional systems operating in each college was given - those within the organisations, departments and the classrooms. There followed a description of the three components to the learning milieu - organisational, departmental and of the classrooms. An illustration is given showing the flow of governance, control, legislation and influence into the classroom learning milieu.

An overview of the participating organisations was presented, showing the general characteristics of each college, followed by individual portraits of two significantly different types of college and the case-studies that were carried out within them. The portraits described the three components of instructional systems and learning milieux of each case.

Having discussed the cases-studies and described the environments in which they were functioning, the next chapter gives a full account of these data collected through the interviews and observations, why they were gathered and how these were dealt with.

5 Data collected from interviews and observations and how these were dealt with

This chapter begins with a reference to the background information provided by the document and literature reviews. There follows an outline of the seven participating colleges and a presentation of two tables, one showing the number of case-studies and methods of collections of data conducted in each college, and the other, of the respondent groups from each case. There is then a description of these data summary tables which list all collections across every case-study and this is followed with an overview of the research participants.

The next section sets out in detail the manner in which interview data from each respondent group were handled. Observation data and how these were dealt with is explained in the following section. A description of the analytical log and how it was used for recording these data collections is given next. Finally, there is an explanation of how the college information on KS achievements was handled, and a section on the reliability and validity of these research data.

5.1 Data from documents and literature

The literature was considered to be part of these data collection procedures (Dick, 2005). Using some aspects of a grounded theory approach enabled the investigation to compare *literature* to emerging theory in the same way that it compared *data* to the emerging theory, a method adopted because of anticipated changes in KS2000 and also to help make sense of these data gathered during the study, for example, conflicting student collections of data from the interviews and observations.

5.2 Outline of data collected from the seven host colleges

Case-studies were conducted in seven colleges. In Colleges A, B, C and D, an additional case-study was also carried out, either to present a balanced picture of the organisation or to safeguard the research where there was concern that the first case-study tutors might leave before the fieldwork was completed. The second case-studies in Colleges A, B and D had different tutors than the primary cases. In College C, the same two tutors were in both case-studies[1]. The second cases in Colleges A and D were from the same vocational areas as the first cases, but in Colleges B and C, the second case-studies were from different vocational areas entirely. Due to limitations of time, fewer observations were carried out in some second studies, but the participants were interviewed.

Fig. 5-1 gives a simple illustration of the case-studies conducted in every college and the methods of data collections used in each. The case-studies are labelled as A1, B1, etc., for first case-studies and A2, B2 etc., for second case-studies. As the figure shows, observations and interviews were carried out in all seven colleges, participation observations in five Colleges A, B, C, D and G.

[1] In College C, the two tutors partnered each other in both case-studies. One tutor delivered Comms and the other delivered AoN to the same sets of students.

Figure 5-1 Case-studies and methods of collecting data by college

Fig. 5-2 gives an overall picture of participating personnel from across all seven colleges. They include heads of KS, vocational curriculum managers, KS administrators, internal verifiers, coordinator/head KS and coordinators, KS tutors, students, vocational tutors, other KS and BS tutors and support tutors.

There were different levels of management across Colleges A, C, E, and F, responsible for their college's KS provision, either fully or partially. In the study, this group of participants are referred to as 'Head of KS'. In Colleges D and G, it was coordinators who fulfilled that role and they are referred to as coordinator/head KS. There was no designated Head of KS in College B.

KS tutors in Colleges B, C and F were classed as vocational KS coordinators for the vocational areas they served, but to avoid confusion, as their primary role in the study was as a case-study tutor, they are classed as KS tutors. In Colleges D and G the respondents were both coordinator/head of KS *and* case-study tutors; therefore their data are treated in the analysis in both capacities.

Vocational curriculum managers from Colleges A, B and F and vocational tutors from Colleges A, B, D, E and F participated. Other general KS and BS tutors, support tutors and administrational staff also took part in the study. A small number of 2nd and 3rd year students were interviewed to give added background information about tutors. Altogether, 139 individuals were interviewed from across the seven colleges.

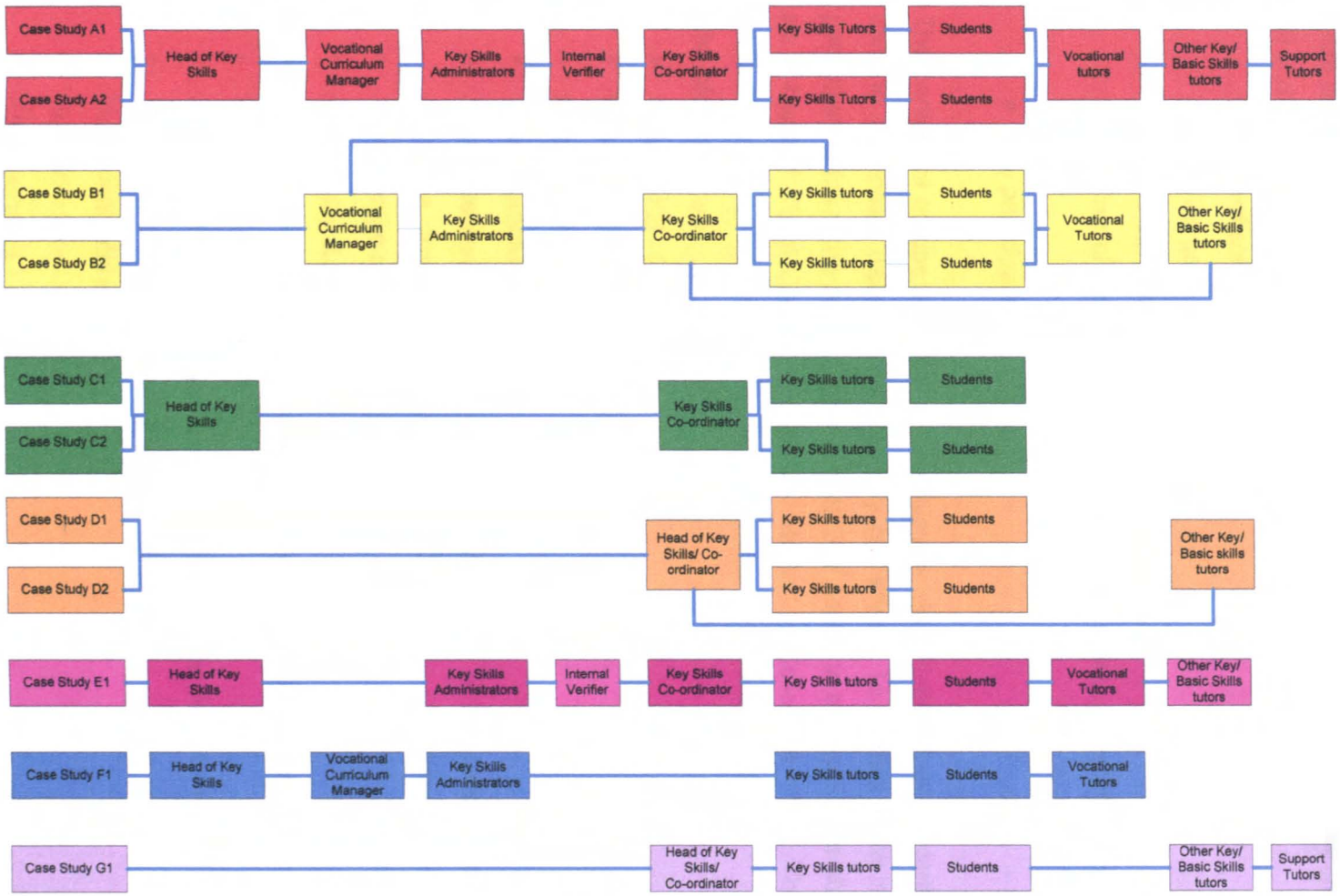

Figure 5-2 Participants by college

5.3 Data summary tables

There are seven colour-coded data summary tables presented in Appendix L. Each table lists all collections of data made from each case-study within every college (A to G) and are set out in order of:

- date of collection
- field log page entry (flp)
- method of data collection
- number of data items - separate pieces of data collected in the session or day
- the participants.

The participant groups are listed in the tables by abbreviations that will continue to be used in this thesis (listed in the Glossary of Terms[1]). To identify which college the participant is from, the college letter of A to G is added to the *end* of the abbreviation, as in head of KS at College A = HKS/A, student at College A = S/A. The same is applied to all other informants with the exceptions of tutors (see below).

The informants are:

- Head of KS - (HKS/*)
- Coordinator/head of KS - (Co+HKS/*)
- Coordinator - (Co/*)
- Coordinator/tutor - (Co+T/*)
- First case-study KS tutors - (T/*1) – the letters of the college are put in the middle i.e., the first case-study tutor at College A is T/A1, the second, T/A2 etc.
- Second case-study tutors - (T/*2)
- Case-study students - (St/*)
- General KS students – these are identified by year i.e., 2nd year St/*
- General KS tutors - (KST/*)
- Internal verifiers - (IV/*) and coordinator internal verifiers-(Co+IV/*)
- Vocational curriculum managers - (VCM/*)
- Vocational tutors - (VT/*)
- Support tutors - (ST/*)
- Administrators - (AD/*)

[1] The abbreviations for each informant group are listed in the Glossary of Terms, under the section of acronyms specific to the thesis, not officially used.

The star (*) represents the college suffix A to G.

5.3.1 Overview of the research participants

As discussed in Chapter 3, KS tutors and their cohorts of students were the main focus for the research. However, whilst tutors had influence and some control over the classrooms' learning milieu (LM), overall power came from the organisations and departments in which they operated. For this reason, the scope of the study included senior and middle management (both KS and vocational), who had institutional responsibility for KS2000, and department managers, Cos and IVs, who had day-to-day responsibilities for KS. Administrators were included because they supplied operational information. Data from these personnel provided information of each college's instructional systems (IS), how they operated, and the people and college policies that drove them. Their accounts helped set the scene for these data collections from the case-studies by illuminating organisational cultures and their influence on the classroom LM.

VTs were included in the study because they influenced the IS and classroom LM through their direct contact with the students. STs and other specialist staff influenced the LM to varying degrees. As co-workers with KS tutors, their data added description to the LM. A small number of interviews were conducted with general KS tutors working within the same departments as the case-study tutors and their data were used as additional support information.

Figure 5-3 illustrates the influence of each group on the IS and classroom LM.

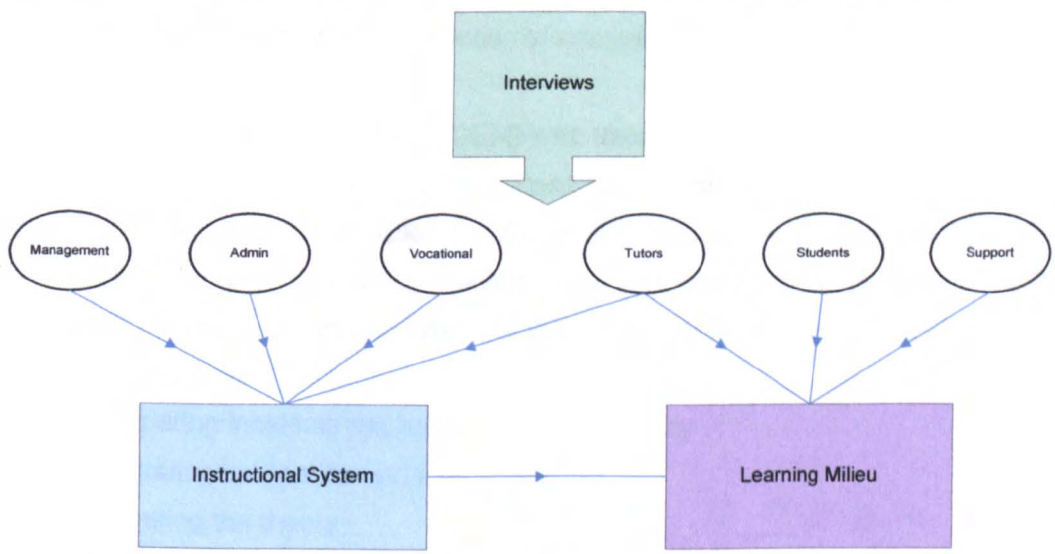

Figure 5-3 Influence of each group of participants on the IS and LM

5.4 How interview data were handled

Interview data comprised the recordings of interviews carried out, written recordings of interviews and notes made in the field log diary and analytical log.

Every recorded interview was transcribed by hand and, along with hand-written collections of data, filed under the appropriate college and group, both electronically and in paper form. Some examples of transcriptions are in Appendix M. Data from each case-study were dealt with first case by case, then cross-case, over all the colleges.

The methods to be employed for analysing these data were considered at this point. The general guidelines of Miles and Huberman (1994), for early activities of conceptualising qualitative data analysis, as recommended by Robson (2002, p. 473), were used to devise interview analysis frameworks, because of their usefulness for case-studies that were, *'neither exclusively ethnographic nor grounded theory studies.'* These frameworks had been created in the analytical log to record the activities carried out *during* the field work from which the grounded theories were developed. The frameworks comprised:-

- session summary sheets from field log diary and analytical log entries
- preparing interim summary sheets mid-way through the research
- devising early 'first' categories from which the umbrella categories were to be created

Chosen categories reflected patterns and themes as they emerged from these data and became, *'the basis for the organisation and conceptualising of that data and therefore a crucial element in the process of analysis,'* (Dey, 1993, p.112).

The constant comparative method (CCM) was used to form finer, more discriminatory categories capable of being used for cross-case analysis and exploring levels of generality. CCM, according to Boeije (2002, p. 391), together with theoretical sampling, constitutes the core of qualitative analysis in the grounded theory approach. The four stages of CCM, as described by Glaser and Strauss (cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 339), were followed:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory
4. Writing the theory.

The interview process was conducted in eight stages. Firstly, informants were separated into six respondent groups that reflected the main purpose for collecting their data i.e., acquire information on instructional systems (IS). The VCMs, although senior management, were placed with VTs in a vocational grouping, as their interest and influence on the IS and LM was believed to be more aligned to the VTs.
The six groups were:

1. KS management - HKS, Co+HKS, IVs and Cos
2. KS tutors
3. students
4. vocational - VCMs and VTs
5. support and specialist tutors (ST)
6. administration (Ad)

Using a category analysis technique (Robson, 2002), every *group's* data set were visually inspected. Significant responses and statements that related to the case-studies and informed the study questions were looked for and identified by hand-marking. A number of high-level umbrella categories were then selected that represented responses and themes as they emerged from within each group's collection of data in every college. These umbrella categories were then letter-coded.

College data display tables were devised (example in Appendix N) to process the information (Fetterman, 1989, p. 88). Data in the umbrella categories were searched further to identify gathered facts relating to the *instructional systems* (IS) of each of the case-studies. This information, which largely came from these data collected from management, was recorded on separate IS tables (example in Appendix N) and used to inform the portraits written on each college and the case-studies conducted within them. Other recorded information employed in these portraits was notes and diagrams from the field log entries and analytical log.

Having reduced these data, each *collective* group's data were separated at this point, ready to be categorised and analysed differently, depending on what the specific aims of the interviews were and what types of data had been collected e.g., KS tutors' data were collected for a different reason than that from VTs.

Category breakdown sheets were devised (example in Appendix O) for every group within each case-study, headed by the umbrella categories. Each group's collection of

data were then searched and evaluated to identify significant and specific statements made by individuals, common themes across the members of groups and emerging patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 9) that related to the study questions.

Sub-categories of collections of data were identified, formed and recoded on the category breakdown sheets. These data were evaluated for the *individual* case-study's LM, some of which was included in the separate portraits of each college.

The next stage looked at these data *across* every college. The groups now included the groupings from every organisation. The umbrella categories, which covered the areas representing reoccurring features (Robson, 2002, p. 459) and responses from *all* participating groups across the colleges were recorded on *cross-college category breakdown sheets* devised to record these collective data (example in Appendix O). Searches were conducted to identify and record common themes, statements, beliefs, experiences, patterns, and issues (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 9) over all case-studies which were recorded in the sub-categories. This exercise was the process of generalisation of the collection of data.

Qualitative analyses of these data were made, one on each individual case-study and another of collective data across all case-studies. These are shown in Chapter 6.

5.4.1 The KS management group

This group comprised HKS, Co+HKS, Co and IV. These data provided knowledge of their organisation's general structure, size, provision, partnerships with employers and detailed description of their KS provision and instructional systems (IS). Managements' personal accounts illuminated issues surrounding the IS, and those from Co and IVs were used to focus in on certain aspects of the IS. As these data across all case-studies were evaluated, some generalisations were made from them which helped forge links with formalised bodies of knowledge (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 9) and build more theory. A fuller description of the roles and responsibilities of each section of staff within the management group is in Appendix P.

How the management groups' data were handled

The umbrella categories were recorded on tables of data for every college and letter-coded.

1	Organisation of KS	***MO***	managements' organisation of KS
2	Overview of the KS policy	***MP***	managers' views on KS2000
3	Understanding of KS	***MU***	managers views of what KS are
4	Acceptance of KS College wide	***MA***	managers' views on how KS are accepted college-wide
5	KS capability	***MC***	managers' views on students' capacity to do KS

Information which described the IS, as discussed earlier, was identified, recorded on tables of data and used to inform the college portraits in Chapter 4. These data came largely from the MO and MP umbrella categories.

From each of the umbrella categories, sub-categories emerged, which were recorded on category breakdown sheets and then coded.

	1 Organisation of KS	***MO***	
i	Policies, systems and operations	*MO/1*	
ii	Roles, duties and responsibilities	*MO/2*	
iii	Managing the KS provision	*MO/3*	
iv	Qualification systems	*MO/4*	complicated - unfair - fair - distorts national statistics
v	Achievements	*MO/5*	successful outcomes - unsuccessful outcomes -sufficient resources to achieve the government's directives - insufficient resources to achieve the government's directives.
	2 Overview of the KS2000	***MP***	
i	The concept of KS	*MP/1*	is good - is not good
ii	The efficacy of KS	*MP/2*	is complex - dependent on many factors - produces results - does not produce the results.
	3 Managements' understanding of KS	***MU***	
i	The purpose of KS learning	*MU/1*	KS means remedial - developed for the less able students - for those who did not pass their GCSEs - for all students
ii	The KS focus	*MU/2*	the vocational students - all students

	4 Acceptance of KS college wide	***MA***	
i	Culture conflicts	*MA/1*	across all of the college - from the vocational areas
ii	Resistance to KS	*MA/2*	across all of the college - from the vocational areas
iii	Changing peoples' minds	*MA/3*	staff - students
	5 KS capability	***MC***	
i	Levels of students' education	*MC/1*	students have sufficient levels of education to do KS - students have insufficient levels of education to do KS
ii	Levels of tutors' education	*MC/2*	KS tutors have sufficient levels of education to do KS - KS tutors have insufficient levels of education to do KS - VTs have sufficient levels of education to do KS - VTs have insufficient levels of education to do KS

An example of a completed category breakdown sheet is given in Appendix O.

The management groups' collection of data informed theoretical arguments drawn from the main issues isolated in the sub-categories, analytical log, document scrutiny and literature and are presented in Chapter 6.

5.4.2 Data from the case-study tutors

Data from across all phases of interviews with tutors were handled collectively. Informational collections of data were used to build pictures of the instructional systems (IS) and classroom learning milieux (LM). Tutors' personal accounts illuminated issues surrounding the IS and LM, were analysed in Chapter 6 and informed the discussions and conclusions in chapter 7. Observation and interview data from across all case-studies were evaluated and generalisations made from them which helped to forge links with formalised bodies of knowledge (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 9) and build theory.

How the tutors' data were handled

From the category analysis performed, nine umbrella categories emerged. They were letter coded and entered on to category breakdown sheets.

1	Organisation of KS in the classroom	*TO*	organisation in the classrooms
2	Perception of role	*TP*	perception of role
3	Understanding of KS	*TU*	tutors' understanding
4	Relationships with others	*TR*	relationships
5	The efficacy of the KS curriculum	*TC*	efficacy
6	The qualification systems	*TQ*	qualification systems
7	The effect of doing KS on students	*TE*	effect on students
8	Students' capacities to do KS	*TS*	students' capacity
9	The effect of delivering/teaching KS on them	*TB*	tutors' beliefs of effects on themselves

Sub-categories emerged from the umbrella categories and were recorded on category breakdown sheets and letter-coded.

	1 Organisation of KS	***TO***	
i	Teaching styles	*TO/1*	formal authority - demonstrator or personal model - facilitator - delegator
ii	Structure and ordering of programmes	*TO/2*	tutorial - fixed lessons - assignment based - length of lessons
iii	Teaching methods	*TO/3*	lecture, worksheets, group, individual tutorial
vi	Arrangement of space	*TO/4*	using computers - desk work
	2 Perception of role	***TP***	
i	Teaching	*TP/1*	non interactive engagement - student centred engaged teaching
ii	Facilitators of educational progress	*TP/2*	vocational - life skills
iii	Maternal/paternal	*TP/3*	correct what went wrong at school - help students improve their future life - give students the confidence to succeed - remove sense of failure
	3 Understanding of KS	***TU***	
i	Improving students	***TU/1***	qualifications - education - life skills - life chances - job prospects
ii	KS education	***TU/2***	remedial skills for students who cannot read, write or do maths - for everyone - very basic - some should be doing BS not KS

	4 Relationships with others	*TR*	
i	College and department	*TR/1*	good - not good - reasonable
ii	Colleagues	*TR/2*	good - not good - reasonable
iii	Vocational areas	*TR/3*	good - not good - reasonable
iv	Students	*TR/3*	good - not good - reasonable
	5 The efficacy of the KS curriculum	*TC*	
i	Future progression	*TC/1*	skills for life - they need them to gain employment - fit for purpose
ii	Time allotted to KS	*TC/2*	insufficient time to do them properly - plenty of time to do them
iii	Useful for whom	*TC/3*	not sure the right students are doing them - they target the right students
	6 The qualification systems	*TQ*	
i	KS exams	*TQ/1*	taken up - not taken up - unfair - fair - confusing - clear - distort governments statistics
ii	KS portfolios	*TQ/2*	students completed the set tasks - students did not complete the set tasks - requirements of specifications were realistic and relevant to students - they were not realistic or relevant
iii	The proxy qualifications	*TQ/3*	only preparatory work done in first year - full exams done in the first year - achievement rates - pass - fail
	7 The effect of doing KS on students	*TE*	
i	Motivating students	*TE/1*	are their students motivated to do KS - are they de-motivated to do KS - intrinsic - extrinsic
ii	Making their students do KS	*TE/2*	behaviour effects - socialising students into doing them - making them believe in their values - making them conform
iii	The feel-good factor	*TE/3*	confidence building - no failures - students ideas of own ability

	8 Students' capability to do KS	***TS***	
i	Underpinning knowledge	*TS/1*	entering FE with sufficient to do KS - insufficient to do KS - only those who came with the knowledge already, get the KS qualifications
ii	Educational expectations	*TS/2*	do they think they should have acquired KS before going to FE - did they expect to teach the KS once the students get to FE
iii	The ability to acquire KS via the college programmes	*TS/3*	do they think students can acquire the KS - do they think students cannot acquire the KS
	9 The effect of delivering/teaching KS on them	***TB***	
i	Training and support	*TB/1*	given - not given
ii	The experience of teaching/delivering KS	*TB/2*	enjoyable - not enjoyable - sometimes enjoyable
iii	Confidence building	*TB/3*	yes - no - sometimes

The *informative types* of collected data were identified and used to inform the college portraits, which were presented to the participants for their validation.

The tutors' personal accounts of experiences, incidences and events were explored and analysed for each of the case-study classroom LM and recorded on the individual college category breakdown sheets. Significant areas of interest within each of the cases were identified and recorded.

These data were then viewed collectively. Data from every case-study tutor were recorded on category breakdown sheets, analysed, and presented in descriptive text in chapter 6, recalling some selected participants' personal accounts of experiences, incidences and events. These informed the process of generalisation of these data.

Further grounded theoretical arguments were drawn from these collective data within the sub-categories, with reference to the analytical log and the study's literature.

5.4.3 The case-study student interviews

These data from across the student interviews were handled collectively and used to illuminate issues in the classroom LM and inform the discussions and conclusions in chapter 7. These interview data, combined with observation data (discussed in section

5.5) across all case-studies were evaluated and generalisations made from them which helped to build the theories as presented in Chapter 6.

How the students' interview data were handled

From the category analysis performed, eight umbrella categories were created, letter coded and entered on to a college category breakdown sheet.

1	Understanding	*SU*	students' understanding
2	Progression	*SP*	students' progression
3	Mode of learning	*SL*	mode of learning
4	Locus of control	*SC*	locus of control
5	Interactions	*SI*	students' interactions
6	Emotional blocks	*SE*	emotional blocks
7	Assessments	*SA*	students' KS assessments
8	Student Reflections	*SR*	students' reflections

Sub-categories emerged from each of the umbrella categories and were recorded on the category breakdown sheets and coded.

	1 Understanding	***SU***	
i	The KS being done	*SU/1*	the ones they are doing- the level of KS they are doing
ii	The introduction of KS	*SU/2*	the reasons - not known why
iii	Doing KS along with their vocational course	*SU/3*	do not know why - to get a job - to get a better job - to get qualifications - to go on to the next level of their course - to make the government look good
iv	The KS qualification	*SU/4*	its worth - its value - its usefulness - its vocation relevance - its remedial connection- better than having GCSEs - not better than having GCSEs - easier to get than GCSEs - no opinion

	2 Progression	***SP***	
i	A second opportunity for them	*SP/1*	a chance to make up for not getting GCSEs - not an opportunity
ii	Good for their future	*SP/2*	improves skills for life - no idea
iii	Improving their position	*SP/3*	for getting on in their course - for getting a better job at the end of their programme

	3 Mode of learning	***SL***	
i	How they find them	*SL/1*	ability to do them - able to do some of them
ii	Like school stuff	*SL/2*	find them as hard as school work - easier than school work - boring like school - better than being at school
iii	KS teaching/delivery	*SL/3*	like the way they are receiving KS - do not like the way they are receiving KS - think they are doing the right KS - think they are not doing the right KS - attend their KS lessons - do not attend their KS lessons - attend sometimes
	4 Locus of control	***SC***	
i	Information about KS	*SC/1*	when they joined the course - about the KS needed to qualify in their vocational course
ii	Being forced to do KS	*SC/2*	the choices they would make - resigned to doing KS - conforming to doing KS - believing in KS
	5 Interactions	***SI***	
i	With their KS tutors	*SI/1*	like/get on with them - appreciate their position
ii	With their peers	*SI/2*	like/get on with them
	6 Emotional blocks	***EB***	
i	The perceived values of KS	*EB/1*	useful/helpful for life - job related - important qualifications - more important than GCSEs - no idea - confidence building - motivating - de motivating - a good experience - a bad experience - interesting to do - boring to do
	7 Assessments	***SA***	
i	Portfolios	*SA/1*	doing the work - completing the tasks - completing the portfolios
ii	Exams	*SA/2*	passes - failures
	8 Student Reflections	***SR***	
i	Doing KS portfolio work	*SR/1*	feelings - effects
ii	Doing the exams	*SR/2*	feelings - effects

Students' personal accounts of experiences, incidences and events were explored and analysed for each case-study classroom LM and recorded on individual case category breakdown sheets, to identify significant areas of interest within each case-study.

These interview data were then viewed collectively. Data from every student were recorded on category breakdown sheets, analysed and presented in descriptive text in

Chapter 6, recalling selected students' personal accounts of experiences, incidences and events. They informed the process of generalisation of these data. The grounded theoretical arguments were drawn from these collective data within the sub-categories, with reference to the analytical log and the study's literature.

5.4.4 The vocational group

The vocational group comprised personnel from two divisions within the vocational departments (i) VCMs and (ii) VTs. Their data were viewed collectively. Wherever possible, VCMs with responsibility for KS provision to the case-study students were included in the study. Wherever possible, students' VTs participated in the research.

How these data were handled

From the category analysis, four umbrella categories were created, then letter coded and entered on to category breakdown sheets.

1	Nature of provision	*VP*	vocational data on KS provision
2	Understanding	*VU*	vocational understanding of KS
3	Success	*VS*	KS success within their vocational areas
4	Overview of the KS	*VO*	vocational overview of the KS policy and its efficacy

Sub-categories emerged from each of the umbrella categories. These were recorded on the category breakdown sheets and coded.

	1 Nature of provision	***VP***	
i	KS responsibility	*VP/1*	the KS systems provided - the methods employed - the issues
	2 Understanding	***VU***	
i	KS for their students	*VU/1*	the reason for doing them - for themselves - for their vocations
ii	The benefits of KS	*VU/2*	student benefits - employer benefits - none
	3 Success	***VS***	
i	Vocationally controlled KS qualification	*VS/1*	organisation - achievement
	4 Overview of the KS	***VO***	
i	The value of KS	*VO/1*	for life - for job prospects - fit for purpose

The vocational groups' collection of data were analysed and employed in a number of ways. Some informed the individual case-study IS and classroom LM in the portraits. Data recalling selected participants' personal accounts of experiences, incidences and events, which confirmed, supported and validated these data from other respondents, were identified. These data informed the theoretical arguments drawn from the main issues isolated in the sub-categories, the analytical log and the study literature. The vocational groups' collection of data, with the acceptation of some shared ground, naturally fell into two divisions, those fundamentally *for* and those fundamentally *against* KS being taught in FE.

5.4.5 The support and specialist tutors

This group comprised classroom assistants, learning-support tutors, specialist subject tutors who worked with KS tutors. Data from the ST group were handled collectively and used to support the KS tutors' collection of data.

How these data were handled

From the category analysis, three umbrella categories and sub-categories were created, recorded on the category breakdown sheets, letter code letter.

	1 Role	***SpR***	***supporting role***
i	KS areas supported	*SpR/1*	subjects - levels
	2 Personal accounts	***SpP***	***ST's personal accounts***
i	Experiences	*SpP/1*	
ii	Issues	*SpP/2*	
	3 Overview of the KS	***SpO***	***ST's views of the policy and its efficacy***
i	The value of KS	*SpO/1*	for life - for job prospects - fit for purpose

5.4.6 Administration staff

Data from this group were used as background information on IS and case-study qualification achievements.

5.4.7 Other informants

Interviews conducted with other interested parties outside of the colleges provided background information to the case-studies and informed the general findings of the research in the discussion and conclusions in chapter 7.

5.5 The Observation data

The observations informed all four research approaches adopted in this study. Observations were used in conjunction with the *interviews* in the case-studies and included the qualitative *ethnographic* approach. Their employment added richness to the *illuminative evaluation* concept, informing and aiding the progressive focussing of interviews and provided a vehicle in which to identify some *grounded theories*.

5.5.1 The observation sheet

The same observation sheet, fully described in Chapter 3, was used in every observation and participant observation. The simple sheet noting students behaviour was adapted from a scheme of Robson (2002, p. 325-6). The sheet contained predetermined categories for recording what was observed, based around a small number of events and was designed to inform the research categories as they were emerging from the study.

Information gathered from the observations was recorded in two ways, (i) tabulated form, (ii) narrative accounts. The tabulated form (the systematic observations), were always carried out *during* the observations, with behaviour (events) numerically recorded in its frequency across the lessons overall. Notes were taken along side of the observations at intervals of 15 minutes.

The narrative accounts (the ethnographic observations), were made during lessons, in-between lessons at break times and directly after the observations. These accounts were entered in the analytical log as *'humanistic'* rather than *'scientific'* summaries of the observations (Robson, 2002, p. 312).

To maintain balance between participation and observation (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.168), events were recorded as near to their happening as possible in both. Observer consistency was also important, therefore, exactly the same things were observed in all case-study lessons.

5.5.2 Handling observation data

The observation (participation and non participation) collections of data on students and KS tutors were handled differently.

Students' collections of data were handled in four ways.

i. After each observation, a summary of observed events and the notes taken during and at the end of the session were presented to, and discussed with the tutors for their validation of my interpretation of those events.

ii. Analytical notes were made after each observation concerning collected data, from which existing grounded theories were re-evaluated and new theories were formulated. These were used to progressively focus subsequent data collections.

iii. Data collected from the observation sheets were summed across all observations within each college and divided by the total number of students in each observed session, which gave an average percentage level of each event (behaviour) (example in Appendix Q), which was then summarised at the bottom of each sheet. These data were not intended to give a statistical, scientific analysis of observed behaviours, rather to record and present a sense of what was happening in the classrooms.

iv. Using category analysis, these data from the narrative accounts of observed lessons were categorised under seven headings and letter coded. Essential features of the observations were recorded on observation category breakdown sheets.

1	Attendance	***SOA***	observed attendance
2	General behaviour	***SOB***	observed behaviour
3	Engagement in the lesson	***SOE***	observed engagement
4	Ability to do KS	***SOAb***	observed ability to do KS
5	Effects of tutor on students	***SOT***	observed effects
6	Effects of lessons on students	***SOL***	observed effects of lessons
7	Completed work	***SOC***	observed completed work

Students' observation data were analysed and used for progressive focussing and to confirm, support and validate these data from tutor and student interviews and grounded theories from the analytical log, document scrutiny and study literature.

Case-study KS tutors' collections of data were dealt with in three ways. From category analysis on narrative accounts made during and after the observed lessons, seven categories were selected to highlight the essential features of the observations. These were coded and recorded on observation category breakdown sheets.

1	Support in the classroom	*TOS*	observed support
2	Teaching methods	*TOT*	observed teaching
3	Programme materials	*TOM*	observed materials used
4	Student engagement	*TOE*	observed engagement of students
5	Controlling lessons and students	*TOC*	observed control
6	Effects of student behaviour on them	*TOET*	observed effects of lessons on tutors
7	Use of language	*TOU*	language used in lessons

Notes made after observations were recorded in the analytical log, informed some grounded theories and were used for progressive focussing. These data support the interview collections of data in the analysis in Chapter 6.

5.5.3 Observer effects

The ethical guidelines, as set out in Appendix E were adhered to at all times to minimise observer effects. However, there were some recorded effects:

- Rules put in place by tutors for when I was present in class reportedly improved students' behaviour during those lessons.
- One student wanted to use my participatory role to exclusively support her in lessons and refused help from the tutor whilst enlisting mine. There appeared to be relationship issues between the two parties and I had to carefully withdraw from this student.
- Familiarity became a problem with some all-male groups and they tried to shock me with sexist remarks. A balance had to be drawn between maintaining students' respect for me as a female guest, whilst not becoming an authority figure and possibly losing their cooperation. I drew on my experience as a tutor to do this.
- Ownership was an unexpected issue. A particular group came to view me as *one of them* and guarded me very aggressively against other students if they joined the lessons in which I was present[1]. Only members of 'my' group were allowed to talk to me. When this occurred, I withdrew from those lessons.

[1] If tutors were absent, some lessons 'doubled up' and groups were sometimes taught together.

5.6 Data from the analytical log

The log was maintained throughout this study. Its contents were used to support other collections of data. Entries were made in the log after each field work session and were colour-coded for reference. The log recorded information in a variety of ways, using mini-accounts of the interviews and observations, notes from casual meetings, diagrams and tables. Theoretical ideas were registered, coded and confirmed, along with any incoming information and literature which related to the case-studies and grounded theory development. The entries were used to inform the progressive focussing of these data collections and informed the analysis.

5.7 Dealing with other data

A simple table was designed for recording, presenting and analysing other collections of data from the colleges and case-studies, which comprised:-

- college documents – prospectuses, general information
- lesson documents – lesson plans, copies of registers, task sheets, some examples of students' work

These documents provided general support information.

Interviews conducted with other interested parties (outside of the colleges) were designed to provide background information to the case-study data sets and inform the general findings of the research. These data were recoded on Table 5-1 and used to inform and support the discussion and conclusions in chapter 7.

Table 5-1 Table of collections of data from interested parties outside of the colleges

Date of data collection	Fld entry	Method of data collection	No. of data items	Participant(s)
08.04.05	49	Interview	1	XXXXX University - personnel involved with a KS project
21.04.05	76	Interview	3	Personnel from QCA
04.10.05	264	Interview	1	CM - a representative from an employer's agency[1] called REMIT.

[1] Employers' agents are those who act as middlemen between the employers and the FE colleges. They liaise with both parties and place students in the appropriate training organisations e.g., apprentices in work-based learning courses, some within FE. They also handle the funding for the KS provided to those students.

5.8 Data on KS results

Case-study collections of data came from a number of sources. Some colleges provided the information on the students' achievements, but as this was completely different in style and format across all colleges, it was necessary to also use other methods to show these. Students' collections of data provided numbers of KS exam passes, and management and tutors' collections of data provided statements of achievements. Appendix R shows samples of two different college KS results reporting methodologies.

Awards of KS Qualifications: 2005-06 nationally (DfES, 2007a), were used obtain an estimate of L1 AoN pass rate (as an example) as a percentage of foundation students' KS L1 participation within FE. The calculation is shown in Appendix S.

5.9 Reliability and validity of the research

According to Golafshani, (2003, p. 5), although the term *'reliability'* is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea of reliability is used in all kinds of research, *'If we see the idea of testing as a way of information elicitation, then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality.'*

This research is considered to be a good qualitative study. It helps to identify and, *'understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing,'* (Eisner, 1991, p. 58). Healy and Perry (2000) assert that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm's terms.

The concept of *validity* in qualitative research, *'is not a single, fixed or universal idea,'* (Golafshani, 2003, p. 6) and there are a wide range of terms that are used to describe the perception of what constitutes a valid study. This research adopts the concept of validity as being one of quality, rigour and trustworthiness (Davies and Dodd, 2002; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). To increase the validity of the study, the overall information from the interviews, and reflections on the observations were discussed with the tutors at the end of each interview and observed lesson for their agreement of my interpretation. Each portrait of a college was examined and endorsed by KS managers or tutors for their accuracy.

5.10 Summary

This chapter gave an account of how the collections of data from each group of respondents were handled. The first section presented an outline of these data collected from each college, illustrated in two tables showing the numbers of case-studies and a list of respondents. The referencing system adopted for the colleges was explained.

The next section presented and discussed these data summary tables and the information they contain. The abbreviations used for every group were listed. This was followed by a full description of how each groups' collection of interview data were handled, showing the categories and their sub-categories, what they comprised and how these data were used. The collection of observation data and their handling was described next and the categories that emerged were shown.

The use, value and purpose of maintaining an analytic log throughout the study was the subject of the section that followed and how the grounded theories were developed through the continuous evaluation and analytical log entries of these interview and observation data were discussed.

How these data collected outside of the colleges were handled is then discussed. Information on KS achievement of the case-study students was outlined and how that was used in the study explained. Issues of reliability and validation were then examined.

The next chapter follows on with an *analysis* of these data.

6 Analysis

The KS college instructional systems and the classroom learning milieux were described in Chapter 4, with portraits of each college showing the context and conditions in which the research was conducted. The portraits also introduced the case-study tutors and students. Chapter 5 described these data collected from all of the research participants and how they were dealt with.

This next chapter analyses these data, with emphasis on the main respondents, the KS managers, tutors, students and vocational staffs. Extracts from their interviews are used to illustrate the analytical points being made, thus part of the story telling comes directly from the participants. These stories are analysed and discussed in conjunction with these data collected from the observations.

Data from each groups' interviews, observations and notes were analysed separately case by case, then cross-case. They are presented collectively in the chapter.

The quotes from participants' interviews are referenced by the respondent's title code followed by the line number of the transcript in brackets. For example *T/A1(55)* is read as *Tutor, College A, (case-study 1)*, transcript *line number 55.*

6.1 The KS management group

The composition of the management group and the reasons for their inclusion in this study were discussed in Chapter 4. The three divisions of the management group; HKS, Co and IV and their differences were described in Chapter 5.

The five umbrella categories created from the management groups' interviews were:

1. Organisation of KS
2. Overview of the KS policy
3. Understanding of KS
4. Acceptance of KS College wide
5. KS capability

6.1.1 Organisation of KS

This section covers the points under the five sub-categories that emerged from this umbrella category: (i) policies, systems and operations, (ii) roles, duties and responsibilities, (iii) managing the KS provision, (iv) qualification systems and (v) achievements.

(i) Policies and operations-instructional systems

The instructional systems (IS) operating within each college were, as stated by HKS/C(44), *'governed by LSC funding, college funding and government initiatives.'* However, the managers influenced and directed these systems. For example, HKS/C(38) maintained she *'set the direction'*, having been solely responsible for setting up College C's KS2000, and HKS/A largely devised the KS2000 quality systems.

College A, D, E and G coordinators had played a significant part of introducing KS2000, although ultimate decisions on policy lay with senior managers. In Colleges B and F, KS2000 had been put in place by previous KS personnel.

Staffs' early experiences of the KS curriculum appeared similar. Some reported their organisations having what Hodgson and Spours (2002, p. 35) called, *'a partial involvement'*. The DfEE/IOE (2000) reported colleges showing a high level of support for offering opportunities to achieve KS, but much lower support for actually offering the KS qualification to the majority of their students (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p. 35).

This might be because the government funding to *provide* KS was greater (approximately 10 times) than the funding offered to put them forward for exams.

In each of the case-study colleges, it had taken time for personnel to cope with KS requirements or give them much priority. Most felt their colleges[1] were unprepared for such a major organisational change, particularly in their operational procedures. As reported by IV/A(17),

> *'The school[2] that we were in had no connection to the work we did. It made no sense putting us in that school, because our line manager had nothing to do with our work.'*

Some were administrative, as Co+HKS/E(199) explained, *'we had a bad admin system at the time.'* Other managers felt their college systems could not cope with the pace of introducing KS and staffs found them confusing. FEDA (1997, p. 30) feared this would be the case, maintaining that timeframes within FE were *'too tight'* for the new KS reforms. As Co+HKS/E(231) described,

> *'There was an awful lot that happened very quickly with, around the new spectrum of skills,'* and *'there wasn't much catch up time.'*

Due to this confusion, HKS/A reported it had gone unnoticed that a whole class of vocational students had not received any KS for an entire year. According to Co/B(75), to clear up such confusion, the QCA *'brought out the Agenda Guidance, this, that, and the other'*[3]. For Co/B(55), problems also reportedly eased *once, 'people had got their head round what the demands of it were,'* but it

> *'did require an awful lot of training. I mean, I was in schools when it was introduced, and there was a lot of training going on, there was a lot of confusion.'*

HKS/A(21) echoed this, *'In the first stages of KS there was a lot of confusion over who was exempt from KS and who was not.'* Poole (2001) suggests that such tensions might be the reason for the weaknesses in programmes in the early days.

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[1] The colleges as an organisation include administration and all levels of staff, knowledge of, understanding in, and KS capability.
[2] By school, the coordinator means the vocational curriculum area.
[3] The first substantial 'guidance' from the QCA on implementing KS provision appears to have been published at around 2002. It was largely in the form of guidance notes on standards and qualifications, not practical advice on 'how' to implement KS.

Other managers criticised early moderation[1] procedures. Co+HKS/E(231) maintained that,

> *'in the first year we had a moderation with (²), they passed most of, nearly everything we put through. The second year, they failed a lot of the stuff they'd passed the first year, and some of it was exactly the same work, because half of the group had submitted and some hadn't. The second half of the group submitted the next year, and they didn't pass. How can you tell the tutors that half the portfolios had passed and half didn't, even though it was exactly the same work in them?'*

In spite of early problems with KS2000 however, most managers agreed with the view from the DfEE/IOE (2000), that a certain amount of confusion was accepted as being part of the process of introducing new systems, especially a new NC. Managers felt they had overcome this phase and were now satisfied with their progress in KS provision, which was attributed to two things - hard work to radically improve their college IS and fully embracing KS2000.

Managers Co/B(75) and IV/A(240), thought the QCA had improved the KS content with *'the KS in the September 2004 specifications,'* making their requirements *'a lot clearer.'* However, these changes were considered by IV/A(248), to be,

> *'tiny shiftings around. They haven't really addressed the fundamental problem that there is with the content of KS,'*

a point discussed later.

When KS were introduced, a number of colleges began by running their KS provision from a central department. Some subsequently had moved most or part of their KS responsibility to the vocational curriculum areas at various times since then. In Colleges A, B, C, E, and F, the overall responsibility was with the VCMs, which consisted of some or all staffing, timetabling, assessing students' portfolios and overseeing KS examinations.

Whilst Colleges D and G managed their KS provision centrally and therefore had no problems, many KS management found difficulties with their college's vocational areas providing KS. They believed VCMs were not running these systems well enough, which

[1] Moderation is the process of external AB assessment of KS portfolios which determines a pass or fail of the evidence in the portfolio (Part B).
[2] For ethical reasons the AB is not identified.

often caused them extra work i.e., having to train tutors who should not have been engaged to deliver KS in the first place. When responsibility for KS was given to vocational areas, some KS managers appeared to have expected their VTs to take on the delivery of KS. As HKS/A(190) put it,

> *'When we started, we believed we would go for some form of discreet[1] KS, because we didn't have the staff with that level of expertise[2].*

However, in most cases, VTs did not begin delivering it, because they reportedly did not see it *'as their job,'* -HKS/C(61). They apparently were, and remain, *'reluctant to deliver KS,'* HKS/A (77) which they also considered to be yet another set of specifications to think about when organising and planning their programmes - extra work and time consuming.

As a result, many VCMs had to import specific KS tutors into their departments. Colleges A, B and F VCMs engaged what were termed 'vocational' KS coordinators to run their daily KS operations, most of whom also taught the KS. In this research, none of the vocational Cos or KS tutors had originally been VTs.

In all colleges, KS had largely evolved *outside* of the vocational courses and were delivered separately by designated tutors. KS were not embedded entirely into any of the vocational courses, as recommended to be by NACETT (1998, p.7). College A were the closest to embedding their KS into vocational courses, but they were still separately provided and assessed. In College E, a small number of courses were beginning to integrate them, but, as Co+HKS/E(117) stated, *'there are courses where it is not possible.'*

When interviewed by a lead inspector[3] and asked what model they used, the integrated model or the stand-alone, HKS/E(135) replied, *'well actually, I didn't think it was possible to run an integrated model, and she said (the inspector) 'no', she agreed with me."*

In each college, assessments, examinations and moderations, including those within the vocational areas, were processed separately from the vocational courses by non-vocational staff, as was also recommended by NACETT (1998, p.7). The QCA, wanting

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[1] The use of the word 'discreet' here meant that the KS would be hidden (more than just embedded) within the vocational coursework.
[2] The interviewee meant that the college did not have staff with the particular KS required by each of the vocational areas, given that they would be hidden and/or embedded into the coursework.
[3] The reference of lead inspector applied to lead inspector from Ofsted.

both an embedded system of skills provision *and* a separate portfolio and testing regime, was considered by some managers to be problematic. IV/A(82), described this situation,

> *'It seems to me that KS is two different things. It's an integrated qualification essential to people's main programmes or it's a rather separate thing existing within a BS world. It has an identity problem.'*

and,

> *'Schizophrenic. It's two different things and that's good, because everything that you get, all the push, is that it should be integrated, that the units are signposted, the NVQ has got to have the work arising naturally from it. So, all of those things are not supposed to be difficult - so as you're doing the course, you're going to be doing this. But then, when you put it into operation you find it very, very difficult, because it's too particular to do it in that way.'*

It is that particularity which IV/A thought made KS difficult to integrate and manage alongside vocational courses[1].

Overall, the VTs appeared to have little to do with the whole KS process, although some vocational materials were provided by them for KS tutors to modify and use in portfolio lessons. Two KS tutors and VTs twin-taught in lessons, which worked well in terms of student control and participation.

(ii) The management group's role within the organisation

Whilst managers' roles and responsibilities differed across case sites, every member of this group had experienced their colleges' KS evolution over the past five years, mostly from a KS post, but some from other teaching or managing positions.

Managers, who *introduced* KS2000, whilst experienced in management, stated they had no prior training to set up these particular operations. They basically felt their way through it and gathered information along the way. Statements, as from Co+HKS+TG/1(102), were common,

> *'To start with, I had none, no training at all, absolutely none. We were very fortunate that we had a local person who was bought in to help to train us locally. It was a sort of consortium, but it was a very loose sort of consortium. I never really got to the bottom of it.'*

[1] The NVQs and GNVQs courses which form the majority of vocational qualifications at the first and second year levels and are practical based.

IV/A(158) experienced similar. Just before Curriculum 2000 came in, his college decided *'they wanted some curriculum coordinators to oversee KS,'* so he applied and got the job.

> *'We divvied up the responsibilities in the team, who would try to look after each, which KS, and I picked IT, and somebody else was supposed to be doing number and somebody else communication.'*

Most managers used their earlier experience of BS, CS or other learning sectors to introduce the KS2000. HKS/C(34) was,

> *'aware of the national policy and the various government initiatives and, LSC funding. I've worked in this area for quite a long time, so I've got a good understanding of students' particular needs. I know from my experience.'*

Coordinators came into KS from various teaching posts, BS support or directly from business.

All managers were knowledgeable about KS2000 and fully committed to quality provision. When the research began, every manager appeared happy in his or her job. However, by the end of the field work one Co+HKS left[1], giving the reason that too much pressure was being applied to improve figures. The Co+HKS did not believe this was achievable, given the neediness of many students and the lack of resources to cope with them.

Managers were candid about the issues and problems they faced within their colleges, many of which appeared common across all sites, along with similar frustrations and difficulties. These are discussed within the following sections.

(iii) Managing the KS provision

Managers monitored their operations using different approaches. In some cases, senior HKS had middle managers, organising and regulating KS across curriculum areas. Co+HKS managed KS on a day to day basis and other middle manager HKS relied on close monitoring of, and liaisons with VCMs.

There was clear acceptance amongst managers that KS were not going away and that government had set up a 'skills' drive to which they were expected to respond.

[1] For ethical reasons, the Co+HKS is not identified and the final interview with this participant is not included in these data.

Managers appeared to view their role as one of enforcing systems put in place and funded by government, which, in principle, they did not disagree with.

Reflecting their academic roots, College G's management showed a different response to KS2000 and their policy was not to automatically deliver KS to their foundation students with C- GCSE qualifications. College G *always* re-entered these students for GSCEs in maths and English. Co+HKS+TG/1(157) maintained that,

> *'although L1 number (AoN) would only be suitable for those who came to us with a GCSE of E and F, we have a very, very high success rate of getting those students through their GCSE. All students here, who come to us with a grade D for GCSE maths, re-take in November, and all those who have got lower than a D, take it in the summer. We do have a high pass rate and it is a condition of their being here that they re-take their English or their maths, or both.'*

Changing this policy *'would be a strategic decision here at college and I cannot see that that would ever be the case, they're all trying to re-sit their GCSEs,'* – Co+HKS+TG/1(123).

IT was offered to first year students with no IT GCSEs. Some higher graded GCSE and A-level students *chose* to do L3 Comms and AoN[1]. As stated by Co+HKS+TG/1(154), *'If students have D+ grades, they can then take KS at L3. Because they will have GCSEs, there's no point in them doing L2.'* There were a limited number of vocational courses run at College G.

Across all colleges, in spite of attempts by management to socialise and gain compliance from vocational areas, many of them were not considered to be fully on board with KS. Some managers, who 'part' managed KS provision, were frustrated with the vocational staffs. HKS/F(193) said,

> *'Not all curriculum areas work to that good model[2]. I'll do reports, recommendations, things that have worked well, but I don't have authority to say you must do this. There hasn't been a cross college rule that says that everyone must do this or this.'*

Co+HKS/E(18) agreed,

> *'I don't manage the provision unfortunately. I don't have direct input into recruitment or training, I can't demand anything. I can make recommendations,*

[1] Mostly, the evidence for the level 3 portfolios was taken from existing coursework.
[2] By 'good model', HKSF meant the KS model researched and tested by her team that was deemed to be working in some areas of the college.

but I can't make stipulations. The centres themselves actually recruit their own staff and they allocate staff to timetable and to the programmes, but then I'm responsible for setting up training that those staff might need, for establishing processes and procedures for exams, for portfolios, which is quite a difficult position, because I monitor quality, but I don't have direct input into recruitment, or training. I can't make any body do anything.'

A number of managers believed KS *elements* were unnecessarily confusing for their staffs. Co+HKS+TD/2(163) thought,

'a number of people stumble over the interpretation of the elements. If they could clarify it and make it easier to comprehend then it would become easier for people to get engaged with.'

The sheer complexity of providing KS to large numbers of C- students was concerning managers. Co+HKS/E(66) described this,

'I hate to think this is being recorded. It is not always the students' interests that are put at the front of timetabling and quality. It just isn't. It should be, but it just isn't. It's often, it can't be for logistical reasons, and this is a big problem for, let's be honest, it's a big problem for FE in general. You see, we have got some fantastic chefs' programmes here, really, really good in hospitality and catering. We've got a brand new facility and they do some wonderful things over there and if you've got a learner coming along and they want to join the course and they've done really badly at school and they have a real flair and aptitude and motivation to do this course, you are not going to turn them away. No, it's what you, how you then cope with the fact that their reading and writing and numeracy are very poor once they get here. So you've got two options. You either don't recruit some learners, which then doesn't give them much, any chance, or you recruit them and then you work out how you are going to support them. I'm in favour of the second, you recruit them, then support them, but not, but not, to the nth degree, to the level that you can resource and, forgive me if I'm wrong, you can resource practically, and to the level that the student can actually attain.'

(iv) KS qualification systems

Managers felt that KS ABs handled moderations badly at the beginning, causing ill-feeling from vocational areas. Some ABs were criticised as being disorganised, inconsistent, dominant, unhelpful and, *'flexible in interpreting the standards.'* -

HKS/E(240). In contrast, some vocational ABs were reportedly, *'more lenient'* with their vocational students' work, passing portfolios that had been previously failed by KS ABs. According to HKS/C(203), *'we got 89% KS results for one of our catering courses where they went with their awarding body.'*

Managers had issues with portfolio production and assessment. Difficulties arose around integrating KS and vocational portfolios. For HKS/E(205) it was,

> *'the logistics of it all. We can't keep them, not if they have their coursework in them as well.'*

HKS/C(217) thought the production of two separate portfolios unnecessary[1].

> *'If a student produces, and they are all on competency based programmes now, why have they got to produce another portfolio? They've already got one. If the skills are at an appropriate level, they have the KS. If they are on a L2 programme, they're producing an assignment, that's their KS...surely.'*

IV/A(101), on the other hand, maintained that producing one, combined KS and vocational portfolio, would be problematic because the specifications of KS were *'too pedantic.'* IV/A described the process,

> *'You've got a separate test, which has nothing to do with the qualification you're on, and you've got to have a separately logged portfolio. Yes, it could be the same portfolio, but it's got to be separately evidenced and logged off and cross-referenced, which is quite hard to do, and to do it on the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Engineering (AVCE), they do have to mark everything twice, and it does feel quite onerous. The page references you want for your AVCE references are not the page references you want for your KS at all, and it feels quite complicated when I do it, and I'm quite used to doing it. If you miss out something for the AVCE or you miss out something for the KS, you've got to have a grid for what's missing.'*

IV/A(264) also found the specifications required for the portfolio evidence problematic,

> *'In IT you've got to show that you've used the Internet source and you've got to use a paper based source. Well, I can't see how using a paper-based source is an IT skill. It just seems like a pernickety requirement. So you've got to have these two sources, then you've got to show these sources, you can't just infer these sources, that's a weak portfolio. So you've got to show your sources. You must show you've used multiple search criteria in finding information. It's not just good enough that they've found the things you wanted them to find and*

[1] A vocational and a KS portfolio

have been successful and produced a good portfolio. Exactly how did you find it, and did you use multiple search criteria? And then you've got to show your draft of your work, and again, you could get away with it, but it would be regarded as a weak portfolio. If IT2.2 hasn't got a draft involved in it, so you're asking your student to take a piece of paper that they have not finished, that they are not happy with and they are not satisfied with, and you have to ask them to hand it in to me and write on it why you're not happy with it and how you're going to change it.'

Some managers were concerned with the way in which KS concentrated far too much on assignment and portfolio building instead of developing the actual skills.

Numbers of managers were unhappy with the KS proxy qualifications system[1]. HKS/E(521) maintained that, *'most L1 learners will have a proxy. Most L2 learners would have a proxy, and that makes a complete mockery of the testing system.'* Proxies were also considered[2] to be used indiscriminately by other colleges to bolster their figures, with students getting qualifications below what they already had. As Co+HKS+TG/165) commented - *'it's often chosen by a student doing a L3[3] maths course, because then they are proxied for the test, so I don't know that we're getting the right students to do the number[4].'* Proxies were also complicated, according to IV/A(131) and,

'very hard to explain to people what's going there, you know, well, they might be exempted from everything, or they might be exempted from the test, or it might be IT, or they might be exempted from everything, or a short course.'

'There's no symmetry to the system they've set up and without symmetry staffs find it confusing and inexplicable.' - IV/A(326).

Whilst managers opposed to proxies were in the minority, some felt the system made it difficult to negotiate national KS pass/fail figures for comparison purposes. As Co+HKS/E(303) observed, *'colleges are taking students with existing GCSEs, using that as a proxy, getting a portfolio, getting a KS qualification, and putting that in as meeting a target, and that student has already achieved that L2 target...they are false figures, they are.'*

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[1] The KS proxy qualifications system is fully described in Chapter 1.
[2] There were some allegations made by managers regarding the abuse of the proxy systems by other colleges. Whilst these were made by well-informed and experienced participants, and unofficially well known to those working in the FE sector, they could not be validated for the study, therefore are mentioned only.
[3] In this instance, the L3 work is an A-Level.
[4] The word 'number' here means KS AoN.

It is not possible however, to comment on this view, as there is no government information available on *'prior attainment of learners taking KS qualifications,'* (Wass, 2007). It is known however, that in 2005, almost a quarter of all, *'KS qualifications were achieved by way of proxy,'* (Hesketh, 2007).

Administration staff in a number of colleges reported the QCA had recognised abuse of the proxy system and was now encouraging colleges to adopt a more judicious use of them. There were no plans by the QCA to abolish proxy qualifications however.

Whilst it cannot be confirmed, Co+HKS/E(273) was critical of others abusing the system, believing some colleges enter *all* students for BS literacy tests and for L2,

> *'Regardless of what they've come in with, and even if they had A* GCSEs, they can still do L2. If all of this data is put in together, colleges can get 80 or 90% success rates in KS. I know one particular college where they do boast that. But I'm not saying they haven't got great tutors, but if initially you say you all do L2, or, even worse, you all start doing L1, of course you're going to get high success rates, and there's no standard method at the moment of setting people off[1]. We've found all sorts of tricks as we've gone along. Some colleges don't register students until they are actually ready to submit a portfolio, so if they don't get registered, ok, they don't get the funding, but they don't get the bad achievement rates either.'*

The inconsistencies of KS qualification systems across Britain were questioned by HKS/E(857), who asked,

> *'How come Wales can opt out of doing the KS test and do the portfolios only, and that still gets recognised within the NQF? Wales said, 'oh, we don't want to do the tests' and the DfES said, 'ok then'...they've bent the rules. Wales don't do any testing. They haven't done any for two years.'*

This claim is correct (Dysg, 2006).

(v) Achievements of KS

Students' achievements were not considered to be particularly good across most of the management. HKS/C(161) maintained their KS success rate was *'poor'* and although,

> *'improvement in this area was happening, it was very, very slow. Very, very slow. It's gone from single figures but it's not much better.'*

[1] Meaning - 'setting people off on KS'.

Co+HKS/E(823) expressed this differently,

> *'You get sixty students enrol on a couple of hairdressing programmes and nearly all of them have to do KS tests, that's in September. By April, it's clear that only thirty of those students are actually going to pass, so you enter thirty and twenty eight of them pass. Great! That's a great achievement rate...twenty eighth out of thirty. But twenty eight out of sixty is not a great achievement rate.'*

The success rate of KS is discussed again later.

Various reasons were put forward by management for students' non-achievement, particularly at foundation level. Not being able to engage enough competent[1] and qualified staff was a significant problem, but managers believed tutors with expertise in three KS subjects were difficult to find. In most colleges, subject specialists were *not* engaged to deliver KS. Only three case-study tutors were specialists, one in maths, two in IT. However, there are no government requirements for tutors to be qualified or experts in KS subjects. Qualification requirements were imposed by the colleges themselves and most had none.

Funding from government to adequately train tutors in KS, including VTs, was largely considered to be insufficient and had to come out of general KS funding for students. There had been some government training initiatives, which were only funded for one year, after which colleges were expected to fund and could not. However, it was unclear how much funding colleges required and for what level of training. Data from tutors, discussed later, suggested that there *was* training available to them in some colleges, but the general picture was patchy. None of the tutors (KS or VTs) interviewed were obliged to do training.

Sufficient time to teach KS to students, given the high numbers entering colleges with C- GCSE grades, was a major issue frequently raised by managers and the number of teaching hours colleges were realistically able to provide KS was generally felt to be insufficient to improve students' achievement rates. As described by HKS/E(396),

> *'The time allowed is three hours[2] a week and you can't reasonably be expected to do that in an hour. That was always going to be a no win situation, which is where the whole FMA and MA system falls down, because you cannot set a framework and then not allow the teaching time for that to happen.'*

[1] The competence required was unclear, but was usually expected to be evidenced by qualifications i.e. in KS or related subjects and in teaching

[2] Broken down, the three hours is one hour for each of the three main KS.

Co/B(189) gave a student example, *'She's building up her numeracy skills, which she really needs to go back to square one and build over a longer period of time than we've got available.'*

IV/A(590), maintained that, *'The idea that they come and then do an hour a week for a couple of terms with me and then suddenly reach that standard is a bit peculiar. It's a very odd thought isn't it? They've been with a specialist for years and not achieved it and yet they have an old generalist like me, who trains and mugs a bit up, and has a shot; somehow there's got to be a fantastic breakthrough?'*

Another reason given for poor achievement was lack of support from vocational staffs. Managers felt that where the VCMs operated 'good practice'[1] and placed more value on KS, their students' achievement rates would improve. However, HKS/C(200) believed that it,

> *'goes back to the whole idea that staff don't want to do it, so they're often, the students aren't taught. They might choose a test, but there is no need to do, there's not seen to be a need to do a portfolio. Our particular External Moderator[2] always wants to see a separate portfolio for KS so...but then I think it's because the KS EVs haven't got a clue about KS either.'*

6.1.2 Overview of the KS policy

This section covers the points under the two sub-categories of (i) views on the concept of KS and (ii) the efficacy of KS.

All management agreed in the 'concept' of KS2000, as expressed by HKS/C(62), *'I am satisfied with the policy.'* Most saw KS as a positive thing for their students and believed, some absolutely, they were important skills for vocational students to acquire. HKS/C(309) thought, *'even hairdressers should have these skills. They need to be able to read and write, don't they?'* Co+HKS+TG/1(55) felt, *'it raises their level of skill enormously,'* believing that there was a huge skills gap,

> *'certainly in this age group. Students need, in this big wide world, they now need ICT skills for pretty much any career they are going into, from hairdressing right the way up.'*

[1] By 'good practice' management meant the practice advocated by the KS personnel, because they believed they had more KS knowledge requirements than the VCMs.
[2] The External Moderators are from the Awarding Bodies.

However, as far as the needs of employers were concerned, most managers did not know exactly what employers felt about KS, or what they required. Most assumed however, that employers must desire their future work force to have KS.

For IV/A(193) the absolute core rationale for KS was *'unarguable."*

> *'If somebody is coming to college, post sixteen education/training, then it's quite reasonable that they should, whilst they are at college, during training, be developing their language ability, their numerical skills and their understanding of how to use IT. It would be a very bizarre thing to say the reverse. So, given that they've got to develop those skills, it is the only sensible way education can be viewed. It then becomes a question of how you do that. I think that's where KS falls down. So, in terms of its concept, you couldn't argue with it, but, as you move further away from the 'they should be doing something,' to the particular details, it then becomes harder and harder to implement.'*

Most managers felt that FE in general, was *not* the place to be *'teaching'* the underpinning knowledge of KS and felt similarly to HKS/C(320),

> *'I would like to see them taught much more effectively at school. I would not do KS at all. I think the government drive for KS and BS is because they've failed them at school. The emphasis needs to be shifted from the colleges at 16, back to schools because they have been at school for 11 years. Why do they need to come and do KS to improve their number and reading at 16? They should be looking at, when they come to college, higher level analytical skills. It's fudging what is a fundamental government issue isn't it. You know it's because it hasn't been tackled in school. They should be coming to college at 16 able to apply it in a vocational context and have the underpinning knowledge. In theory, they should be able to do a KS in a day.'*

Co/B(197) also felt that KS should be taught in school prior to them coming into FE, but maintained, *'it isn't happening is it?'*

On the other hand, Co+HKS(210) thought college was the right place to do KS for students who failed in the school system,

> *'They have large numbers of students in the schools and they are less able perhaps to meet the individual needs and also some students are emotionally or unfulfilled at school, and they come to college and they become mature. They are better able to work in a flexible environment and we sometimes tap*

into a side of their teaching and learning that they've never experienced before, and they suddenly achieve. So often I've felt that the students may have had very good schooling, but the teacher trying to work with other students in the class has been unable to meet their individual needs, and they've come to college. They realise they've got a second chance and they make the most of it, or sometimes develop their existing skills, which makes them more employable and better able to go to university.'

All managers associated KS with remedial education for C- GCSE graded students, but were committed to providing good VET which included them. Many however, even those passionate about KS, were realistic about how effective they could be in providing such remedial education to high numbers of students coming from school with poor levels of maths and English.

Some believed government's employability L2 was too high for C- students. Co+HKS(462) thought *'was a bit harsh,'* and was,

'not really in favour of going so far that we say they don't get their NVQ, which is what the framework says. If they are lacking in those areas anyway, we are making something they could do well twice as hard to achieve.'

IV/A(494) was also doubtful about the L2 target,

'You kind of get the impression that L2 is essential, in everything. All targets are couched around L2, as if you can't operate at all, you'd be entirely unable to operate in society if you had a D grade in English and maths, which isn't quite the case is it?'

Fundamentally, in spite of improvement during the last five years in their overall provision, most managers felt the barriers to the full effectiveness of KS remained difficult to overcome. Some saw these as being internally generated, such as the lack of competent tutors and support from vocational areas. Others were more concerned about the levels of ability of incoming students.

Whilst most managers wanted to have some form of skills training and qualification available to vocational students, many wanted to see some changes made to K2000. IV/A(221) summarised this, using an analogy with the millennium dome,

*'They made something unique, a remarkable achievement. But when they came to put things in, most people thought that the things they put in the millennium dome was a load of old ****, perhaps you might want to edit that, were not of a sufficiently*

high quality. It was the things that went into it, not the grand arching vision. It was the detail that went into it that was flawed.'

6.1.3 Managements' understanding of KS

This section covers the points under the two sub-categories of (i) the purpose of KS learning and (ii) the focus of KS.

All managers understood the KS specifications and requirements within the NQF and felt they understood the government's purpose for their introduction. Possibly, because they were only concerned with VET in FE, the managers saw KS as being focussed towards students within their sector. Most managers thought KS were specifically linked to vocational qualifications and their purpose was to improve their students' chances of employability. HKS/F(313)'s views were commonly held by management,

'We are preparing learners to be good employees in the workplace. We're equipping them. We are an institution which responds to employers' needs. We are here to serve the workplace and enhance the learners' skills for them to be effective in the workplace.'

Co+HKS+TD/2(215) saw KS as part of a progressive route to either employment *or* further study, *'They've left school with a GCSE and they're now going on to a grade C or above, which makes them more employable and better able to go to university, otherwise there's no point in doing it.'* Others, such as Co+HKS+TG/1(55) thought that, *'the whole ethos of it is to raise students' level of skill.'*

IV/A(313) was unsure,

'Are we doing a different work-based skill, a skill which is equipping people form their future employment, or is it remedial work? And I don't think there's a clear answer to that, and I don't even think Tomlinson gave a clear answer to that when he was doing his report.'

6.1.4 Acceptance of KS college wide (A)

This section covers the points under the three sub-categories of (i) Culture conflicts (ii) Resistance to KS and (iii) Changing peoples' minds.

The reported vocational staffs' lack of acceptance of KS was problematic for most managers. Many maintained it had taken this group time to recognise KS, either due to

their ignorance as to what they actually were - they did not understand them or what they involved - or simply because they chose to ignore them. Whilst all management reported this situation had improved since 2000, they generally believed that within certain vocational areas these attitudes prevailed. Remarks from HKS/C(61) were typical, *'as a college, by and large, we are still resistant to the idea of skills development, whether that's BS or KS.'* However, HKS/F(186), reported that *'some areas take KS very seriously, some not so seriously.'* In general though, management found it an uphill struggle to engage the vocational staffs and to 'shift' cultures'. As HKS/C(82) explained,

> *'It's all very well having a policy. It all looks good on paper, but it's changing the culture isn't it? I mean, I've worked in 7 or 8 colleges and things haven't moved on particularly in the 12, 14 years I've been working in KS. There is still the same resistance.'*

HKS/F(197) agreed, *'there hasn't been a culture of compliance, there's been a culture of each curriculum area doing what's best for them.'* For Co+HKS/E(32), *'it's taking a culture change that is still on going for centres to realise that the achievement rates and results are their responsibility,'*

Most managers appeared to view the vocational areas' criticisms and seeming revolt against KS2000 as, *'vain and trivial in the face of the model itself','* (Jameson, 1984, p.57).

To hasten a mind-change within FE towards KS, government used a carrot and stick approach (Merrick, 2004, p. 4). The carrot was heavily funding the sector to deliver and produce KS success to students. As HKS/C(50) explained, *'You want them to achieve morally, but you also want them to achieve because funding links to it.'* The stick was the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), the *'nightmare'* (Mackney, 2006, p. 5), of Ofsted inspections introduced in 2005, with their increasing focus on the quality of FE KS provision.

KS management appear to have been positioned as the *'agents'* (Bilton et al, 1994, p.28) of government to change the *vocational* cultures within their respective organisations and thus socialise their vocational staffs. In this respect, managers' roles have been used for political control (Gerhardt, 1980). As stated earlier, by enforcing government's KS policies, they were enforcing that political control. There is no criticism of managers intended, as they had little choice in this matter (Ofsted 2007),

given that government set its sights on FE colleges for its major placement of KS (Hodgson and Spours, 2002, p. 32).

There are undoubtedly strong vocational cultures within FE - colleges contain groups of diverse, multi-vocational departments. Schein (2004, p.17), maintains that the differences to be found within such organisations range from the barely perceptible to the obviously striking. The vocational departments within the colleges[1] had their own buildings, equipment, staff, history and trade associations that formed exclusive identities and these distinct cultures, which have for decades, as recognised by Schein (2004, p.17) *'worked well enough to be considered valid.'* Given these cultures are so strong, it is understandable that they could be a formidable barrier to enforcing any change.

However, confusion over what KS *were* had possibly not helped this situation. It would appear, from the managers' narratives, that they thought KS and CS were the same or very similar (Mager, 1997, p.10; Payne, 2000, p. 359). According to HKS/A(98), *'the KS were somewhat linked to the CS that were in BTEC programmes,'* and HKS/C(91) maintained, *'I was involved when it was first implemented, when it was called CS. Before it was CS, then KS, there was a different name wasn't there?'* Co+HKS+T/D2(248) and IV/A(158) also treated CS and KS as being the same, *'I know there is some degree of debate between employers deciding whether or not the CS or WKS[2] are more valuable, but I do feel that the students are better able to communicate when they go into employment, because they've got KS.'*

Gaining broad agreement at the beginning of any new system, as Black (2003, p.9) points out, *'involves extended periods of negotiation.'* Managers' data established that KS2000 was clearly bought in too quickly, causing confusion and annoyance. In such confused situations, 'negotiations' with vocational groups may have been minimal.

Since 2000, managers have tried to persuade vocational personnel into accepting KS, thus adopting the *'role'* of what Garson (1998) describes as, *'one of facilitating political cooperation and thus reducing political uncertainties,'* in this case, the success of KS2000. Management have spent time talking-up its value and ideology across vocational cultures, trying to deal with prejudices and change certain customs and

[1] With the exception of College G, the sixth Form College.
[2] WKS = Wider Key Skills.

rituals (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). However, changing these cultures has been difficult.

Full consensus of the vocational areas means creating and changing behavioural regularities (Schein, 1985), and behavioural motivation (Zaelke et al, 2005, p. 54). As described by Bilton et al (1997, p.11) *'culture and socialisation are the key to the consensus theory.'* Management have tried to create a shared understanding of KS amongst all staffs from which it would be taken for granted that a pattern of typification and behaviour would develop. It was hoped that from these actions, vocational staffs would come to regard it as being their *job* to provide a joint vocational training and academic education (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p.15). As Black (2003, pp. 4-9) says, *'the socialisation of ideas for building such consensus needed for successful launch and delivery of projects, requires managers to influence and persuade others to achieve agreement.'* Black (2003) adds however, that, *'sometimes, these agreements and arguments fail and are not achieved, particularly when the parties involved think differently in some basic or deeply held way.'* As will be discussed later, some VCMs strongly felt that imposing KS on C- students was wrong, and most VTs did not think teaching remedial education to be their job. HKS/C(257) pointed out, *'you can take a horse to water but you can't make them drink, can you? You can set as many policies as you like and if people don't want to do it...'*

Managers appeared to be trying to create organisational cultures in which every department had *'shared values and beliefs about what is important'*, (CIPD, 2007), in which it is *assumed* that the vocational staffs *should* accept the importance of KS. HKS/C(249) introduced mandatory staff development days to *'sell'* KS positively, which resulted in, *'much more of a compliant mood.'* Such normative models which focus on cooperation and compliance do not appear to be working as well as had been hoped with the vocational staffs however. Where this failed, the rationalist approach of *'enforcement and deterrents,'* seem to have been adopted as *'the best way to deter non-conformists'* (Zaelke *et al*, 2005, p. 54). In making VCMs responsible for their own KS provision, they became vulnerable to consequences of non conformity. As expressed by HKS/C(297) *'in the end you've got to make them do it haven't you?'*

Thus, the socialisation of vocational staffs continues in the hope that if they are treated consistently in terms of certain basic assumptions, they will come eventually to behave according to those assumptions (McGregor, 1960). That said, most managers were sympathetic towards vocational staffs having to take on KS and appeared concerned at

the possibility of VTs being pressurised by their VCMs to deliver subjects they were not comfortable with. By and large, managers' dealings with vocational colleagues were fair and empathetic, which could be one reason why it has taken so long to get the vocational personnel on board with KS. The statement by HKS/E(87) reflects a general attitude towards vocational staffs,

> *'I think it's quite important that when you talk about literacy and numeracy completing, you don't end up with the tail wagging the dog. And this is a problem sometimes in SfL[1]. That you get people who actually are so passionate about it that they forget that students actually have got other units to complete and coursework they have to do and work assessment. I think that what sometimes happens is that the balance almost shifts the other way in terms of SfL and KS, and we get certain pressures from certain area 'have you completed your KS?' And I'm the KS manager, so that's what's important to me, but I would hate to think that students were missing out on vital important coursework because someone, somewhere was just obsession about KS.'*

6.1.5 KS capability

This section covers the points of the two sub-categories of (i) Ability of students to do KS and (ii) The shortage of qualified and competent tutors in KS

(i) Ability of students to do KS

Managers reported large numbers of students entering their colleges with very poor reading, writing and maths ability and felt they were being asked to 'educate' these students in environments that largely and traditionally existed for supplying post-school training. Many believed it was not possible to raise their students' skills levels to the required L2 in the time they had to achieve it. HKS/C(124) gave a familiar student description,

> *'They have got a reading age of 7.5 – 9.5'*
>
> *'They can't string a sentence together, let alone put a full stop and a capital letter.'*

Managers felt that students should not be entering FE without having first acquired a minimum level of maths and English attainment. It was also reported that it was not only students with C- GCSE grades who lacked this basic underpinning knowledge. Comments from HKS/C(106) reflects common views,

[1] SfL means Skills for Life, a new term applied to KS and BS jointly.

'The fundamental issue is, it shouldn't be taught in colleges at all, because it should be taught in school. Students should come with adequate literacy and numeracy skills, and whether that means re-thinking the GCSE programme or re-thinking the long-term school strategy where students can read, write and are numerate adequately...we wouldn't have this issue at 16'

Co+HKS+TG/1(62) agreed,

'I'm always appalled with the students' level of number skills. I mean, when they get the calculator out to divide 30 by 3, I think, you know, where are we, and those people probably got a B at GCSE, so I think that's very concerning.'

IV/A(297) found that some students,

'seem to struggle with KS and yet seem to have good GCSE grades. We have people who we screen who ought to be doing a low level of KS and if you look at their original assessment results, may have got a C at GCSE, so there does seem to be a big miss-match between the two qualifications and yet they are the same...or are they? When KS were initially being launched, they were launched as something different from GCSEs, entirely different.'

There were further issues regarding differences between the content and requirements of GCSEs and those of KS. HKS/C(145) pointed out,

'GCSEs concentrate on slightly different skills. Very often, the initial screening materials[1] that are advocated by whoever, are testing different skills. So they are tested for spelling, grammar and punctuation, and actually, students haven't been tested on that at school. So there's a huge mismatch between what they achieved at their GCSE and what we're expecting them to do for KS or BS.'

Doubts were also cast on the *learning* of KS that occurred at college. Co+HKS/E(396) reported, *'the girls that get through the KS exams are basically the ones that when they started, had the knowledge anyway.'* This was confirmed by Co+HKS+TG/1(65), *'I'm not sure if the AoN actually raises their skills level an awful lot, though some students may argue it does. The trouble here is the student who chooses to do AoN has already got reasonable number skills[2].'*

(ii) The shortage of qualified and competent tutors in KS

Case-studies were staffed by designated KS tutors, not VTs, although one VT assisted in KS lessons. Managers in general had few criticisms of their KS tutors and struggled

[1] HKS/C is referring to the KS ability screening that students undergo on college entry.
[2] What Co+HKS+TG/1 means by reasonable number skills is a C+ graded GCSE.

to adequately staff their KS positions, finding this a key issue in managing their overall KS provision. One college permanently used agency staff. The experience of Co+HKS/F(55) was not unusual,

> *'Our lack, or limitation, is that we would like to have an increase in the number of permanent qualified experienced tutors in KS. We are sometimes spending more time dealing with disciplinary issues, because the tutors are not as confident with dealing with students, and there is more mentoring perhaps than we have got sufficient time for. Any time we spend in doing that, we have less time to deal with our own[1] issues.'*

HKS/A(171 and 456) believed that lack of KS competent staff was not helped by the fact that they could only afford limited numbers of full time KS posts and believed that the more skilled, qualified tutors in specialist subjects such as mathematics were not generally found in the part-time sector. Co+HKS/E(45) however, thought it was not always about qualifications, often more about expertise,

> *'you don't always have the right match of staff with the right degree of expertise. We have people with maths degrees who couldn't teach L1 learners because of their requirements.'*

One college made BS qualifications mandatory for tutors, but in general, KS qualifications were not required in order to deliver it. One manager asked for tutors to be competent in them[2]. A familiar picture of how new tutors were introduced to KS was given by Co+HKS+TD/2(96), *'The general process is that we give the tutors a copy of the KS syllabus and ask them to review a couple of units, which they would feel comfortable working towards and with.'*

The quality and competence of KS tutors was largely monitored via the IV process, which checked the completed portfolio work of students.

Management generally expressed little confidence in the VCMs having control over their own KS provision. Remarks from HKS/E(329) expressed a common view,

> *'Some tutors (vocational) are light on their hours and courses. For some heads of school or team managers, it is easier to tack the hours on to someone who is lighter on hours than it is to actually get a qualified[3] person in to do that.'*

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[1] In this case; management, training and tutoring duties and issues that Co+HKS+TD/2 had to undertake.
[2] How this competency was judged was not altogether clear, but it appeared to be largely judged by the academic level of the person, i.e., someone coming from an engineering background would be deemed to have a reasonable level of mathematic ability.
[3] Meaning qualified in KS, or a subject specialist.

Co+HKS/E(329) added that whilst some VTs were very good, *'We've got some who should not be timetabled to do anything...but are ending up with KS.'* Most managers believed VTs lacked KS ability - *'especially in numeracy,'* which was considered to be *'a big factor for their reluctance to teach it'*. HKS/A felt this was translated to students because the VTs had themselves switched off. Apart from VTs, *'who can't do KS themselves,'* HKS/A(7) thought it was because they regarded KS as, *'extra work.'*

However, in spite of such concerns, managers again, empathised with VTs. As HKS/C(171) said, *'they need an experienced tutor, a tutor experienced in their own right. If you're a BS tutor you wouldn't expect to be experienced in carpentry, but what we are expecting is carpentry tutors to be experienced in the delivery of BS and KS.'*

In spite of such reported lack of ability, KS training was not evidently offered to VTs in many colleges, either by the KS or vocational departments. Where it was, training was voluntary. However, as it is not government policy for *KS tutors* to hold a qualification in KS, it is hard to see how a demand can be placed on the VTs to become so qualified.

6.1.6 Review

Although the KS2000 had reportedly been difficult to set up, managers were pleased with their progress in terms of the KS instructional systems they had in place.

Managers agreed with the concept of KS but had concerns about its content, qualification systems and expectations in regards to their students' gaining qualifications.

Managers were knowledgeable about KS2000, its specifications, funding and purpose[1]. Most believed KS targeted non-academic vocational students and was remedial in its focus, KS2000 largely being considered to have been devised to improve skills for employment.

The majority experienced negative reactions towards KS when they introduced them and still grappled with resistance to KS from vocational staffs with whom they appeared to be having an on-going culture struggle. Five years of endeavour to socialise them has had limited success.

[1] As laid down by the QCA

In colleges where responsibility for KS provision lay with vocational departments, it appeared to cause problems for KS managers. In spite of this however, managers were empathetic towards the vocational staffs' reluctance to take on KS. Managers felt that many VTs were unable to do the KS themselves and were unwilling to take on the extra work they involved. These were however, largely reported, without rancour, as being the reality of the situation. Funding from government to train staff was deemed to be insufficient and training and qualification was left as a college decision, as government had no requirements for tutors to be KS qualified. A general shortage of qualified and competent staff affected most colleges.

Every manager was realistic as to what KS success they could achieve with many of their students, given the large numbers with poor levels of maths and English ability. Most felt that FE was not the place to 'educate' these students, school was. Many appeared satisfied that their KS tutors were doing what they could to achieve some KS success with students, but the results and outcomes were reportedly poor. There was a general feeling that, in time, with more qualified staffs, better vocational support and much improved schooling, this situation might improve.

Whilst managers were fully aware of students' lack of underpinning knowledge, they appeared to have a general lack of awareness of students' behaviour in KS lessons, and the problems their tutors were facing in this regard. These issues are taken up again later.

6.2 The case-study tutors

As shown in table 6-1 there were eleven case-studies (a KS tutor and his or her cohort of students) conducted across seven colleges. In Colleges A, B, C, and D, two case-studies were carried out, and in Colleges E, F and G, one case-study was conducted. In total however, there were twelve participating tutors. In College C, the *two* case-studies had the *same two tutors*, and in College G, the *one* case-study had the *same two tutors*. In both Colleges C and G, the tutors delivered different KS subjects.

Table 6-1 Cases studies and tutors

College	Case study reference	Primary teaching styles
A	A1	T/A1
	A2	Co+T/A2
B	B1	T/B1
	B2	T/B2
C	C1	T/C1 and T/C2
	C2	T/C1 and T/C2
D	D1	T/D1
	D2	Co+HKS/D/TD2
E	E1	TE1
F	F1	TF1
G	G1	Co+HKSG/TG1 and TG2
	G2	Co+HKSG/TG1 and TG2

Eight tutors held full time KS tutor posts, one worked twenty six hours, one was from an agency and worked variable hours[1], one tutor was the vocational Co as well as KS tutor, and two were Co+HKS[2]. Three tutors came to KS from other positions and subjects within their organisations and nine were engaged specifically as KS tutors from outside.

Nine umbrella categories were created from the case-study tutor groups' interviews and classroom observations:

1. Organisation of KS in the classroom
2. Perception of role
3. Understanding of KS
4. Relationships with others
5. The efficacy of the KS curriculum
6. The qualification systems

[1] The agency staff member was not classified as full or part time.
[2] Coordinator's duties included 28 teaching hours per week.

7. The effect of doing KS on students
8. Students' capacities to do KS
9. The effect of delivering/teaching KS on them

6.2.1 Organisation of KS in the classroom

This section covers points under the four sub-categories of (i) Teaching styles (ii) Structure and ordering of programmes (iii) Teaching methods and (iv) Arrangement of space.

(i) Teaching styles

Each tutor had his or her own style of teaching, influenced by two factors - the prescriptive nature of KS themselves and whether or not they were centrally or vocationally controlled. Most tutors used a formal approach in their lessons - they focussed on and controlled the flow of content of KS, from which students created the evidence for their portfolios.

Co+T/A2(137) used a demonstrator teaching style, indicating what skills and processes the students needed to evidence their portfolios and then coached and guided them to develop and apply that knowledge,

> *'This is the assignment. This is what I want done. You can get this done for the 2nd week of your next block year. Bring it in, we'll go through it, and I'll show you how to do it.'*

A small number of tutors were facilitators. Their teaching styles focussed on activities and student-centred learning, placing the responsibility on to the students to take the initiative for meeting the demands of various learning tasks. T/C1(39) used a lot of group discussions because, *'the students enjoy it very much'.*

T/F1 operated a delegator teaching style, placing much control and responsibility for learning on the students and acted in an advisory and consultative role. T/F1 gave small group tutorials in which she told students what needed to be done (formally), but after this, they went off and did the work independently, only referring back to her for help, *'I find that works better for them and better for me.'* – T/F1(225)

Table 6-2 Table of primary teaching styles

College	Case study reference	Primary teaching styles
A	A1	Formal lesson
	A2	Demonstrator
B	B1	Formal lesson
	B2	Formal lesson
C	C1	Facilitator
	C2	Formal lesson
D	D1	Formal lesson
	D2	Formal lesson
E	E1	Formal lesson
F	F1	Delegator
G	G1	Formal lesson
	G2	Formal lesson

(ii) Structure and ordering of programmes

All tutors delivered a minimum of one KS at L1 to their foundation students. Two delivered all three main KS to their group and one tutor included a WKS in her KS programme.

It was largely left to tutors' discretion, unless dictated by vocational areas (as with the CA's MVT groups), to set students' KS *level*, basing them on prior GCSE grades and diagnostic test results. Where appropriate, tutors arranged for BS tuition instead of KS and student learning support. For the most part, if not directed otherwise, tutors worked with levels set out in their students' course NQF[1] (see Chapter 1) and commonly operated the proxy system of exemption from L1 exams for C+ GCSE graded students.

Which subject the groups undertook in their first year was primarily dictated by the vocational AB requirements or by the college (at senior management level). As T/A1(221) explained,

> *'They have to complete their L1 in the first year. If they move into an employed situation through the college agencies and they become apprentices.'*

Where the vocational ABs did not demand KS, such as with the CACHE students in College B, the vocational area or senior management decided which KS would be done, reportedly selected with progression through the course in mind. As VT/B(51) explained,

> *'We do have those links that say you have to be at a certain level of KS to progress on to the next course (year 2).'*

[1] The NQF sets out that learners undergo L1 KS in year 1, KS L2 in year 2, KS L3 in year 3.

College C required their foundation students to complete an English Speaking Programme (ESP)[1] to run alongside their KS (see College C's portrait), the purpose of which was to increase their confidence. This was the only college found doing such extra programmes.

Some tutors were accessing various KS on-line teaching programmes. T/F1(265) used one called 'Blackboard', finding she could put links on it to take students through KS in an interactive way. T/B1(281) put students on a programme called KS 4U,

> *'a website that will go through tutorials on line. The tutors on line are so detailed and helpful that they are gaining knowledge.'*

On-line KS testing, introduced in 2004, was used by T/A1(250), who found it a,

> *'Godsend, because we can put them in for number L1 when we feel they are capable of it.'*

At the time of this research however, twice-yearly KS exam timetables were being operated across most colleges.

In each case, tutors expected to play a full or significant part in designing KS materials themselves that they subsequently delivered. A minority had been given course units from vocational areas to adapt for their KS programmes. Some tutors were using, to a greater or lesser extent, materials that reflected their students' vocational courses e.g. hairdressing students designing a salon and measuring volumes for hair products for AoN. This initiative came from the tutors themselves, who used it to motivate their students into accepting and doing KS, by giving them some vocational, contextual meaning. The majority of tutors believed students *should* be able to relate the KS work to their life and chosen vocation. As T/C1(88) believed,

> *'it's important that they see how it's relevant to them personally,'*

and T/B1(242) felt that,

> *'if nothing else, the integration is a great motivation and a success for retention.'*

T/D1/222 thought KS should be,

> *'taught as part of life, otherwise they're not interested. They don't see the relevance, they don't do it. That's what KS is all about, isn't it?'*

[1] The educational level of the ESP is below L1 KS.

T/A1 and T/A2, both engaged in the same vocational area, used vocational assignments to evidence KS - *Health and Safety at Work* and *Designing a workshop.* As T/A1(55) explained that the work his students did,

> *'can be transferred into their NVQ, and one assignment is also used for the new Technical Certificate...so there's a qualification there. So, in fact, it's quite a roll-over of assignments that cover these three areas that students take.'*

T/F1 used set assignments related to, but not embedded in students' coursework. T/B1 believed the only way to make KS successful was to *completely* embed it into vocational courses and used vocationally related task sheets wherever possible. T/C1, T/D1, and T/E1 used a series of task sheets related to vocational courses. T/B2 and Co+HKS+T/G1 used students' vocational coursework as portfolio evidence, but Co+HKS+T/D2, T/C2 and T/G2, used set worksheets *not* related to the vocational courses to build students' portfolios. T/G2(11) encouraged his students to,

> *'use actual work which they've been set from their subjects, using them as a vehicle for getting the IT KS, qualification,'* but found that, *'a lot of students don't necessarily have work which meets the criteria for the IT KS and therefore, we have to set them general assignments.'*

However, little difference was observed in the KS lessons[1], in terms of work being completed by students, whether the KS materials used were completely embedded in their course units, related to vocational coursework or worksheets *not* vocationally related.

In lessons where tutors did *not* use course materials, largely IT and AoN lessons, those tutors defended not doing so. T/C2(213), in referring to KS, maintained,

> *'It's not real. They are trying to make it real, but it's not. You may want to do a mean price sort of thing to find the average, but you wouldn't represent that on a chart. You don't do that. I think, honestly, it's about testing a certain skill. Why not just have an exercise on it, based on representing a certain amount of data? Why does everything have to be linked? Why can't we just have each element tested by itself, and that would be showing the AoN?'*

KS/D(98) agreed, and reported on a conversation he had with an Ofsted inspector over a piece of work he gave his students,

[1] Excluding the tutorial lessons.

'Why have you given them one not related to catering?' he asked me. I said, 'because we want the students to appreciate that the KS they learn now is not just related to Chef School, and it will never always be Chef School. By giving them another assignment, which is not related to Chef School, they can then have the reasoning behind it, ok, that's not related to catering but it's to do with spread sheets, it's to do with creating graphs. So, you actually kind of get students to acknowledge - yes, I can transfer these skills to any other area, any other department, any other job.' The Ofsted inspector, in his analysis, said he actually preferred that method.'

Co+T/A2 and T/F1 used tutorial-type lessons (described earlier). All other lessons were fixed, at either once a week or, as with block-release students, set weekly when attending college. The average length of a lesson was one and a half hours. Only one lesson extended to two hours. Most tutors allowed students a short break in the middle of their lessons, but these were not official.

(iii) Teaching methods

The majority of teaching methods used were whole-class work, in which students worked individually on their own portfolios. Co+T/A2 and T/F1 gave a series of short, group lectures instead, after which students were seen on an individual basis if they needed help. All tutors offered students instruction outside of lessons, but not one-to-one learning support. This was undertaken by support tutors.

Different tutors used different terms for the KS they delivered. T/A2 called them '*essential skills*' and T/A1 called classes '*Assignment Workshops.*' Most tutors occasionally referred to them as KS in lessons. T/B1 was the only tutor to use the full KS terminology and language in class i.e., *specifications* and *elements* etc. However, it appeared to make no difference to students' acceptance of the KS work, whether it was referred to as *assignments*, *essential skills* or KS. It was observed, that T/B1's use of formal KS language, confused and annoyed students.

(iv) Arrangement of space

It was common practice for tutors to use computers in lessons, whichever KS subject they were working on. In general, students worked independently at computer stations on their own portfolios. This appeared to be used as a practical way of controlling the class and getting some work done, whilst enabling one-to-one teaching to happen within the lesson.

Very little handwriting at desks was observed in any lesson, apart from T/C1 who used whole-class group work around desks, some of which was hand written, to positively engage her students in lessons, which were always supported[1]. Students in extra AoN lessons at College D did not use computers in those lessons. One practice KS test was observed being taken on paper, but the rest were observed being carried out on-line.

6.2.2 Perception of role

This section covers the points under the three sub-categories of (i) Teaching (ii) Facilitators of educational progress and (iii) Parental

(i) Teaching

Some tutors felt they 'delivered' KS, others that they 'taught' them. The two words were generally thought to mean the same thing, although technically, they are different activities, 'delivery,' as in 'taking something to somebody' (Encarta, 1999) and 'teaching,' as in 'something taught' (Encarta, 1999). T/A1(49) said,

'I deliver Key Skills to L2 in English, Maths and IT,'

T/B1(16),

'I teach all the Child Care group the three main KS,'

and T/C1(37),

'I only actually teach Communication, I don't teach Maths or IT,'

T/C2(6) reported,

'I deliver BS numeracy at all levels.'

Both activities were observed in whole-class lessons and individual tutorials. Tutors appeared to accept they would not just be delivering the specifications to students who would thus be applying their prior knowledge, as was supposed by KS2000 (see Chapter 1), but would also be teaching maths, English and IT. With students not having the underpinning knowledge required to do portfolios or pass exams, teaching KS was a necessity. In order to deliver *and* teach, each tutor had developed their own systems, in which they largely had a free hand. Some tutors *delivered* KS specifications to their students in whole-class groups then *taught* individuals who needed extra help with the subject, in separate tutorials. Most tutors however, delivered and taught KS during whole-class lessons. Those tutors, who did not deal with students collectively in a classroom situation, appeared less stressed than those who operated whole-class lessons.

[1] The ratio of student to tutors was 3:1.

Occasional whole-class tuition was offered by T/F1 on specific KS tasks e.g., creating a scale diagram. In five case-studies, separate lessons[1] were provided for students needing support in basic mathematics. Unless tutors were subject specialists[2], these extra lessons were not undertaken by them, although T/D1 *assisted* a subject specialist in AoN lessons.

Although there is a difference in concept between delivery and teaching, for the purposes of this thesis, the term 'delivery' is used to represent either delivering or teaching KS, because both methods were being used by in parallel by tutors.

(ii) Facilitators of educational progress

Whilst all tutors were concerned with improving the level of skills and qualifications of their students, what they perceived their actual role to be differed in its focus slightly, and appeared to be linked to students' vocational course requirements. For example, T/A1(236), whose group's vocational course and AB required KS at L1 for apprenticeship status, was mainly concerned with KS qualification,

> *'to enable youngsters to progress in their qualifications.'*

T/F1(83), who had similar vocational students had the same focus,

> *'to get them their first KS qualification. It may be the first qualifications they've ever had in some cases...it may be the first test they've ever passed. OK, it may be L1, but they are on their way to their first qualifications.'*

Tutors whose students' vocational course requirements were *not* dependent on KS qualifications felt their jobs were more to do with raising general ability and skills, such as T/C1(30), who was there, *'to raise the level ability of people coming through the educational system.'*

All tutors believed they played a significant part in helping their students to achieve KS qualification. T/C2(77) expressed a universal view, *'what I try to do is give them a couple of skills they would need when they leave college,'* as did T/A1(236),

> *'bringing it down to their level of understanding about what they need to do. I find I am the facilitator.'*

[1] The taught lessons were not classed as Learning Support.
[2] The definition of a Subject Specialist is a trained and qualified teacher of the subject.

(iii) Parental

Many tutors appeared to believe their role[1] went beyond delivering and teaching KS. T/C1(52) expressed familiar views across tutors, *'we will stick with them till they get it right.'*

T/A1(236) maintained,

> *'I'm more helpful to them than they are to themselves. So, I'm an enabler.'*

Many tutors felt that they were correcting or repairing what had gone wrong in their students' previous school years. T/E1(74) thought that,

> *'class sizes and bullying'* had caused students *'to fail in their schoolwork and they don't learn particularly well in that kind of environment. They are very much more comfortable at college and treated as grown ups...I'm not surprised they haven't achieved in some areas.'*

T/B2(54-70) also thought that,

> *'Many of the students have had poor experiences at school, particularly as far as English and maths are concerned, and lack the basic skills necessary to complete their learning programmes. The motor vehicle students that I've taught in the past come from the category of having poor experiences at school; either they haven't tried or they haven't been supported or whatever the reasons were, the outcomes weren't great for them.'*

Co+HKS+T/D2(113) explained how he expressed care to his students,

> *'We know you've got this piece of coursework coming along now, let's help you with these skills so you can minimise the amount of time you need to spend doing that task because you are more proficient at it. If you save the time, you can go on to do other things.'*

T/C1(39) showed care a different way,

> *'They create a portfolio over a year and the way it's delivered is that they do a piece of work and it's corrected, and you guide them and help them, and even if they have to do it several times in the end.'*

T/F1(226), believed her tutor role included supporting,

[1] The term 'role' is defined sociologically as a set of expected behaviours attached to a particular status position (i.e. the tutor) or as the product of interaction between individuals pursuing common goals (i.e. the tutor and student).

'the students in any sort of area that they need supporting, referring for counselling - things like this is my tutorial role.'

Pastoral care is very much a part of today's educational ideology and is set out as an entitlement in Curriculum 2000 Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE[1]). In every case, the tutors could be said to be operating within their classrooms what Burbules (1993, p. 45) describes as a virtuous *'constructivist view of knowledge and a non-authoritarian conception of teaching.'* Each tutor tried hard to build up a mutual understanding with their students through a process of *'shared inquiry, respect, appreciation and affection,'* as well as listening and establishing trust. More than that, tutors operated what is the popular practice in today's educational system, spending a great deal of time building up the self-esteem of their students and supporting the feel-good, no-fail culture that this has spawned.

Such actions of tutors reflected the 'no failure' policy of KS themselves. Students were not told they have *failed* a KS exam. They were congratulated if they passed, fell short of the pass mark by 'within 10%' or had a low mark. The tutors endorsed this system and continually encouraged students who failed the KS exams to try again. In theory, students were able re-sit the exams limitless times. The college usually funded the first two attempts, after which, students could pay and continue taking them. How many attempts were made by each case-study student were not clear, as re-sits could have carried on into the next years.

For some tutors, a parental, pastoral approach worked well with their students and a mutual respect was evident within the classrooms. For others however, these approaches, no matter how much effort they put in, did not appear to make much difference to how students worked or responded to them as tutors, enablers, facilitators or helpers. For a number of tutors, general bad behaviour of students seemed hard to overcome, and in the end, these tutors were observed resorting to various forms of an authoritarian approach, shouting, arguing and threatening disciplinary action. What may have started out as a non-authoritarian approach to teaching their students, ended

[1] PSE is non-statutory but there are guidelines for it and it is seen as an entitlement under the legal requirement of preparation for adult life and for a broad and balanced curriculum that includes social, moral spiritual and cultural education (DfEE/QCA, 1999 and DfEE, 1999). There are also separate guidelines for those working with students with learning difficulties (QCA 2001).

up, as described by Dewey (1975, p. 55) to be *'sheer strain, constraint and the need for some external motivation for keeping them at it.'* As and when students displayed childishly naughty behaviour, tutors reacted and responded by became a disciplining 'parent'.

6.2.3 Understanding of KS

This section covers the points under the two sub-categories of (i) Improving students and (ii) KS education.

All tutors fully understood the KS content, requirements and specifications. Each tutor used the 'official' terminology when referring to the subject matter at interview, and described them as being 'skills,' which their students 'applied,' using their 'underpinning knowledge.' By 'underpinning knowledge,' it was understood that they meant an *education* in maths and English etc. As explained by KST/D(154),

> *'I'll give them the feel of two or three exercises so they can then start testing their knowledge from the whiteboard and applying it on a computer, giving them the underpinning knowledge and getting them to sit an exam 10 weeks later.'*

T/B2(80) also used the KS terms frequently during interviews,

> *'I think that the students would often benefit from having more intensive dedicated sessions, particularly for underpinning knowledge - so that's the part A of the KS, in workshop-style sessions, before they are allowed to take part in their main programme of re-learning.'*

Tutors considered KS to be specifically related to two things that were invariably linked together:-

(i) remedial education for vocational students, and

(ii) a tool to improve their future vocational and employment prospects

T/E1(67) believed that,

> *'students in vocational education, where they haven't necessarily done very well academically, if it's delivered well, if it goes with the vocational area, then it is very, very important for them.'*

T/C2(36-77) agreed,

> *'They aren't academic and chances are their main goal is to achieve employment.'* T/C2 added, *'more and more employers are looking for above average, so they can confidently speak, they can hold a presentation, they can*

do a group discussion, they can use a computer, they can use excel data base etc, they can do a bit of maths, business maths. That's what KS is really.'

T/G2(37) had a similar view,

'I think it's quite essential that they do have IT KS, because they're going to have to come out (of college) with some knowledge of how to use computers in virtually every job they will be doing.'

T/C1(30) felt,

'They're more encouraged to take on jobs where they will need number and literacy skills. It increases their chances of employment. Better employment, higher salaries...promotion.'

Two tutors saw KS as 'life skills'. T/D1(125) told her students who questioned why they needed to do percentages,

'If you go out into the real world, actually, percentages are the most important things that you'll come across. You'll all go out and get loans and you've all got credit cards. You should be able to work out what you're paying back. Ok you can work it out on a calculator, but you need to have some idea of the maths behind it.'

T/D1 believed that education for GCSEs did not provide students these basic skills.

For some tutors, KS gave a second opportunity for students to gain skills and qualifications. For T/C1(100) this was,

'especially where people want to get on to mainstream courses in the vocational areas and they maybe need GCSEs. KS gives them the option to get on to those courses, because they'll accept KS L1 and L2 if they don't have the GCSEs.'

T/B2(69) agreed,

'They can't make very much progress in their chosen field without having a basic knowledge, even if it's only to L1 of English and maths, and therefore for them it is a second chance.'

T/A1(227) saw the value of KS, *'especially as a second chance.'*

As discussed earlier, not all tutors agreed with calling KS, 'KS.' Co+T/A2(167) never saw a major difference between BS and KS,

'If I've got to teach someone to calculate an area or I've got to show someone to draw a frequency graph, or take out the end of the wall, or board tiles, then it is BS they need.'

During the observations, tutors referred to KS as BS, CS, life skills and essential skills, which they took to mean the same thing. T/B2(77) thought that tutors should not pretend that KS is anything else other than KS, such as during college inductions where it was commonly reported that KS were somewhat glossed over. T/B2 believed that KS are, *'just looking at reinforcing, and it's looking at re-establishing some of their basic knowledge.'* In spite of calling them by various names however, students in every case appeared to know what they were doing and invariably referred to them as KS.

6.2.4 Relationships with others

This section covers the points under the four sub-categories of (i) College and department (ii) Colleagues (iii) Vocational areas and (iv) Students.

(i) College and department

Whilst the majority of tutors enjoyed good working relationships with their departments and colleges, a few did not. The three main concerns tutors raised were:

1. lack of classroom support
2. insufficient pastoral care
3. pressure to improve their KS passes year on year

The average number of students observed in the KS classes was around fifteen. Given their sometimes bad behaviour and needs, tutors considered these numbers too large to cope with sensibly. For example, one group, where the tutor had no support, trying to cover all the students' needs was impossible. To draw her attention, students yelled, screamed and slammed items around, resulting in her becoming overwhelmed. As described by T/B1(143),

> *'Some of the groups are so big that I really should have someone assisting me. There should be two tutors to some of these groups. Some groups are very needy, very needy and I find that with the CACHE groups. They are forever calling out, you know. I almost imagine it in my head...these chicks with their mouths open and the bird flies back and forth with food, but they need more people on hand to do the job.'*

This was not a unique case. T/B2(126) said when,

> *'You are one tutor in a very large class, it becomes almost impossible to differentiate sufficiently well for those students to be able to partake in the course and really up their skills. And those students become just as disruptive as the students who are below the level for the course. So I think there's a case*

to be made for taking those students out and giving them dedicated work shop sessions too throughout their course.'

Asked if smaller groups would improve KS success rates T/D1(252) said, '*Yes, I think, only if you cut class sizes, smaller groups, relevant to ability.*' Coping with mixed ability groups in the same class was a problem for many tutors.

Some tutors felt unsupported by their department. T/A1(203) said,

'There was a meeting recently between some members of staff, but I wasn't invited to that, and yet they were discussing KS. It was by pure chance I happened in on that meeting. Then I was included. I found that quite insulting to me in that respect, but then again, it's something that happens...there is a support issue.'

T/A1 had also reported some serious incidents with students to his manager, but felt they had not been addressed to prevent their re-occurrence or to help him cope with them. In this situation, the college appeared to show little pastoral care towards the tutor, who went on to become ill and by the end of the year, left his job. In fairness to the VCM involved, he seemed aware at interview of the strain T/A1 was under regarding his workload.

Whilst most tutors did not feel pressurised by management to achieve success, there was some evidence of pressure on a minority to qualify students, as funding relied on it. One tutor complained that annual pay rises depended on students' pass marks, although this tutor's manager maintained she would still get the rise, with or without students passing. One Co+HKS left his job because of the constant pressure to achieve student KS passes. Apart from these three reported problems, the only other issues raised by tutors were low salaries for their stressful jobs and having to put in more hours than they were being paid for, just in order to keep up with the heavy administration. However, all tutors, even those who raised issues, were exceptionally loyal to their coordinators, managers and colleges.

(ii) Colleagues

No tutors reported having had issues with KS colleagues.

(iii) Vocational areas

The relationships with vocational groups ranged from being very good to poor. These were not personal issues between the two groups, but came about because the tutors

felt vocational staffs gave them little or no support. The extent of these problems varied considerably across the case-studies.

For T/C1(146), relationships with the vocational areas were,

> *'excellent...I have good relationships in all the areas because I get my students to go in to these areas for their optional six hours a week, so I have to liaise quite closely with them to get access...I'm viewed as a nuisance who wants to get their students in for six hours a week, but if they are approached in the right way they're very nice.'*

T/C1(32) showed an understanding of the vocational areas ability and willingness to do KS,

> *'If you speak to them, you'll find that they think they are specialists in their own area, not maths, English, and IT. So you have somebody who's interested in performing arts but that doesn't mean that they're going to be able to deliver KS, and I think that's fair.'*

T/C2(186) however, who worked from within a vocational area delivering KS, felt vocational staff were,

> *'very negative towards KS...those staff in vocational areas absolutely hate it (KS). They hate delivering it, they hate hearing anything about it and I think that negative attitude is passed on to those students in those areas and they have poor attendance in KS. Achievement is very, very low and I actually think in certain cases, staff (vocational) are responsible for low levels of achievement because you have students who are capable of achieving at both levels and not being able to achieve at L1, simply because staff aren't on board. I think they see it more as a pain, because traditionally they came from industry and not having to deal with KS and not deliver them.'*

Vocational staff, according to T/A1(191) did not give him, '*any assignments to work with the students on - they don't give me any support in terms of coming in and finding out about their students' attending.*'

T/E1(42) felt relationships with vocational areas had improved over time, although,

> *'I don't think they've got there yet. In certain areas...yes, and they've come a long way from the position we were in a few years ago, where it was very much a whole college ethos to be anti-KS.'*

KST/D(178) thought, *'some areas would work and others would reject us as threatening...saying that they don't see it as their job,'* whilst T/B2(312) had a positive experience, *'personally, I get on very well with them...I have no problem with them at all.'* According to T/B2(333), *'it could be improved.'*

T/C2(145) believed that these attitudes prevailed partly because KS *'unfortunately, in the vocational areas, are not always emphasised as part of their programme,'* and believed their lack of support caused problems with student attendance. T/A1(180) maintained that vocational staff thought,

> *'KS is something to do with me and not to do with them, and that KS is a waste of time anyway. They don't regard KS in any way shape or form. Why that is I don't know, but maybe there's an historical thing with them.'*

However, T/B1(79) found the situation at her college had improved,

> *'It's 200% better. Everyone in the department, from top to bottom, is getting to grips and getting to know and attending the meetings and listening to what is being said and fully on board that KS is there, and it's there to stay.'*

Tutors' views regarding vocational staffs' attitudes towards KS were similar to those of management, but differed in one respect - few tutors commented on the *ability* of VTs to do KS, seeing their resistance to them as being largely a cultural issue. A minority were sympathetic to the vocational staffs' reluctance, but most felt strongly that they should take KS on board and support them.

(iv) Students

In spite of every tutor maintaining they got on well with their groups, observed confrontations between tutors and students during some lessons did not appear to support these assertions. However, only one tutor *reported* having ever encountered significant problems. T/A1(286),

> *'experienced theft of personal property. I haven't experienced an assault, but I have experienced a 'close to' situation, a near on assault. I've had to withstand threats against my car being smashed up and trashed and all this is really about students who can't cope with what they need to do for KS and they react in a different way when they come here. Nevertheless, it is very unsettling and not fair...with one particular group, an implied threat towards me is (happens) every time I have the group.'*

T/B1(17) maintained that,

> *'you have to have eyes in the back of your head for those who misbehave. You have to be controlling, you have to be contributing...you have to be teaching...you know...it's just too much.'*

T/E1(232) did not have '*any issues*', believing that,

> *'if you get them on the right programme and they are happy with the work they are doing and they are stretched enough, then I don't think you will have too many behavioural issues. The ones (classes) where I've gone in to rescue, have purely been where students have already got the qualifications and what they are being asked to do is totally unnecessary or it's a complete patronising exercise and they can do it backwards and upside down basically, but that comes down to training of the staff.'*

For T/C1(145), the relationship with her students was '*very, very positive,*' and it was improving for T/B1(244),

> *'I feel I'm getting a better opportunity to actually teach those who are in now, apart from those few, the disruptive ones that you will never...I can always set the VT about it and the personal tutors do listen to me and do something about it.'*

Co+T/A2(100) also found his relationships to be good,

> *'most have begun to understand that providing they try, they don't have to be perfect or wonderful. Providing they try, then all they have to do is ask for help.'*

T/C2(116) thought his group was, '*a bit of a trouble group,*' and KS/C(100) thought it, *'all right.'*

6.2.5 The efficacy of the KS curriculum

This section covers the points made under the three sub-categories of (i) Future progression (ii) Time allotted to KS and (iii) Useful for whom?

All tutors agreed with the concept of improving students' knowledge and the idea of developing the education of those with C- GCSE grades. No tutor was opposed to using KS2000 to achieve this and most thought a separate qualification from the vocational was right. The majority thought KS were fit for their purpose and agreed with the government's skills policy.

T/B1(151) thought that, *'KS in itself is a fantastic idea, it is catering to the individual needs to upgrade their skills for a competent working life and I'm all for that.'* KS/D(36) was *'passionate about the skills you need, especially in IT and Comms,'* as was T/E1(83), *'especially where they haven't succeeded elsewhere, to get them their first KS qualification.'*

All tutors believed that KS2000 was valuable to students, either as remedial learning or re-learning, and some thought it a second opportunity for them to acquire basic education and qualifications, as expressed by T/C1(62), *'yes, absolutely, definitely.'* A minority saw them more as life skills, like T/D1(124), *'I think it is quite a valid thing to be doing if you go out into the real world.'* Co+HKS+T/G1(154) thought the KS was to, *'to raise students' level of skill.'*

Co+HKS+T/D2(217) believed KS *had* to be of value, *'otherwise there's no point in doing it...if students are not going to gain anything from it,'* and believed that there were *'enough students who are gaining enough information to make it/give it a value.'*

Part of that value was considered by most tutors to be the worth given to KS by employers, a message they consistently gave their students during lessons, in spite of their not having any first-hand knowledge of this. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is evidence that employers do not value KS2000 as much as government portray. In this respect, tutors acted as agents of socialisation (Hensin, 1999, p. 76-81), training students to accept what government believes and broadcasts - that employers value KS and they, the students, will not get a good job without them. Having undergone the process of typification and idealisation, as described by Gerhardt (1980), tutors could also be considered to be allowing, either consciously or unconsciously, their tutor's role to be used as a channel to express political aims – persuading students into conforming to the government's skills agenda.

However, a small number of tutors did *not* believe employers cared much about KS. T/D1(136) thought that,

> *'with a vocational subject, they want a good hairdresser, and if they're not very good at computer skills or maths and English, they (employers) will cater for that in other ways. For example, if it's a big chain, they can employ people to do the accounts and whatever, can't they? We don't question our plumbers' literacy do we?'*

T/E1(112) did not know what employers thought of KS,

> *'I have never heard or have been told what they are looking for but I wouldn't know whether an employer would know what a L2 KS AoN is. So I've yet to see evidence of that, although I have been told it. I don't know whether they know what it is?'*

T/G2(238) was not sure either, *'probably don't, I don't know.'*

Some tutors felt KS2000 had been introduced badly. T/B1(70) gave a typical view,

> *'they started it off the wrong way. It should have been integrated right from the start with all the departments (vocational) involved.'*

T/B1(176) thought KS would be more effective, *'if it's handled at a more humane pace.'* Others felt that it its content should be less intense. Lack of sufficient time to deliver KS to students, given that many of them were so *'needy'* was reported by T/B1(148)), and considered problematic by many other tutors also. Asked if students had enough curriculum time to acquire the underpinning knowledge needed to achieve KS, T/B2(109) replied, *'definitely not,'* and T/B2(77) explained,

> *'some of my students I only see once a week and it's sort of mid-way through the first year sometimes before I really get to grips with what they can do, particularly if they're in large groups.'*

Lack of in-class support was an issue for some tutors with large groups. T/D1(242) was *'having a real struggle'* to teach some of her students fractions, *'because they need it on a one to one, small group, and I'm trying to keep them all motivated and relevant to what they're doing. There are 12 or 14, there's only me. I've said to them (the college) - can I have Maths support - but I can't get any.'*

Some tutors believed KS had its limitations, particularly for C- students, where the highest level they could reach was considered to be L1, not government's employability L2. A small number of tutors maintained there would always be a section of students who, even given extra tuition or time, would not achieve KS, even at L1. This was recognised by Tomlinson (2004). Trying for a qualification at the BS levels was the preferred option for such students and removing them from having to take the KS exams altogether was another[1].

[1] Current BS, which now forms part of the Skills for Life strategy, of which KS is the progression route, includes the KS exam at KS L1.

There were indications that some tutors helped 'create' students' portfolio evidence. This was a practice I encountered in the early days of KS, but it was surprising to find it still happening.

Certain requirements of KS2000 were thought to be ridiculous. T/C2(197) felt that,

> *'you need to represent a bit of information in two ways. Why does it have to be the same information represented in two different ways? If it's about testing a certain skill, why not just have an exercise on it based on representing a certain amount of data? Why does everything have to be linked? I can think of a cooking exercise where measurements, portions and that sort of thing, why can't we just have each element tested by itself and that would be showing the AoN?'*

T/E1(157) thought KS options should be more flexible,

> *'I think it's good that they are part of the course, but equally I think, there should be the option for them to pick 3 out of the 6*[1]*, because I feel there's an element of students that actually would gain far more by doing maybe WWO, and IOL, rather than having to sit down and do AoN and Comms.'*

Most tutors did not feel their students valued KS. T/B2(354) thought that,

> *'the media students don't think it's at all necessary to do and it can be a bit of a constant battle with them from one week to the next to try and persuade them to do things. I'm winning with some groups but not with others, and overall, no, I'm not winning, no. I don't think it's a winnable battle. I don't even think it's one I'm willing to take on actually. After three and a half years, I'm not willing to go down that route.'*

T/C2(145) believed that most students came with, *'a negative perception of anything mathematical. They left school hoping they would never have to do it again.'*

However, one tutor believed that students, being more mature in FE and having greater individual attention than at school, *might* achieve KS success. T/D2(125) on the other hand believed that students should *not* undertake KS at 16, being that they were coming directly from school, disaffected and unwilling to do any more maths and English, but wait until they have worked for a time, and have *'matured.'* From a number

[1] The '6' refers to the 6 KS.

of interviews conducted in this study with second and third year students, they appeared to be more willing to do KS than first year students. Certainly, their behaviour in lessons was much better.

6.2.6 The qualification systems

This section covers points under the three sub-categories of (i) KS exams (ii) KS portfolios and (iii) The proxy qualifications

(i) KS exams

Most tutors believed, in principle, that KS exams were a good idea and KS qualifications worthwhile having. Co+T/A2(39) believed the examination system, *'would add some degree of credibility to the KS,'* and only a small percentage thought their students could *not* cope with doing them. The exams students were required to do in their first year differed across the case-studies, depending largely (but not solely) on the vocational requirements for KS qualification. Co+T/A2 and T/A1 entered all students for three KS exams in their first year because they were required by the vocational programmes. However, not all tutors entered first year students for exams. T/B1(208) maintained that, *'one thing I don't do...being on the front line...it is futile to make them take exams,'* and entered students for exams only if she felt they were ready to pass them. T/B1 worked mainly on portfolios in the first year, as her students' L1 vocational qualification did not depend on KS.

T/C2 on the other hand, put first year students in for L1 AoN exams and built the portfolio in the second year. T/B2(225) found her first year students', *'performance and behaviour in class improved so much,'* they were entered for exams. By contrast, T/E1(174) found exams stressful for the C- students whom,

> *'it still fails, it just freaks them out. They're going to struggle with it whatever, and you can do 150 practice tests and still pass them, then still not pass them in the real one.'*

(ii) KS portfolios

The content and specifications for portfolios were set out in KS2000 therefore all ABs adhered to the same regulations. However, in terms of procedural management of portfolios and compilations, paperwork etc, they did not. This, T/E1 claimed, caused confusion for everyone.

Portfolio work in the first year differed greatly across the cases, with some groups completed them in year one, others not. Some groups worked on portfolios in set lessons, others independently. Because portfolio requirements differed across the cases, it was difficult to judge completion rates. However, the most successful case-studies, in terms of student completing portfolios appeared to be where vocational programmes demanded KS qualification.

Most tutors believed developing work through a mechanism such as a portfolio, was a good idea, but they appeared to have had different experiences with them. T/C1(165) thought portfolios, *'were a positive experience for her students'*, and was successful in getting them done. For T/D1, it was a last minute dash to build portfolios, as her students' VT, whose job it was to work on them, had failed to do so all year.

Some tutors felt they should be consulted more over portfolio content, as certain evidences required for them were thought to be silly, particularly the need for draft documents. T/C2(274) agreed with his students who argued that their work was *'not finished,'* as they did not understand why they should put less than perfect documents into their portfolios (stages of draft work).

Overall, tutors accepted portfolios were part of KS qualification and in principle, did not question their existence. Concerns were raised about the time allocated for students to complete portfolios, given their general lack of underpinning knowledge. From the observed lessons, the time issues raised were very real. Many students worked slowly and it took significant time for tasks, however simple and small, to be completed.

Another major issue for tutors was the time required to assess the portfolios once completed. The frazzled comments from Co+T/A2(13 and 204) were not unusual,

> *'handing in 240 assignments, almost in a week, that you've got to mark, bag, get right, and we've got...probably 40 2nd years who are at the end of their FMA training and who themselves haven't handed any work in yet, and have got to get it finished in a fortnight. Um, 30 assignments there to mark, assess, give back and get corrected, and have again, so I can build portfolios by the middle of July. There's a lot of pressure. I can't work like this. I've got 30-odd portfolios on my desk that I can't get finished. There are 100 portfolios that have got to be finished by the end-middle of July, and I haven't got a hope in hell of doing that. Because, even if they've done the work properly, assessing 4 assignments, putting it in a portfolio is four hours work...sometimes it's 400 hours.'*

Co+T/A2 had been seriously ill earlier that year and did not feel supported by his department over the amount of assessments he was required to do.

(iii) The proxy qualifications

As discussed earlier, some tutors took issue with the proxy system. It was heavily criticised by one tutor for the unfairness, complexity and problems it caused within her groups, some being exempt from the exams, others not. T/E1(153) wanted to,

> *'abandon the proxy system, totally, throw it out the window. If they've got a L2, it's a complete nightmare, because it's not consistent across all ABs in terms of procedure, and it is very confusing. You've got all different courses, and you need to be qualified in proxies before you can manage to claim the awards. In terms of procedural management of portfolios and compilations, paperwork, it's so diverse.'*

Concerns were also raised about the use of proxies to bolster figures in the FE sector. However, criticisms of the proxy system were not universally made across the KS staffs.

6.2.7 The effect of doing KS on students

This section covers points under the three sub-categories of (i) Motivating students (ii) Making their students do KS and (iii) The feel good factor.

Tutors had a range of views concerning the motivation of their students, but were each observed using a motivational tool linked to the attribution theory (Weiner, 1992), which induced a *'feel good about themselves factor'* in their students. This is described by Bempechat (1999) as *'the most influential contemporary theory with implications for academic motivation.'* Students were repeatedly told that if they put in the effort, they could and would pass KS. However, according to Bempechat (1999), the factors related to the attribution theory that influence motivation in education are much broader than effort alone. They include ability, task difficulty, and luck. It was observed in some lessons where numbers of students worked hard on their assignments that they did not achieve in KS. T/B2(405) felt *'genuinely sorry'* for some of her students, who were *'struggling, but really trying.'* She thought that, *'the portfolio on top of getting through the test is too much for them to cope with. There are a lot of students who actually don't have the capacity, but do have some motivation because they want to reach that end goal. Some of the foundation students fall in to that category.'* T/B2(383).

Most tutors believed that in order to motivate their students, the KS needed to be made relevant to their vocational areas and lives. As T/B1(194) suggested, *'success in KS was about convincing students of the value, importance and relevance of KS to their future.'* Many tutors felt that 'convincing' (or socialising) students into accepting the value of KS for securing employment, was the way to motivate them.

T/B2(86) thought her students,

> *'don't always see the relevance of doing a separate session of KS when they come to college, and even if they did, they are often looking for excuses not to do as many sessions as possible. KS they see as one of the lessons they might be able to drop out of, or at least kick up a fuss in.'*

KST/D(228) echoed this,

> *'you have to relate it to the real world, even if it's not their curriculum area, something that they all know of, or a company they know of. You have to relate it back so they can think in their own head, or can understand.'*

T/C1(76) agreed, but found that the initial problems with motivating students was, *'because they're disaffected. They've come from school where they've not had any success previously and we have people who are trying to try and get them into like, get them to do things.'* However, T/C1(79) found that,

> *'over the course of the year, they can see that they need to do the CV and the letter of application for a job. They can see they need to practise their interview skills because they need them to go for an interview and it becomes valid to them when you prove to them that they need those skills and they become more interested and more motivated. By the end of the year, they're cooking by gas whereas initially they don't want to participate...I believe it's important that they see how it's relevant to them personally.'*

The change of students' attitudes towards KS from being largely negative, to one of greater acceptance over the course of the year, was observed in many case-studies. It was not absolutely clear however, why this change occurred. It could have been the result of successful socialisation of students into believing what the tutors were telling them, that future employment depended on them having the KS qualification. In this sense, the tutors were applying extrinsic motivational methods to procure compliance from their students - no KS, no (good) jobs, no money. Mostly however, students appeared to simply become resigned to having to do them.

According to T/B2(37), her students enjoyed K, *'very much'*, particularly the discussions (more than the paperwork), and T/C1(37) used KS as a *'trade off,'* with students to get help with their coursework, maintaining, *' they're happy with that.'*

The fact that many students could acquire their first year vocational course qualification *without* passing the KS, tutors considered to be a disincentive for students to do them. However, as seen from the students' data, almost half the students did not actually know about this. Where students did know, such as those of T/B2(345), they still, *'don't view it as being at all necessary'*. T/B2(194) reported that when she told her students, *'you'll want to know how to write the letter, they always turned around and said - I'll employ someone to do this.'*

Some tutors linked *ability* to the level of motivation their students had. ST/D[1](91), who supported T/D1, maintained there was,

> *'a fundamental problem. If you take the bottom quartile of students in terms of their ability and you get them at the age of 16/17/18/19, and you recruit them to do subjects like football, hairdressing, pop music, car maintenance, you can't really expect them to want to do maths, English or IT.'*

T/B2(385) thought, *'those who don't have the motivation are the worst of the bunch really, because whether they have the ability or not, doesn't then matter, because they need the motivation to do it. Most of the foundation groups do not have the ability.'*

Some tutors believed, as discussed earlier, that previous bad experiences at school were to blame for students not being motivated to do KS. T/C2(73) felt that some of his students were very capable but had a *'lack of structure in their previous education.'* However, *'there are some who are out of their depth who are expected to do L1. They aren't academic, and chances are their main goal is to achieve employment, say working in Tesco packing shelves, that sort of thing. That is their main goal, because they have realised that academic is not for them.'*

Whilst tutors generally felt students could be difficult in lessons, their behaviour drew *significant* responses from only three tutors. This was an interesting finding, given the appalling behaviour observed in many lessons of over-loudness, rudeness, disrespect and bad language. However, the tutors involved did not make much issue of it. What

[1] ST/D was an ex KS tutor of some years, who left and became a support tutor because of the administrative duties of KS. As a support tutor, he had none.

appeared to be happening was that tutors were accepting certain levels of bad behaviour as normal and there seemed to be a general reluctance to chastise and confront students. In this respect, tutors were conforming to an in-class culture that was being dictated by the students. A compromise seemed to have developed between the two parties which, as described by McFarland (2001, p.614), *'transformed the classroom against the tutor's will, into a situation 'more akin to a volatile playground than a classroom learning environment'.* When observing some case-study groups, I found the actions of students within these lessons to be quite disturbing.

T/C2(145) tried to make sense of this behaviour, *'most come with a negative perception of anything mathematical. They left school hoping they would never have to do it again. Unfortunately, when they come to college they have to and it is always quite difficult to try and get them to conform to, they have to do it.'* It is perhaps because these students are pressured to do KS that they behaved so badly in the lessons and, in spite of appearances, I believe most tutors recognised this.

As discussed earlier, tutors tried very hard to make the KS experience as pleasant as possible. They understood why their students rejected them, but still fervently believed that they were doing what was best for them, trying to give students some skills to take from college into their life and work. In this, tutors were unwavering, and did not express any feelings of compunction in the mandatory application of KS2000 to largely unreceptive, uninterested and resentful students.

6.2.8 Students' capability to do KS

This section covers points under the three sub-categories of (i) Underpinning knowledge (ii) Educational expectations and (iii) The ability to acquire KS via the college programmes.

(i) Underpinning knowledge

For some tutors, their students' lack underpinning knowledge, even those with C+ GCSE grades, was considered to be a serious problem. T/B2(39) recognised that whilst some in her group,

> *'will achieve their L1 because they now have the double tutor, with the others, I think it would have been doubtful. The others should be able to achieve something and maybe the BS certificate in literacy and numeracy would be a*

better route for them to go down, and we're going to be considering that for next year.'

T/E1(84 and 91) was concerned about the levels that her vocational students were expected to achieve,

'I can see a case for L1 being the level that they need to be honest. I'm just thinking of a couple of students where they can't particularly read very well, can't write very well. For them, L 1 is going to be their ultimate limit, but it's not going to stop them being a very good engineer, welder or care assistant.'

T/B2(143) agreed,

'As a rule, no, they can't. It's very unusual in Health and Beauty. You get - I can't do maths, I'm thick - they'll have GCSEs, but they can't do the basics. Half of them say - I can't to do it - half of them say - why should I?- I think a lot of them, they don't understand.'

T/B2(175) also thought it,

'ridiculous that so many students come to us with such poor skills. Something is going wrong earlier in their career. There's always going to be exceptions where they have had poor experiences due to different kinds of factors, but in my experience there are too many students whose skills are too poor, even the ones who have pieces of paper with reasonable grades written on them. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have the standards that go along side those grades. Very often we have L2 Comms students[1] who would struggle to produce a reasonable portfolio at L2 without an awful lot of help. You do get a lot of Cs that are wobbly. I'm not sure that the two qualifications try and measure the same thing, but I would expect a student that had a grade C to have sufficient underpinning knowledge to complete a L2 portfolio without a lot of help from me.'

T/D1(134) also maintained that students *'come in with lower grades GCSEs, or they'll have GCSEs, but they can't do the basics.'*

For Co+HKS+T/D2(187),

'if people are leaving school who are unable to calculate and use a computer to communicate and to produce information and they are unable to present information, then there is a gap in the skill. And if this country is expected to perform and compete against other nations, they need to be prepared for employment, better prepared for university or further studies, then there must

[1] KS tutors refer to L2 Comms students are being those students who have C+ GCSE grades

be some mechanism to do that, because they are unable to function efficiently when they leave school. For many people's needs, and we need to make sure they do those functions better. Less than 50% of students leave school with a grade C in maths and English.'

T/C1(62) was against the KS test, on the grounds of those with low ability having bad,

'test nerves, as long as there's going to be a final exam there's going to be nervousness about students sitting an exam. There will be the disaffected students who will not turn up for the exam. There will be those who cannot do it on the day. I mean, they all practiced throughout the year, they all did the on-line exams periodically to get the hang of it, get used to its strange medium. Then, come the day, the ones who were getting perfectly good results in the practices, fail.'

T/B2(77) felt her students would,

'often benefit from having more intensive dedicated sessions, particularly for underpinning knowledge. If you want them to reach a certain level in order to achieve an apprentice framework for example, or in order to reach a standard they can then take part in the main programme of learning, sometimes this sort of one hour, two hour a week approach currently taken, isn't sufficient for them to reach that standard.'

(II) Educational expectations and (iii) The ability to acquire KS via the college programmes.

Tutors views concerning their students' ability to eventually acquire KS qualifications varied enormously and were often contradictory. For the most part, tutors stated their students were capable of doing them. T/D1(181) thought that her students did not achieve, *'because they don't want to,'* but recognised that the CACHE group overall were *'very needy.'* T/A1(242) thought the problem was one of having to *'jolt'* his students *'at each stage and step of the way, to kick start them into their work at every turn and* twist.' T/A2(100) had *'difficulty sometimes with their lack of ability to obtain information in terms of - this is what you've got to do, and this is what you've got to have here - and then you write exactly the same things 300 times.'* For T/G2(75), it was because his students looked on KS, *'as a chore, to have to do an extra qualification, which is a shame. We do have a certain amount of antipathy towards it.'*

T/C1(66) initially thought the KS curriculum achieved its intended learning outcomes. However, by the end of the year, T/C1 was unhappy with her students' results,

'they haven't achieved as well in their examinations as I would have liked. Portfolio work, because it's been built up over the year has been successful, but unfortunately the actual exams pass rate was poor. It looks bad for me, when you're looking at your figures for the year. What can you say? You deliver the sessions throughout the year. You practice the examinations throughout the year. They ought to be able to pass.'

T/D1(153) was unsure her students could acquire the KS for various reasons,

'I ask them to research something, and they'll do that, but they won't put anything in their own words. I ask them to research in the hope that they'll read it, but they don't actually read it.'

T/D1(208) had,

'an hour and a half a week to teach them those KS. They're not going to take it on board. You will get some who will take it on board, but they won't learn it in the time that's given to them.'

The KS levels tutors set for their students largely corresponded to those in the NQF. Roughly half of the students were, judging from their diagnostic test results and GCSE grades, doing the correct level (L1). Tutors seemed to experience problems in lessons with students who were considered to be at either end of the ability 'spectrum'[1]. As expressed by T/B2(147),

'In no other system in education do you have such a mixture of levels. If you go into secondary school, you don't find people trying to teach A-levels along-side GCSEs. It wouldn't work, and no one would actually expect it to. Yet somehow or the other, in this type of set up, it seems quite acceptable that you can have L1 students in the same class as a L3 student, doing the same subject. And that is quite a common occurrence in big groups of students and it's impossible to provide a good service to those students.'

T/B1(157) agreed, but expressed it differently,

'It's absolutely intense and the variety of need and questions that I'm answering in the same class, at the different levels of so many people are, God, I tell you. Sometimes I feel like my eyes are going to pop right out of my head. I'm running here to do a L3 with this person and down there sitting beside them doing a L2 person. I have to be going back and forth. Sometimes, and I think God, I'm sure people get strokes doing this.'

[1] These levels within the spectrum were students who had below L1 underpinning knowledge or at L2 and L3, who were C+ GCSE graded.

T/A1(320) described the situation well,

> *'You get two different levels of candidate. You get a candidate who hasn't achieved well at school, who's had a real bad experience at school and is then placed in a KS position. You also get a candidate who's done fairly well at school. That's not going to take him in to a high flying job, but he enjoys motorcars and working on cars and he feels he's learnt enough to equip him for life. So I get two extremes. I get the extreme where the person is qualified to a certain degree saying - I don't want to do this - Then I get the other extreme, where the kid says - I can't do this and I won't do this. I never did enjoy this at school and I never went to school anyway - Occasionally, I get the person that's in the middle who wants to do something.'*

6.2.9 The effect of delivering KS

This section covers points under the three sub-categories of (i) Training and support (ii) The experience of teaching/delivering KS and (iii) Confidence building.

(i) Training and support

Ten tutors held teaching qualifications (FAETC[1]) and two were working towards acquiring them. Five tutors did not hold specific KS qualifications, nor were they required to when engaged as tutors. Those who acquired KS qualifications[2] had done so voluntarily and considered it to be their own responsibility to learn and remain updated about KS2000. A minority of tutors reported their colleges offering KS course training with a qualification, which they found very helpful to them, such as T/E1(31), *'The college support me very much in any training event I want to go to, to get the training I need.'*

In many cases however, tutors had been given little or no specific training or mentoring in KS, particularly, but not entirely, in the early days of the initiative. T/A1(102) gave a familiar story, *'there was absolutely no support whatsoever, no training. I had to pick up the dragon reigns and run with it, with information that was limited, and it left me fairly exposed.'* By 'exposed', T/A1 meant to criticism and ill feeling following the early mistakes he felt he made, which still affected his relationships with vocational staffs in his department. T/C2(59) echoed this experience, *'at the time there was no mentoring, I was thrown in at the deep end and I had to develop my own strategies.'* T/B1(50)

[1] FEAC is a Further and Adult Education Teachers Certificate
[2] The qualifications gained were usually at levels 3

maintained that on joining the KS team, she, *'didn't even know what KS was at that time.'* T/C2(46) reported having to find his own way of doing things,

> *'I did ask for help and it was strange that each person I asked for help, they weren't that helpful. I asked for help and I'd be quite specific. They would just give me big answers and I think that was a bad thing, so I more or less had to grow into the role, develop the strategies, because I wasn't getting that information prior to my teaching.'*

However, these statements were given as reflections, not criticisms, as most tutors appeared to accept that the lack of support and training they had experienced was due to a general confusion within their colleges surrounding the introduction of KS2000. As T/A1(124) replied when asked if he felt it could have been done differently, replied, *'no, because there was an imperative that they had to cover and there was nobody prepared to take on KS.'* T/F1(113) also said that she did not, *'know if it would have made any difference anyway. I tend to go off and learn on my own. Until you have the experience of actually doing it, it doesn't really fall into place.'*

Only one KS tutor in the study had 'Advanced KS Tutor'[1] (AT) training, a specialist support tutor for other KS tutors, taking on failing groups, one of which participated in this study. T/E1(28) explained, *'when something is failing or not working, I pick it up and try and get some achievement out of it.'*

A number of tutors maintained that if given time and financial inducement to gain a KS qualification, they would do so, but for the most part, tutors without them were comfortable that their general education qualified them to deliver KS. All were confident in their own abilities, particularly at L1 and L2, but not always at L3. T/B1(23) said she had asked her department, *'to incorporate AoN into the curriculum areas'* at L3, because she did not *'feel 100% capable'*. However, some tutors raised concerns about abilities of other KS team members, echoing views of management. T/C2(60) maintained that he witnessed a colleague who, *'was non mathematical and he was trying to explain a typical mathematical concept and he was not able to. One week into my job, he asked me to explain what to do.'* KST/D(167)), was also critical of colleagues and said they ran *'a Mickey Mouse work shop, no structure, no Scheme of Work, no Learning Plan. The tutors making up what they have to do day by day. They (students) don't feel as if it's a real lesson.'*

[1] An Advanced Tutor has qualified in all 6 KS at all three levels.

(ii) The experience of teaching/delivering KS and (iii) Confidence building

From the observations, some tutors were in control of their students throughout most of the lessons, whilst others appeared to lose control at various points. However, from their interview data, all tutors believed they were *always* in control of their students.

Some tutors appeared lenient towards disruptive behaviour, whist others tolerated less. This was not dependent on the gender of tutor or the 'vocational type' of student (as in hairdressing, motor vehicle etc). Some tutors shouted a lot, others barely raised their voices. Some tutors appeared constantly stressed, whilst others seemed much more laid-back and calm.

Visible effects[1] on tutors delivering KS varied enormously, even amongst those working within the same department to similar vocational students. Views on their experiences were very different from Co+T/A2(97), who *'loved'* his job, whilst the story from T/A1(27) was,

> *'When I first started, I was very enthusiastic about it. I feel myself, that I will be leaving KS, because I've had the experience of it and I don't feel it's been a happy one...it has reduced my confidence. Unfortunately, the negative dealings have outweighed the positive ones,'* and took failing to get his students to achieve as, *'a personal reflection on my abilities.'*

T/A1 left his job at the end of that year.

For T/B1(194), delivering KS had been an *'education.'*

> *'They have taught me to be disciplined, to be self controlled, bite my lip, rather than say something I shouldn't. I have some conversations in my head while I'm having another conversation with them, otherwise I would just explode, I'd just walk out defeated. It's a hell of a job, a hell of a job.'*

T/B1 also left her job at the end of that academic year.

An issue for roughly half of the tutors was the administration and preparation, in terms of volume of paperwork, time to do it, and the requirements of assessments, including the proxy system. A number of tutors worked more hours than they were being paid for.

[1] These were considered to be from a range of visible tutor behaviour; anger, frustration, shouting, looking tired, looking stressed.

These extra hours were a major problem for T/B1(98),

> *'Today I had to tear myself away because I decided I'm not going to be working for nothing any more today. I do an awful lot of hours that I don't get paid for. I have been there on occasions until 7 in the evening, doing things and preparations that need to be done, where I only would have been paid until five.'*

T/B1(102) also found the paperwork overwhelming,

> *'I tell you, the paperwork, it's never ending. The paperwork is ghastly. Look at how many pieces of paper have to be filled in, just for one element like discussion, oh my God, I have 148 students. It's mountainous. It's actually 12 sheets per student.'*

T/D1 would not become a member of staff because she did not want the administration side of the job or having to put in unpaid, extra time, which T/D1 believed would be the case. Not all tutors appeared to find the administration of KS to be a problem however.

6.2.10 Review

Each tutor created excellent systems within their lessons. The materials used and the construction of the sessions were very good. Every tutor had developed a distinctive style and method of teaching that, although influenced by their departments' and students' programmes, reflected their own preferred way of working. Whilst no style or method could be judged as being better or worse, in terms of achievement, those adopted by T/F1 and Co+T/A2 appeared to have been the least stressful, as far as daily wear and tear on the tutors themselves was concerned. However, the assessment workload remained the same at the end of the year for Co+T/A2, who sadly passed away the following year.

Every tutor was committed and dedicated to providing quality lessons and appeared to genuinely care about their students' future ability to find employment, which the majority of tutors believed, could be achieved through improving their students' KS. All tutors worked hard to give positive feedback to boost their students' confidence, not allowing any to believe they were incapable of being successful, in spite of having significant numbers of students with poor underpinning knowledge.

Every tutor was knowledgeable of KS requirements and most fervently believed they were helping to give students a second chance to make good and repair the damage done to them by their school experiences. In these respects, those tutors appeared to be on a mission to 'save' the students in their care. When this failed, as in students not doing KS work or passing exams, some tutors found it difficult to accept, as many maintained they *could* do KS and therefore *ought to* be able to pass them. They believed they could 'make anyone learn anything as long as they go about it the right way' (Black, 1993, p.79), because '*something can be done about it*' (Tunstall, 2002, p.506) that '*something*' being to achieve KS qualification.

All tutors regarded KS as a remedial learning or re-learning for C- graded GCSE students, whereby they could gain some meaningful basic education that would make up for this deficiency.

Most tutors felt they had good relationships with their colleges, departments, and colleagues, but many had issues with their colleges' vocational staff, who they felt, as a whole, did not support them enough in their endeavours to improve their vocational students' skills.

Understandably, all tutors thought the concept of KS2000 was good, but some were critical of its content, procedures and requirements.

Tutors had a range of reasons why KS was not as successful as they felt it should be. Apart from lack of support and students not wanting to do them, some thought it was because of the instructional systems operating within their colleges - they were expected to deliver to large groups of mixed ability students. Others felt that the time allocated to students in which they were required to learn and evidence KS was insufficient, given that so many of them had inadequate underpinning knowledge. However, in the case-study that had the smallest classes and highest staffing level, KS achievement was equally poor.

Whilst some tutors had training available to them and felt well supported by their college, others did not feel supported at all. It came as no surprise that T/A1 and T/B1 left their jobs at the end of the year[1]. Their groups observably contained some of the worst behaved students across the case-studies, who also showed the least interest in

[1] The end of the academic year in which the field work was conducted.

doing KS. At the end of their lessons, these tutors regularly appeared exhausted and deflated. For other tutors however, the experience of delivering KS was satisfying and they enjoyed their job immensely. The departure of Co+HKS+T/D2 from his post was a surprise. Pastoral care for tutors seemed fairly patchy. Whilst not criticising their KS tutors and voicing sympathy towards their work-loads, many managers seemed unaware of the levels of student bad behaviour that members of their teams endured on a daily basis.

The happiest and most confident KS tutors encountered during this study, were those who operated a tutorial system, rather than a formal KS lesson. Tutors with classroom assistants, particularly those with large, mixed ability groups appeared less stressed than those who worked single handed. Tutors who operated a tutorial type of system had the most student achievement in terms of both completed portfolios and examination passes at the end of the year. It could not be determined however, that the tutorial system was the sole reason for these achievements. Of the tutors who operated formal lessons, high levels of support in-class did not appear to improve their students' overall KS achievement[1].

[1] Overall KS achievement - meaning portfolio completions *and* examination passes, resulting in a KS qualification.

6.3 *The vocational group*

The vocational group comprised of three VCMs, who controlled their students' KS provision and ten VTs. None of the VTs delivered KS.

6.3.1 The vocational groups' data

Four umbrella categories were created from the vocational groups' interviews. These were:

1. Nature of provision
2. Understanding
3. Success
4. Overview of the KS

As discussed in 5.4.4, members of this group were largely either *for* KS being taught in FE or *against* it. VCM/A and VCM/F were largely *against* and VCM/B was very much *for* KS in FE. The VTs also tended to fall into either category, the most strongly opposed to KS were those managed by VCM/A and VCM/F. The VT most in favour of KS in FE was managed by VCM/B. Overall the numbers of personnel *against* KS2000 in FE were slightly higher. There were issues that the entire vocational group had in common and from those considered to be the most important, some generalisations are drawn.

6.3.2 The VCMs

The VCMs were knowledgeable about the specifications and processes of KS2000.

As to *why* KS were required of their students, VCM/A(117) questioned whether they *'should be a part of the students' framework at all'*, and VCM/B(462) maintained,

> *'I haven't got a choice, have I? I mean we've been told, it's on my budget, it's something to enrich the students, to help them progress. It's something the government wants to be done. I just know we've got to do it.'*

Two VCMs were unsatisfied with the KS systems they had in place within their departments in terms of student achievement. VCM/F(207) felt that a new set of tutors had made the KS more interesting for his students.

VCM/A and VCM/B planned changes to their systems in the near future, largely with more staff training and embedding the KS into existing vocational courses. Both were trying to change the culture within their respective departments by engaging the VTs much more in the process of KS. They had experienced different problems with staffs and anti-KS attitudes but appeared to accept that government required KS to be provided college-wide and therefore they needed to respond.

All VCMs believed KS were remedial education and that they focussed on vocational students. VCM/B(515) maintained they were for those, *'that didn't get really reasonable GCSEs,'* and for, *'students who don't have any qualifications at all. So they come in here and they really do struggle with KS.'* VCM/A(93) was reconsidering the KS provision to his first year students, as, *'a lot of the L1 students now need BS[1].'*

The VCMs felt that too many students were entering FE colleges without having acquired a basic level of maths and English, which caused, as stated by VCM/B(542), *'a hell of a problem in trying to get them to progress'.* All shared a view that KS should *not* be taught in FE colleges but in schools, where they felt it must have gone wrong. VCM/A(541) thought that FE was being used, *'to patch up their failure to educate the students',* and felt KS might be, *'a last ditch attempt (by government) to raise their literacy and numeracy skills.'*

VCM/F(213) believed it was because, *'the foundations haven't been laid as they've gone through the school in previous years. Whether it's their fault, whether it's schools? I personally believe it's schools, as they've had curriculum changes and it's just not taught.'* VCM/F(61) added, *'English, English Lit, communications, numeracy and maths basically. They (the students) really haven't got a clue.'*

VCM/A(117) experienced problems with many of his first year students who, *'cannot read and write',* and was finding it *'very difficult to turn them around in the few hours of dedicated KS time',* over their 2 year course. VCM/A took issue with the fact that his staff were expected to educate students who had not achieved this in 11 years of schooling. VCM/A also felt very strongly for the students who failed the KS exams and then subsequently, the retakes, which they had to do within the NVQ course timeframe. According to VCM/A, students lost confidence and were de-motivated to keep-going on their vocational courses. This echoed the 'extrinsic motivation' discussed in Chapter 2,

[1] The need for BS was in place of KS, being lower in level of requirement.

which, through pressures of the examination process, leaves the student mutilated (SRHE, 1973, p. 76). As VCM/A(575) stated, *'we're penalising those that the whole thing was set up to try and help in the first place, those being the kids that come in with a lower level'*. VCM/F(52), felt *'very bitter that we have to teach it when they should be coming from school at 16 with it.'*

6.3.3 The 'for' KS

VCM/B(460) *'really believed in KS,'* and that, if KS were delivered properly and integrated into the vocational courses, they could be achieved by the foundation group in their first year. VCM/B(226), could not understand why KS were being made such a problem as, *'it is not rocket science.'*

VCM/B thought KS were relevant to the vocations of Childcare (her curriculum area) and maintained that the concerns of her VTs, that KS involved extra work and their being scared to do it, were misconceptions on their part. VCM/B believed training and support could overcome these issues and had already begun a programme providing such training. Once the new systems were fully up and running, VCM/B(425) felt that students, which she understood did not *want* to do KS, *'will see that actually they're doing very little extra work.'* VCM/B appeared to hold similar views to those of government, that students entering FE would have already acquired the foundations of knowledge needed. However, from observing the Childcare group, a significant number of students did *not* appear to have sufficient underpinning knowledge to complete portfolio work or pass the exams.

Despite the fact that VCM/B felt that it would have been easier if the schools had dealt with the lack of students' underpinning knowledge earlier, VCM/B(599) believed that *'if they can achieve them at L1, they've*[1] *done something, haven't they?'* VCM/B maintained that the vocational ABs were very supportive and had set out guidance and easy cross-referencing for the KS needed to be evidenced.

VT/B(22), part of VCM/B's team, considered KS to be remedial skills provision designed for the many learners that come on to her course, *'who have not done particularly well with IT, literacy and numeracy.'* VT/B believed *'absolutely'* in the relevance of KS, particularly for lifelong learning. However, for VT/B's CACHE[2]

[1] Meaning the students.
[2] CACHE students are students on Childcare courses

students, KS were, *'an irrelevance, because they don't have to do it*[1]*'*. VT/B did not seem to agree with everything her manager believed, maintaining that the vocational ABs were unsupportive and actually made little of KS. VT/B(77) pointed out that,

> *'if you look at any job advert you have out in ********at any point in time for a Childcare worker, it only asks for a Childcare qualification, it doesn't ask for evidence of their literacy and numeracy ability.'*

In her opinion,

> *'generally speaking, I think everyone is very positive about it, and I think, certainly in this department...but KS just seems a bit hard for tutors who have their own workload to keep up with. I think it's quite difficult. KS tutors go off on lots of courses and they keep up to date quite easily, so that's ok, they obviously know it. It's them having the time to feed back to us I think, it's hard.'*

Other VTs thought that KS were important. However, whilst in favour of the *idea* of them, VT/A(110) found it difficult to believe, *'the numbers of students that were coming through school and could not read and write.'* Other VTs at College A, who used to teach KS IT, also saw its value, but felt students should acquire a basic education in maths and English at school *before* coming to FE. All VT/As were concerned that students should see the relevance of KS to the vocational course and were in favour of totally embedding them to make KS more palatable to students. As VCM/A(63) observed, *'anything to do with a student, if it's not got a wheel on each corner, don't do it.'*

VT/F(90) thought KS were, *'a great idea'*, but also that they were,

> *'poorly thrown together, poorly administered and managed, and with the way the ABs deliver and certificate towards the evidence that's generated, it doesn't lend itself to keeping them integrated into the subject area, so they*[2] *are losing the advantages they could have given us, or had. It's being lost by the way it's being delivered*[3]*.'*

He believed that if the content of KS were to be completely controlled by the vocational areas, they could deal with the integration of it. VT/F(49) thought that KS could be valuable because,

> *'we were getting people in the trade who could do the job of repairing the car and they couldn't answer the phone. They couldn't order parts. They couldn't*

[1] College B make KS mandatory for the course, but they are not mandatory for the CACHE qualification itself.
[2] 'they' meaning the government and QCA.
[3] By 'being delivered', VT/F meant the whole of the KS curriculum requirements.

speak to customers. So, very quickly, there was this big gap which obviously KS were/are filling.'

VT/D(112) agreed,

'I think that's what's happened in the motoring industry is that technology is getting away from our ability to deal with it and cope with it, the modern technology on a vehicle today. We have been discovering over the past number of years that technicians can't cope with it. They don't understand it and they can't repair it. That's costing money. It costs a lot of money. It's back to the manufacturers, and something needs to be done about that. KS, CS, as they used to be called, are one way of trying to ensure you've got a better standard of person in the industry, a better general education, more able to cope with the higher technology training.' However, VT/D maintained that, *'we're not getting the kids out of school that we should be getting. Let's do something about it.'*

Another VT/D(71) thought KS were '*a good thing, but it shouldn't be here. It shouldn't need to be here*', here being in an FE college.

6.3.4 The 'against' KS

VCM/A had many problems with KS2000. He found it difficult to recruit staff with adequate KS competency themselves. Of the staffs he had (the two case-study tutors), VCM/A was aware of the strain they were under to cope with the constant changes that were being made to the NVQ Work-Based Learning apprenticeship courses and their KS requirements[1].

VCM/A(523) thought KS were a useless exercise of, *'forever staring at computer screens, going on the internet, and finding bits of information that are of absolutely no use to anybody whatsoever.'* The most disturbing aspect for him was their being linked into the students' NVQ programmes through the Technical Certificate, which formed part of their overall vocational qualification.

According to Hughes (2005, p. 343), some employers' share those concerns. Hughes quotes one employer who was, *'deplored'* over *'the testing that is being insinuated into good quality vocational training,'* in particular, *'KS becoming a compulsory part of NVQ*

[1] The students went from having two years to complete their portfolios to one year. Those students half way through their course were affected the most, and the KS tutors had extra work to help these students complete in a very short time.

training.' Hughes (2005) maintained that employers agreed with the *teaching* of KS, *'but not as a compulsory part of vocational training.'*

VCM/A(620) said that NVQs, originally designed to accommodate the practical, non-academic students, being competence based, were compromised when KS added an academic dimension to them, *'they've gone right the way round the other way. It's lost direction completely.'* The KS requirements, on top of the work needed for the NVQs, were, *'more than his students could cope with. It's totally wrong and they hate it.'* VCM/A echoed the view of Steedman and Stoney (2002), that the vocational programmes have been pressured to *'academicise'* their content.

VT/A(29) agreed with VCM/A and felt his,

> *'lads have got enough to put up with in learning what they've got to do, they're only 16 and 17 year-olds. I think it's unfair that the KS comes in with a technically difficult framework. Secondly, I feel that KS is being forced onto the FE colleges, because the b***** schools have not done what they're supposed to do.'*

VT/D(33) said,

> *'We're doing it, we have to do it, and if it's useful, we should do it, but I feel that they should already have got these levels in store. I really think that the school system is failing these youngsters somewhat and we are having to carry the can for it'.*

On top of students not having reasonable levels of maths and English, VT/D was finding that,

> *'the attitudes and the disciplines of the youngsters coming into FE now are far worse than they were just 10 years ago. There's very little respect for anything really, even for each other. They seem disinterested and not willing to go the extra mile for anything, even themselves, even looking for jobs and things. The youngsters generally seem to be quite disheartened with their lot. I don't know if that's just ************* College or generally. It can't be just down to schools. It's perhaps a society thing, a general society issue.'*

VT/D felt that students who did not have the minimum C+ GCSE grades on entry, struggled and should therefore be placed on lower level courses, both vocationally and KS wise.

Students with C+ grades, VT/F believed, had a chance of coping with the new technologies in industry. Those below C did not. VT/D(187) maintained that it was not the *'low achievers'* who were actually the most negative towards KS however. It was those who already had GCSEs because they did not want to, *'do it again. Even though exempt from the exam, getting them to complete a portfolio was problematic'.*

Every VT believed KS were remedial and for students who had not acquired the lowest levels of education, and reported that their students held the same belief. VT/F(176) stated,

> *'the youngsters that I deal with have got this stigma - you didn't do well at school, you're going to have to do this now, and that's bound to carry over to the employers.'*

As far as employers needing KS, not all vocational staff felt they did. VCM/A[1] believed that it was only the larger employers who held that view, the smaller ones did not. VCM/A(206) had witnessed employers tell students, *'we want you to learn how to repair cars and be a mechanic and a body repairer.'* Some employers, according to VCM/A, do not want their apprentices to learn more than that. The more they knew the more money they had to pay them. This reflects the point made by Parrott (2003, p.25), that employers prefer to *'maintain a low pay economy dependent on low-skill.'*

However, VCM/F(183), maintained that, *'employers today are saying, "We won't take anybody who's not got that foundation level".* VT/D(96) thought that, *'if he were an employer, he would not want employees who did not have a basic education',* but believed that students could, and would make a living without it.

6.3.5 Review

The vocational group were very experienced in their field and VTs had been teaching their trade for many years. They were all dedicated to their jobs and their students.

In general, the vocational areas were not opposed to the concept of KS and believed it had its place. However, that place was not in an FE college, which was considered to be where the *skills* (practical and theory) for a trade and profession were taught. Their students should have acquired their education (KS), *in schools, before* joining FE.

[1] The VCMs, of all the groups in the study, had direct contact with employers.

Vocational staffs expressed concern over the large numbers of C- students now entering their courses, who were finding it hard to achieve KS, even at L1. VCMs were planning to introduce more BS for these groups of students, which then bring into question the viability of the government's minimum level of employability, L2. The vocational groups generally blamed the school system for not providing adequate levels of maths and English to students prior to their going to college. Their reports painted a far more serious picture of students' lack of underpinning knowledge than those of KS managers and tutors. VCMs maintained that many students could barely read and write and that even KS L1 were beyond these students' capabilities. Some in this group thought that linking KS to the NVQ Technical Certificate was wrong.

The VTs certainly expressed views that they were *unwilling* to teach KS, confirming what the management and tutor groups reported. However, given their levels of knowledge and qualification within some of their vocational fields, where high-level skills would have been required, it was not evident that they lacked the KS abilities themselves, as was believed by KS management.

The vocational group, who were the closest to employer bodies within FE, indicated there was uncertainty as to what KS employers actually required, but most believed a general, basic education in maths and English was beneficial.

Many VTs considered the students' general attitudes towards doing work, either KS or vocational, to be poor. This reflects what Soloman and Rogers (2001, p. 334) maintain, that students were not interested in any form of further education, either relevant or practical.

Whilst a minority vocational staffs agreed with KS being delivered within a FE setting, most did not, particularly the vocational personnel from the heavier industrial training areas, who were those most against it. Government's agenda to change and develop the whole of the FE sector (LSC, 2005, p.3), into some kind of extended schools, appears to be resented by many vocational staff and strikes at their *'soul'* (Ball, 2003, p. 215). They expressed views that they were being told to perform roles they did not choose to do when they entered vocational training. This seems to contradict what the LSC (2005, p.14) maintains that FE colleges are *'clear and passionate about their educational missions.'* The vocational areas, by and large, do not appear to share that clarity and passion.

6.4 The students

Eight umbrella categories were created from the students' collection of interview data. These are:

1. Understanding
2. Progression
3. Mode of learning
4. Locus of control
5. Interactions
6. Emotional blocks
7. Assessments
8. Student Reflections.

6.4.1 Understanding

This section covers the points under the four sub-categories of (i) the KS they were doing (ii) their introduction to KS (iii) the relevance of KS to their vocational course and (iv) the value of KS qualification.

(i) The KS they were doing

Most students knew the KS they were doing and most appeared to understand their requirements, but not necessarily in KS terms. For example St/A(31) referred to IT work as, *'typing, spelling, power graphs, English.'*

Many students did not know which *level* they were doing, but did not appear concerned by this. A few students at one college with C+ GCSE grades felt they had been placed at the wrong level (L1) and found the work insulting, a situation which had already been rectified when the study began. A minority of students who had done IT at school also felt they should not have to do it again. St1/E(33) said,

> *'I didn't see the point of doing that myself cus I did language at school and I learned ICT on a GNVQ full course and that's worth 4 at A to C level. Then I've got made to do the L2 KS and it's only worth 2, so all the stuff I've already done, I'm just doing it again for a lesser qualification.'*

St2/E(35) felt the same, *'everything I already know. I reckon I could do IT at a higher level, L3.'*

(ii) Their introduction to KS

It was the policy of all colleges to tell students on enrolment that they would also have to do KS alongside their vocational courses. Many students reported having been told, although a few maintained they were not.

(iii) The relevance of KS to their vocational course

A minority of students said they did not know *why* they were doing KS with their vocational programmes and thought them a waste of time. St/D(12) said, *'none of this will be relevant to my career.'*

In general, students on NVQ programmes that required KS in order to progress to the next level of their vocational programme thought they were more relevant to their courses than students whose NVQ programmes did not. Almost half of the students thought KS were specifically provided to help them with this process and to improve their education in some way - qualifications, life skills or employability. Examples of this are St3/D(61), who said it, *'helps with my course,'* St2/D(40), who felt he could, *'apply some things,'* St2/D(34), who believed KS are needed, *'all your life,'* and St1/A(10), who thought they did KS, *'to show you're not a complete tard*[1]*.'* These comments implied that most students applied some relevance to KS qualifications for their vocational progress. Thus, students accepted, *'the authority's definition of reality,'* (Blass, 1991, p.409) - that KS were a requirement of their vocational programme and future employers. A minority of students thought government included KS in vocational programmes so they (government) could be seen to be doing something.

Overall, the majority of students thought KS were related to their getting future employment, such as St/A(74), *'for when you're going for a job,'* including many of those students whose vocational qualifications did *not* ultimately depend on KS, such as St/D(20), who thought KS were, *'good for jobs.'* There were strong indications that socialisation of students by KS tutors had been largely successful in convincing them that KS was needed for employment.

(iv) The value of KS qualification.

When a student said they had to 'get' their KS, they meant 'get the qualification,' because their course qualification required it. Most students placed a value on KS in relation to their future employment. St2/G(30), thought,

[1] The word 'tard' was used amongst one group of students which means 'retard'.

'if it's anything to do with helping you in your education and maybe meaning that you get a better job when you're older, then yeah they are.'

Only one student on a work-placement programme actually stated his employer *was interested* in the KS he was doing. ST/F(156), however, said his boss,

'had a go at me. He said to me it's pointless doing KS. He says you're supposed to be down at college learning about how to fix cars, not how to write.'

Students' views on what *employers* valued more, KS or GCSEs, were evenly divided. Most students in College G, understandably, thought GCSEs were more important than KS. St4/G(122) said, *'I see them as being a more certified standard of education level.'* However, some, such as St3/G(31) though they were, *'about the same really.'*

A small number thought KS qualifications were easier to get than GCSEs but only one description was offered on what 'easier' meant, and that referred to there being no fractions[1] in AoN.

Only a few students said they did not know anything about KS, such as St/C(144), who had *'no idea,'* why he was doing KS. Only two students implied KS were remedial; St/A(66), who remarked that the value of having KS was to prove they were *'not thick,'* and St/F (142), who felt that certain people, those without GCSEs, should do them.

6.4.2 Progression

This section covers the points under the three sub-categories of (i) a second opportunity (ii) good for their future and (iii) improving their position.

(i) A second opportunity

Few numbers of students viewed KS as improving on past GCSE failures, but some did think of them as a second opportunity, such as St/A(97), who said, *'if you don't do well at school,'* and St/C(12-19), who thought, *'it's another opportunity, yes.'*

(ii) Good for their future

The majority of students believed KS improved their life skills. These reported improvements covered anything to do with their future, mostly centring on future jobs, employment and progress in their course pathways. Examples are St/A(79), who

[1] It was felt that the students meant algebra, not fractions.

thought they were provided, *'to build more skills,'* and St/D(24), who felt they would *'build up my IT more.'*

(iii) Improving their position.

Most students presented a progressive outlook. They had chosen their future vocation and were working towards training and qualifying in those areas. They were, with few exceptions, enjoying their coursework and happy in the choices they had made. As discussed in Chapter 2, students were capable of planning their futures (O'Connell, 1973, p.135). What the interview data appeared to indicate, was that the more motivated the student was in their vocational aspiration, the more relevant the KS became to their achieving that aim and hence the more inclined they were to work at them. Some typical examples of this are, St/C(35), who felt he needed AoN, *'because I want to be a carpenter,'* and St/C(32), because, *'hopefully, I'm going to go to L2.'* This confirms what Illeris (2002), Greany (2003) and Harlen and Deakin Crick (2003) maintain, that when something becomes meaningful and important to the adolescent in terms of their life prospects and they see a benefit to it, they will put effort into the task. The use of such extrinsic motivation and the 'reward' for passing KS, a better future and career, therefore proved a popular motivational tool with KS tutors, because it seemed to induce students into doing the KS work.

6.4.3 Mode of learning

This section covers the points under the three sub-categories of (i) Can they do KS (ii) Like school stuff and (iii) KS teaching/delivery

(i) Can they do KS?

Overall, a clear majority of students stated they could do KS at interview. A smaller group said they could do some of them, and a very small minority said they found them hard. None claimed they could *not* do them, neither portfolio nor exams. Even the students, who had previously failed exams, expressed confidence in their ability to achieve KS qualifications, such as St/C(83) , who, having failed, was, *'annoyed'*, but *'with a bit of luck, I'll pass this time.'* These findings are revisited later in the observation analysis.

A small number of students found KS very hard. Whether or not these students would have avoided doing them through fear of failing (Atkinson 1964), cannot be ascertained, because KS were mandatory for all case-study students. When asked if

they *would do KS* if given a choice *not* to, many (but not all) of these students said they would still do them, but their behaviour in lessons, as discussed later, belies this.

From these data gathered in the interviews, fear of failure, described by Atkinson (1964) in Chapter 2, was *not apparently* an obstacle or barrier to participating in KS for foundation level students, either in doing the portfolio work or in sitting exams, therefore fear of failure did not seem to deter their progress (Torrance and Coultas, 2003). None of the students *liked* doing exams but no one said directly or indirectly, that they had problems sitting them. This issue is returned to in the 'emotional blocks' - section 6.5.7.

(ii) Like school stuff

Most students said KS lessons were *unlike* being back at school. Students enjoyed being treated in a more adult fashion and some felt that they received better education at college, preferring doing KS to their school work. Of those students, who felt doing KS *was* like being back at school, it was in their being as *boring* to do as school work. Boredom is referred to again later in 'emotional blocks' – section 6.5.7.

(iii) KS teaching/delivery

How students felt about the way they received KS varied enormously, but overall, the majority were satisfied with the way they were taught. Most preferred to do assignments that could be utilised in their vocational coursework. Completing worksheets in every lesson was the least popular and most mundane, as with St2/D(44),

> *'It's boring and I lose concentration. Some weeks I get loads done, but then some weeks I just think - why do I need to bother - It's not being lazy. I just don't think the stuff's relevant.'*

Most students felt their tutors supported them in their lessons. Of those that did not, the reasons given were that they felt their tutor could not physically attend to them because of a lack of assistance in class and for very few other reasons. As St/D(44) said, *'he's got too many of us to get around.'* Most students thought the tutor worked with them at an appropriate level and that they understood the tasks tutors gave them.

A further complaint was that the one and a half hour KS lessons were *too long*. Their preference would have been for one hour, largely because they were reportedly boring.

Every participating student regularly attended KS lessons, although some stated they would rather be somewhere...anywhere else.

6.4.4 Locus of control

This section covers the points under the two sub-categories of (i) Information about KS and (ii) Being forced to do KS

(i) Information about KS

Whether the students knew they could qualify in their vocational courses with KS qualification or not, was gleaned mostly from general discussion, not from direct questioning. Disregarding the students who *knew* they needed KS for their MA NVQ, approximately half of the remainder appeared uncertain whether or not their vocational course required the KS qualifications.

(ii) Being forced to do KS

Over a third of students felt they were being 'made' to do KS, which was true, given that they were mandatory and most did not naturally feel the *urge* to do them (Illeris, 2002). However, when asked if given the choice to do them or not, roughly the same number said they would.

The exposure to constant socialisation from their tutors and pressure to conform to *authority* appears to have had some success. As described by Blass (1991, p. 409), *'people are prone to obey the orders of a legitimate authority, and deference to an authority can exert a surprising degree of influence on people's behaviour.'* The college and KS tutors wielded *some* inhibitory authority over students which were, *'generated by their breach,'* (Blass, 1991, p. 409) if they did not turn up for KS lessons, they risked losing their place on the vocational course. Attendance in lessons was very high across all case-studies.

6.4.5 Interactions

This section covers the points under the two sub-categories of (i) With their KS tutors and (ii) With their peers

(i) With their KS tutors

Every student said they got on well with their tutors and liked them. This appeared to contradict their observed behaviour, as discussed in section 6.5.8.

(ii) With their peers

All students reported getting on well with their peers who appeared very supportive of one another.

6.4.6 Assessments

The two sub-categories of (i) portfolios and (ii) exams are covered in this section.

(i) Portfolios

The portfolio requirements and contents varied considerably across the case-studies. Some took one KS subject, some all three. Portfolio work did not necessarily reflect which subject the students were taking exams in that year either, as in College C, whose students took the AoN exams in their first year, but did AoN portfolio work in the second.

Of those students working on portfolios, most reported having done some work on them. The majority of students thought they were capable of doing the portfolio work, but, by the end of the year, the numbers who actually completed their portfolios appeared to be small. The largest groups of students who completed were the NVQ MA students in Colleges A and F.

(ii) Exams

Roughly a third of the students reported having passed exams. Most passes were in L1 IT, secondly in L1 Comms, and very few in AoN. The students, who passed exams found them to be relatively easy and appeared pleased with their success and motivated to do more. Those who failed said they were confident they would pass next time and although disappointed, only one student reported actually being demoralised. This finding seemingly contradicts research which claims that examinations have a negative impact on motivation and learning (Stobart, 2003, p.139).

(iii) Qualifications

KS qualifications are awarded on the basis of a pass in both the portfolios and exams[1].

[1] Students are not required to do KS exams in Wales, where a portfolio only is necessary for the full KS qualification.

The overall results across all of the case-studies were poor. Indeed, the KS qualification achievements from the case-study at College E, for 2004/5 (Table 6-3) were *zero.*

Table 6-3 Qualifications achievements college E

COLLEGE E

Engineering 2004/5

			Key Skills AON 1		Key Skills COMMS 1		Key Skills ICT 1	
Dept.	*Course*	*Tutor*	*Target*	*Achieved*	*Target*	*Achieved*	*Target*	*Achieved*
Engineering	**ABC 165 YR1**	**VTE/1**	14	0	12	0	10	0

			Basic Skill Numeracy 1		Basic Skill Numeracy 2	
Dept.	*Course*	*Tutor*	*Target*	*Achieved*	*Target*	*Achieved*
Engineering	**ABC 165 YR1**	**VTE/1**	3	0	0	0

			Basic Skill Literacy 1		Basic Skill Literacy 2	
Dept.	*Course*	*Tutor*	*Target*	*Achieved*	*Target*	*Achieved*
Engineering	**ABC 165 YR1**	**VTE/1**	0	0	0	0

Derived from: "*(College E) cross college SAR.xls*"

This is further supported by an estimate of national KS Awards within FE, derived from DfES (2007a). Using AoN L1 as an example, Appendix S calculates an estimate for the qualifications rate of foundation students in 2005/6 at about 3.5%.

6.4.7 Emotional blocks

This section covers the points under the sub-category of the perceived values of KS.

Most students thought KS were useful, helpful and important in relation to their future employment. The majority believed employers required them to have KS. Statements similar to St2/D(20), *'it's good for jobs,'* and St5/C(42), *'useful in my new job,'* were widely found. A fewer number of students regarded KS in a more general sense, such as St/C(34), *'gonna need them all your life.'*

Many students felt that doing KS helped build their confidence, particularly those who passed exams which, for some, were the first they had ever achieved. St1/C(28), found this experience very motivational,

'I thought I'd pass my comms, but I thought I'd fail maths. Hopefully, I'm going to go to L2.'

Even those students who failed exams had not lost their confidence. As shown by St2/C(101), when faced with re-sits, felt, *'a bit more confident than I did last time.'* For St/A(54), the confidence gained through doing KS, meant he was thinking of going on in his vocational course.

A large number found KS to be boring and uninteresting for a variety of reasons. St5/D(113) said, *'I don't' need this ****,'* St5/D(128), thought, *'it was so tedious,'* and St/A(96), found them, *'boring in the lessons.'* For St/A(173) KS had, *'nothing really'* and another student at College A, St/A(136), thought that *'you don't need half of them in the workshop.'* Many students seemed resigned to doing it.

However, more students thought KS were a good experience than thought them bad, and said they were 'OK', in spite of them being boring. In this sense, 'boring' was clearly not always considered to be particularly bad. The largest group of students who appeared to have accepted the need to do KS were the C- GCSE grade students. Those with C+ grades were the least interested in doing what they considered to be the same work they did in school.

Few students appeared motivated to do KS. The motivation, as discussed earlier, came out of wanting to progress in their vocational programme and future job. St2/A(145) thought that, *'you need to be able to spell – customer-,'* and St/A(103) believed KS would, *'help you become better at work, be more efficient.'*

6.4.8 The observations

This section presents the analysis of the observations. The *contrast* between observation and interview data is left to the Review section at the end.

The observations covered a number of activities carried out by students. These included:-

- taking pre-course diagnostic tests
- working on tasks to build evidence for portfolios
- carrying out KS practice tests
- being given KS task instructions in group tutorials
- teaching during individual tutorials

- group feedback sessions
- vocational lessons

There follows a synthesis of three observed case-studies which were very similar in nature. The purpose is to present an overall ***sense*** *of how these particular lessons proceeded. These are three of nine formal, whole-class lessons, which operated in a similar way. The cases were from three different colleges, each doing a different kind of vocational programme. The lessons were one and a half hours long.*

Most students turned up on time and found their way to computer stations. It took approximately fifteen minutes for them to seat themselves and for the tutor to complete the register. Some students drifted in late, disrupting the register calls.

By the time the lesson's tasks were explained and students logged on, it was often thirty minutes into lesson time. As students began working independently, noise levels rose and tutors started reprimanding individuals. Usually, this was the point at which those who objected to doing KS or said they could not understand them, shouted, refused to do anything or played on the Internet. Tutors then spent the period circling the room helping individuals, cajoling students to do the work, telling some off for playing games, or re-explaining the task to the class.

The following forty-five minutes was the average period of time students were engaged in work. During this period, they demanded a break and usually got one. About fifteen minutes before the end of the lessons, students generally stopped working, whether they were supposed to or not. They then noisily and messily, left the rooms. From my observations of these groups, only thirty minutes of the lesson was in some way productive.

The noise[1] levels in class were consistently high[2] and numbers of students were often badly behaved[3]. In these lessons, I considered the assistance for tutors to have been insufficient, given the apparent control issues and numbers of students requiring individual help. Roughly half of the students in these classes were consistently

[1] The 'noise' in these situations included shouting, swearing at the computer, and singing.
[2] The definition of 'high' had been ascertained between the tutors and I before the observations had begun.
[3] This was a shared view of 'bad behaviour' between the tutors and I and defined before the observations took place as – refusal to work, arguments with the tutors, shouting, playing around, disrespect to tutors, swearing, throwing things to each other, swinging, spinning on chairs, hitting the key boards, unplugging the computers.

disengaged during lessons from the tasks they were required to do and many did little work, at most, typing a few lines. Tutors were often unaware of some of their students, those who expressed their disengagement quietly[1], the 'invisible' of Nardi and Steward (2003, p.345).

Many students complained throughout the lessons that they were being forced to do KS, which they thought were utterly irrelevant (O'Connell, 1973, p.108). The classes contained students who appeared unable to cope with doing KS *and* those just wanting to escape from doing it. They displayed their frustration and anxiety through aggressive and displacement behaviour, re-directing their emotions to substitute[2] targets, the tutors, who then became the scapegoats. None of this behaviour was ever directed at me as an assistant, nor did I witness any physical violence, either towards the tutors or between students.

Two tutors showed significant signs of physical stress[3]. Their voices generally got louder when their students' voices did, and occasionally they seemed to lose control of their groups. They often appeared drained by the end of their lessons. However, some students who railed against KS at the beginning of the year, by the end of it, appeared resigned to doing it. As the term progressed, tensions decreased during lessons, and where student numbers significantly dropped[4], those lessons became quieter.

The participation observations gave me direct access to being able to evaluate students' levels of underpinning knowledge, which in many cases appeared to be very poor. A significant number of students seemed unable to understand or do the tasks they were required to, even when they were fully and clearly explained by the tutors.

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[1] Classified by Nardi and Steward (2003) as being displayed in characteristics of: Tedium, Isolation, Rote learning (rule-and-cue following), Elitism and Depersonalisation.
[2] The KS tutor is a substitute for KS.
[3] The causes of stress are defined as: frustrations, conflict, and pressure - www.helpguide.org/mental/stress
Frustrations - obstacles that prevent you from meeting your needs or achieving personal goals. They can be external, such as discrimination, an unsatisfying job, divorce, or the death of a loved one—or internal, including physical handicaps, the lack of a desired ability or trait, and other real or perceived personal limitations.
Conflicts – stressors involving two or more incompatible needs or goals are known as conflicts. Sometimes the conflict involves a choice between two desirable options, such as deciding between two acceptance offers from equally appealing colleges. At other times, the decision involves disagreeable alternatives.
Pressures – stress can stem from the expectations of others or the demands you place on yourself. You may feel pressure to get good grades in order to please your parents or get into a good school. Or you may feel pressure to excel at work, make a difference in your community, or be the perfect mother.
[4] In some groups, the student numbers had halved by the end of the year.

Other observed case-studies

In six other cases which operated formal, whole-class lessons, the students worked steadily and reasonably quietly in class, although there were some occasional (minor) disputes with the tutors. By and large however, the students were respectful and compliant, notably, the lessons in which students were either completing vocational coursework, or where the tutors were assisted in class by one or more STs[1]. The best behaved students, and those who seemed to do the most work, were observed in lessons where there were either a small number of students all working at the same level, or in groups that had a high ratio of tutors to students. One such group had four tutors for nine students.

Students who completed the most portfolio work were those whose tutors operated the demonstrator and delegator style of lessons. It is not clear why this style made a difference. One reason could have been that these were the foundation apprenticeship student groups who were operating under the imperative of needing the KS qualification for acceptance onto full apprenticeship.

6.4.9 Review

The students' data presented a complicated and, in many respects, a conflicting picture between what was witnessed in the lesson observations and what was reported at interview. The observations showed different levels of student behaviours and attitudes towards KS. What could be described as the 'worst' level, in terms of student behaviour, contained students who displayed alienation and hostility towards doing any KS. Some students demonstrated their apparent disdain through disruptive behaviour and overt defiance. The former brought the delivery of KS *'to a grinding halt'* (McFarland, 2001, p. 613) and the latter, chipped away at the tutors' *'authority and legitimacy.'* At an improved level, an indiscernible, passive resistance was observed, demonstrated by the quietly disaffected students. They did not disrupt the class, but neither did they do very much work. At what could be said to be the 'best level'[2], groups worked quietly and hard to complete their vocational coursework, some of which was used to build a KS portfolio.

[1] The STs could be one or more of the following:- classroom assistants, learning support tutors, vocational tutors or other KS tutors.
[2] The 'best level' as in the level that tutors might prefer to teach, where students work hard and quietly.

During the observations it was clear that significant numbers of students struggled with KS tasks apparently due to their insufficient underpinning knowledge to do L1, both in their portfolio work and practice exams.

The tutors were, in most cases, *teaching* their students this underpinning knowledge, not *delivering* KS specifications. According to the KS guidance (DFES, 2002), at L1, KS are *'delivered'* with *some* expected assistance from the tutors. In reality, what many students required was far more than 'assistance'. As reported by staff, high numbers of students could barely read, write, or do basic mathematics[1].

However, amongst students observed to be really struggling with KS during lessons, some of whom had also failed exams, were those who had maintained at interview, they could do KS and expressed confidence in their own abilities. This finding appears to match research conducted by the OECD (2000, p. 34), which showed that 93% of English teenagers believed they were doing well in the subject of maths, even though they scored below the international average. Soloman and Rogers (2001, p. 334) also reported contradictory findings of disaffected FE students thinking themselves academically competent. In this study, I believe the reason for these reportedly high levels of self-assurance may have been testimony to the KS tutors' constant re-enforcing students' belief in their own ability to achieve and the result of their abiding belief that self-confidence was a first step towards motivating students. This does reflect current thinking, as indicated in a study by Pepi *et al* (2006, pp. 618-9), which states that the need for self-esteem that is particularly strong during adolescence, seems especially important in Western cultures. In this regard, students' data collections show success.

However, such high self-belief in their abilities seems to be akin to the *'wishful thinking'* as described by Pollock (2006, p.13), (although the term is considered to be a misnomer). Wanting something to be true may prevent someone looking for a *'defeater*[2]. According to Pollock (2006), believing in a positive conclusion (in this case qualifying in KS), makes one feel good or allows one to avoid feeling bad. This becomes a reason for not doing anything that might make one disbelieve it i.e., students stating they *cannot* do KS. As maintained by Pepi *et al* (2006, pp. 618-9), in the face of failure, *'students tend to minimize negative external feedback in order to maintain high self-esteem, increasing their belief in themselves and in their abilities.'*

[1] Basic mathematics are the 4 principles:- addition, subtraction, division and multiplication.
[2] The cause of failure.

Rabideau (2005, p.3), when describing self-worth theory maintains that in certain situations students stand to gain by not trying and deliberately withholding effort, *'If poor performance is a threat to a person's sense of self-esteem, this lack of effort is likely to occur'.* Research from the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (EPPI, 2002, p. 5) also states that lower-achieving students were likely to minimise effort.

There were situations however, as described by some tutors, where less able students worked hard on given KS tasks, which may have resulted in their feeling more successful as long as they could satisfy an effort to learn and improve (Rabindeau, 2005).

The frequently observed bad behaviour in classrooms however, were considered to be avoidance techniques used by students, as described by Borkovec *et al* (2004), in the form of displays of bad attitudes, bad behaviours and little work done. Borkovec *et al* (2004, p. 3), states that having experienced failure at school, such students adopt *'fear maintenance,'* to avoid the de-motivating feelings experienced in school. In these cases, students were asked to repeat that experience and were confronted with another threat - no academic success = no future meaningful employment because the employers do not want those without L2 KS.

This was a tool used by the tutors to encourage students to do KS, linking the qualification to improved future prospects, employing the model of achievement motivation[1] of self-belief and a desire to qualify and acquire the techniques by which to do it. However, Tuckman, (1999, p.1), describes this model as having *'outcomes'* which are *'a function of two characteristics - skill and will.'* Thus, for this type of motivational action to *work*, students firstly needed to value success in the *focus* of the motivation and its rewards, thus engage willingly in the work. Secondly, they need be able to do it. Students were generally found to be primarily focussed and motivated by their vocational aspirations, only placing value on KS for its perceived benefits in their vocational progression. They were generally observed to be resigned, not willing, to do KS. In regards to skill, the majority of KS managers, some KS tutors and most vocational staffs, reported students lacking the underpinning knowledge of basic maths and English.

[1] Achievement motivation of Tuckman (1999, p.1) includes three generic motivational factors that influence outcome attainment: (1) attitude or belief about one's capability to attain the outcome; (2) drive or desire to attain the outcome; (3) strategy or techniques employed to attain the outcome.

What the students' collection of data appeared to indicate was that students were conforming, to a greater or lesser degree, and had become obedient to the requirements and will of the college and vocational course, whichever had dictated what KS they should do and at what level. The obvious proof of 'conforming' was in their turning up for the lessons and doing some KS and for attending the exams.

From their interview responses, the majority of students believed that 'getting' KS would help them to secure a job. In this respect, KS were thought important, useful and helpful. The socialisation of students had clearly been successful. The government's drive to promote KS for employment, executed through colleges and KS tutors had been heard and accepted by the students.

6.5 Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of data collections from a number of groups, each having a different role within, and influence on, the case-studies - KS management, tutors, support staff and administrators, the students, and the vocational staffs.

These data from interviews, observations and notes were analysed separately case by case, then cross-case and presented in this chapter. Where appropriate, voices of the participants were used to tell the stories and illuminate them and to illustrate the analytical points made.

The major points from the analysis

The management group, those responsible for devising, developing and overseeing the instructional systems, whilst fully endorsing the concept of KS[1], encountered numerous problems with implementing KS2000. These problems ranged from coping with issues of provision, to fighting deep-rooted, vocational resistance to KS being delivered in FE.

A major problem for KS managers was large numbers of students entering their colleges with poor ability in maths and English and their having to impart what they considered to be remedial education to these youngsters in unrealistic timescales with limited numbers of qualified, competent staff.

By and large, although the managers had different roles from the tutors, their job being to enforce KS whilst tutors delivered and taught it, both parties worked in harmony and viewed KS2000 similarly. It was felt however, that management were not entirely aware of what I considered to be some unacceptable student behaviour that possibly put the health[1] of a number of KS tutors at risk.

Every KS tutor worked very hard, was very professional and totally dedicated, fervently believing that KS would improve their students' life chances. Whilst it was their *job* to deliver KS, it could also be said that they acted as government agents, socialising the students into accepting as true a 'skills agenda' message - that students needed KS in order to get a job because employers demanded them. None of the tutors themselves had first hand knowledge of what employers *actually* required, indicating that they themselves had been socialised into that belief.

[1] The health risks were both mental and physical.

The tutors applied various motivational drivers to bolster their students' self-esteem, which was considered to be successful, as students' belief in their own ability was very high. They constantly encouraged students to conform to doing KS and become qualified. Some obvious conforming occurred. Students attended lessons and exams and some portfolio work was done.

Tutors often contradicted themselves in interviews, sometimes stating that their students were capable of achieving KS, if only they tried harder, at other times saying their students were very needy and that some would never achieve KS, even at L1, no matter how hard they tried. In the observations, many students were unable to do the KS and some failed exams. Tutors appeared to believe that with more effort from the students themselves, more support from vocational staffs, smaller classes and more class assistance, students would achieve KS qualification. However, in two case-studies that had all of these components in place, there were no KS passes reported in one, and few reported in the other at the end of the year.

Whilst student behaviour in some observed lessons was considered to be appalling, few tutors made issue of it. I believe that these tutors and students formed a 'compromise,' where tutors ignored certain behaviours in order to get through the lessons and have some portfolio work done. Students, for their part, appeared to push tutors to breaking point, before eventually backing off and doing some work.

The vocational group were different in character from the KS staff. This group's opinions fell largely into two categories - one accepting of KS being delivered in FE colleges, and the other, totally opposed to that policy. None of the vocational group was against improving their students' *basic* education, which is what they considered KS to be - *remedial* maths and English, but all felt this should be done in schools, not FE. There were no real views expressed towards IT. All vocational staffs reported large numbers of students entering their courses with poor levels of ability in maths and English, with some barely able to read, write and do basic arithmetic. The majority of vocational staffs *did not* consider it to be their job to educate these students, given they had just spent 11 years at school in which they should have acquired this basic knowledge.

These appeared to be the 'cultural issues' that the KS personnel reported struggling with. However, I believe the vocational opposition to KS was more complex than the

digging in of occupational heels. The resistance to KS went deeper than vocational views on an academic curriculum, which is what KS2000 was considered to be. There was a sense that the vocational staff had been 'disenfranchised' of their position within FE, with the introduction and 'imposition' of KS2000, which, in general, they did not embrace. There was a sense that the vocational group believed there had been a realignment of the power structure (Lemmex, 2007) to the KS departments and personnel and that they had lost some of their traditionally held influence within their colleges. They displayed some frustration at not being consulted before, during and after KS2000 came into being. As Riseborough (1992), points out, *'subjugated knowledges'* cannot be totally excluded from arenas of policy implementation (Ball, 2006, p. 49). The vocational group felt somewhat overlooked or discounted, which indicates that the organisational change that KS2000 required, had not been successful.

Vocational staffs had a conviction that FE was not the right place in which to impart the kind of remedial education their students needed. For this group, FE was a place in which prior education and knowledge, gained *during* school years, should be *applied* to a vocational training for which the VTs had a specific expertise. They had not 'signed up' to teach academic subjects.

Vocational staffs had the greatest first-hand experience of the job market and they appeared to indicate that employers' KS requirements were not as clear-cut as government states. Some reported employers did not want their apprentices acquiring too many 'levels' – more qualifications meant higher wages for them to pay. However, one VT believed that some jobs now required a high technically-based training and thought KS qualification, for those students capable of achieving it, might go part-way to helping fill those requirements. For the large numbers of students with poor academic ability in maths and English, linking mandatory KS achievement to vocational NVQs, was heavily criticised by some vocational staff. If the student cannot pass the KS element of the course, they do not progress to apprenticeship status. Therefore, the KS are a barrier to students' chances of obtaining a vocational career - no KS - no NVQ - no apprenticeship - no chance of a (good) job.

The most difficult group to engage in the study was the students. Whilst being economical with their replies at interview, some rich and interesting data were obtained through the observations in combination with these interview data.

The majority of students had a progressive outlook with a planned future and were fully engaged with their vocational choices. Those with the highest ambitions were the most conforming, because they trusted their tutor's statements regarding the value that employers placed on KS achievements. However, most of the students who did *not* totally conform, also believed this to be the case, even those who reportedly disliked doing KS. As far as instilling those beliefs was concerned, the socialising of students appeared to be successful. All students conformed to doing KS to some extent, by attending lessons and exams.

The most striking finding from the students' data was an apparent conflict between interview and observation data. Many students were observed having difficulties doing KS and some had also failed exams. At interview, by contrast, these students maintained they could do KS and felt confident they would eventually pass exams. I believe that a majority of students who participated in this study were *not* able to do two of the three main KS at L1 - AoN and Comms. The third, IT, appeared to come relatively easy to most. However, the actions of KS tutors, constantly building the students' self-esteem and promoting a feel-good factor, coupled with the no-fail culture that currently pervades the educational systems has helped create high levels of self-belief amongst students in their own abilities. In spite of these efforts however, the qualification gains across the case-studies remained low.

The following chapter, *Discussion and Conclusion,* examines the analysis of all collections of data in relation to the objectives and aims of the research.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

Robson (2002, p.38) maintains that, '*human actions can only be understood in terms of their place within different strata or layers of social reality.*' In this study that social reality was the FE colleges and the KS classes. What lay behind these social realities were the KS instructional systems and the learning mileux that were developed through a complex interaction between the content, ideas and skills training introduced with KS2000, as described in Chapter 1 and the history and purpose behind the creation and initiation of KS2000, as outlined in Chapter 2.

How each of the college's instructional systems were implemented within the case-study learning milieux are presented in Chapter 4 and the issues arising from the KS curriculum for those who enforce, deliver and receive it are analysed in Chapter 6. The qualitative evaluation that was conducted to illuminate these issues is described in Chapter 3 and the resultant collections of data are set out in Chapter 5. These addressed the five research questions:

1. What is the origin and rationale for KS2000?
2. What does the concept of 'Key Skills' mean?
3. What are the issues for tutors in their delivery and teaching of the KS curriculum?
4. What is the impact of KS on students' motivation at foundation level?
5. What is the coherence and viability of the KS2000 curriculum?

This final chapter begins with a description of how and what this study adds to the body of literature. The research methods that were adopted for this investigation are then reflected on and discussed, and the limitations of having used such methods are explored.

The chapter concludes with a presentation of the overall findings from the analysis given in Chapter 6 and discusses their implications for the future of KS2000. There follows some suggested research directions.

7.1 How this study adds to the body of literature

In the literature review, Campbell (2001) stated that there were research gaps from a post-16 perspective, particularly in areas that study appropriate national targets for skills and qualification levels (1.5.2). The literature discussed research by Leman (2001, p.19), which highlighted that, *'there is as yet little evidence on what works, that is, the scale of improvement that we can attribute to different types of government intervention, and information on effective approaches can only come from focussed studies, widened participation, and bringing in the groups who are under-represented, particularly those with qualifications below Level 2.'* Leman (2001, p.19) further maintains that it is at this level where there, *'has been little change in gaining educational diplomas and credentials.'* The literature review also looked at the study undertaken by Noble (2001, p.33), which concludes that, *'government needs to understand and assess whether policies are having the desired effect,'* and that it is, *'important to get young people's own views on what is provided for them and what they want.'*

Taking these studies into account, this thesis presents an extensive and methodical investigation into the government's national targets and qualifications within the KS2000 and how further educational staffs have coped with the KS curriculum, particularly the KS tutors, and studied its effects on the motivation of their foundation level students, the *under-represented* of Leman (2001).

There is a body of government funded and non-government research on KS in general within FE and a small number of PhD investigations into specific areas, such as KS management in Tyler (2005), and KS teachers' perceptions in Bolton (2000) and Bolton and Hyland (2003). In contrast to the specific nature of these investigations, my research was broad in scope. It included eleven case-studies conducted across seven sites and incorporated a wide variety of stakeholder groups - heads of KS and managers, coordinators, KS tutors and their cohorts of students, internal verifiers, vocational curriculum managers, vocational tutors, support staff and administrators. In terms of numbers, some 155 participants from across the seven colleges contributed to the study, providing extensive data that led to a development of knowledge and understanding of the reality (Cook and Campbell, 1979, p. 96) of the organisation, management, delivery and reception of the KS curriculum. From these data, the value of continuing KS2000 was considered in two specific areas (i) its potential to be

implemented successfully alongside vocational courses within a further educational context and (ii) in how it is currently applied to foundation level students.

In very broad terms, this thesis contributes to the body of literature within two domains of theoretical knowledge (i) philosophical aspects of education, specifically in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and (ii) makes some small contributions to social science. There are practical recommendations that come out of it.

(i) Education and VET

The chronological account (in section 2.1) of relevant education and training legislation and initiatives from 1944 through to today, tracks and identifies the origins and rationale for KS2000. This discourse talks about the changing government strategies and policies that increasingly targeted, and continue to target, FE vocational training, mapping it over a period of time and making sense of the extensive body of literature that exists on this subject.

The study also adds to the debate on the changing meaning of 'skill', specifically in how it is now applied to what is considered to be education by many working within the FE sector. The research broadened this debate by looking at the type of skills training the KS curriculum was intended to deliver (2.4), examining the basis and validity for applying it to foundation vocational students (2.7) who have inadequate underpinning knowledge to do the KS. The study highlights the consequential *remedial* education tag (2.5) that KS has acquired because of this.

The study contributes to discussions around accessing difficult and disinterested adolescent students and how the act of befriending (by adopting ethnographic methods of participation observations in place of observations), enabled the eventual collection of rich data.

(ii) Social science

The study adds to literature on socialisation, particularly in gaining compliance and conformity from difficult and disaffected foundation students, by using the tools of motivation through building self-esteem and vocational aspirations. The study also indicates that the manifestation of motivation, effort, is, by itself, insufficient for KS attainment and achievement (6.4.9). There is also the need for ability. The analyses of conflicting data from the students, contribute to the debates surrounding fear of failure.

(iii) Policy Sociology

The contributions from this research are firstly, the study adds to the body of *'criticisms'* (CIVITAS, 2007) that have been made over the *'shortcomings'* of the government's education reform policies, C2000 included, in terms of its value, impact on education and cost.

Secondly, the study shows how members of the same college, holding very different views on the KS2000 policy initiatives can affect the operation of that policy within the organisation (6.1.4: *Acceptance of Key Skills college-wide*). The study highlights the redistribution of power from the *'voices'* (Ball, 2006, p. 49) of the vocational staffs within FE, to the *'voices'* of the KS personnel. The study shows how it is this group within FE that now appear to be the meaningful and authoritative speakers on the government's KS *'machine.'*

Thirdly, the study adds to the concerns over making KS a mandatory component of some NVQ apprenticeship courses, particularly in regards to those students entering vocational courses with poor ability in maths and English. In this, the research also contributes to the debates around summative assessment and fear of tests (Torrance and Coultas, 2003, p. 34; Tuckman, 2000) with the use of external pressures placed on such students to achieve (Dewey, 1975, p. 55) in KS.

7.2 Reflections on the methods used in the research

There is a claim that the researcher's prior knowledge, beliefs and experiences, when brought to a study, *'contaminates their representation of reality,'* (Cutcliffe, 2000. p.1479). Turner (1981) however, sees prior knowledge as advantageous in grounded theory. My experience of KS in FE was beneficial when interpreting complicated KS operational systems and procedures. It also afforded me common ground with college personnel, both KS and vocational. My background of teaching KS to foundation students enabled me to assist the case-study tutors and therefore conduct the participation observations.

Illuminative evaluation provided a consistent framework in which to study the, *'particularity of the case,'* (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The ethnographic methods of interviews and observations, especially as a participating tutor, provided insights I might not have had, had I not used this method and approach. The interviews with each participant in the study, both staffs and students, provided personal accounts and experiences.

Those interviews undertaken with students were more limiting than expected (3.2.4), as some showed little interest in answering questions, were economical with their replies and students were unreliable in keeping appointments. However, given this was case-study research, student interviews were necessary, and with perseverance, they eventually provided sufficiently rich data.

The change from conducting observations to participation observations in some case-studies proved valuable, having the effect of cementing relationships with tutors and students and immersing me quickly into the cases. Observations revealed the tutors' teaching methods, interactions between tutors and students, student behaviours and how they coped with KS in lessons. The participation observations allowed for closer scrutiny of students' work, and by teaching them, evaluate their underpinning knowledge and ability to do the set KS tasks.

Employing some aspects of the grounded theory method was useful in enabling the literature to be included as data and effective when collecting and evaluating the interview and observational data. Focussing down (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976) on emerging issues, the theories were strengthened by triangulating the evidence[1] (Pandit, 1996), and thus sped up the process of making adjustments to data collecting. This subsequently helped concentrate efforts on getting to the nub of issues under investigation. For example, during observations, some students appeared to struggle with the KS, adding to the theory that students did not have sufficient underpinning knowledge to do them. However, on interview, those same students said they *could* do KS. In subsequent observations and interviews, the study focused down on those conflicting data.

The field log diaries were an efficient and useful method of recording all field studies and capturing college KS operations and instructional systems. The analytical log was used as a tool to interpret, refine and code these collections of data from interviews and observation sheets and develop the theories throughout the course of the study.

In the analysis of the participant's data sets, the decision to use the framework of six groups of cross-college personnel worked well. As features, patterns and themes frequently emerged across all case-study data, it was clear that whilst the regimes within colleges and cases were different, the participants' problems, views, opinions

[1] Triangulation was made through personal experience, observation and interview collections of data.

and issues with KS2000 across the sites consistently showed uniformity. The diverse regimes of the colleges are illustrated through the individual college portraits, which show the instructional systems and learning mileux within every case-study.

If conducting this kind of research again, particularly with unfamiliar, adolescent students, I would participate and assist tutors in class from the students' first week of lessons. The proposed study would only be introduced to them after some relationships had been established, which might remove the initial problems of gaining their agreement to participate. The process of observations and interviews would follow. However, this method would require a longer build-up period to the research than happened with this study, which took more than a year to set in place.

7.3 The limitations of these methods

It was the intention to obtain sets of data on students' achievements using college statistics (examples in Appendix R). However, at completion of the field work, it was difficult to obtain all of these. The information took over a year to appear on college databases, was presented in many different forms and of those I received, most were difficult to analyse. For example, codes were often used in place of names, so I could not track particular students. As a result, the information on KS achievements had to be gathered from the interviews, plus whatever statistical data was both available and analysable.

7.4 Conclusion

The rationale for the development and introduction of Key Skills was to strengthen a young person's versatility, flexibility and employability, *'in a rapidly changing job market,'* (Payne, 2000, p. 356), a market that was moving away from an industrial and manufacturing, to a service, knowledge-based economy. With this move came an increasing need from the knowledge-based businesses for those entering their workforce to have adequate ability in reading, writing and arithmetic. A sufficient understanding of information technology, along with a practical ability in using computers was also required.

As can be seen from the literature review, the needs of business and industry to have well-educated employees and the government's concerns about youth employability are not new. These issues were being debated and scrutinised as far back as the late 1940s. During the 1950s, government commissioned reports were looking into the lack of educational attainment of the nation's school leavers. This lack of academic

accomplishment was deemed to be the result of too many youngsters leaving school too early. It was further believed that there was a *waste of talent* (waste of potential ability) of at least the top third of these young people. The 'waste' in this sense, was considered to be those entering vocational training (training for a trade) at FE colleges or an apprenticeship, instead of following an academic path through higher education to a profession or a higher technical training, such as in engineering, science etc. Towards the end of the 1950s, the FE sector, viewed as being a link between school and the world of work, was being investigated as a possible placement sector for some kind of post-compulsory academic education. The impetus for this examination arose out of doom-laden prophesies to government of a challenge facing youth in a progressively technical workplace, accompanied by a declining need in the workforce for unskilled labour. The prediction was, at that time (fifty years ago), that there would be a greater requirement by the nation's employers for more school leavers with higher standards of educational attainment, particularly in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Pressures from business and industry on government to provide better-qualified young employees are also not a new phenomenon, as can be seen from the criticism of government over the last three decades, for their not providing adequate training and education for Britain's young, unskilled school leavers. Government have however, consistently responded to these pressures with initiative after initiative to deal with this problem, imposing a greater control over every sector of education and training with each new scheme.

On the vocational education and training (VET) front, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General NVQs (GNVQs) were introduced during the 1980s, with an agenda to create a better educated and trained and more adaptable workforce. Elements of basic skills in numeracy and literacy were attached to the vocational programmes adopting NVQs/GNVQs and later formalised into what became the 'core skills' (CS). In FE, these were delivered to students by the vocational tutors alongside their vocational training. It was believed that the CS inclusion would be sufficient to improve vocational students' general education and form a transferable system between vocational and academic awards, thus strengthening these young peoples' versatility and employability. However, standards of student attainment in numeracy and literacy remained too low, according to some employer groups. High numbers of students were now apparently leaving FE having completed and qualified in their vocational areas, with persistently poor levels of numeracy and literacy. Again, there were calls from some of the larger employer representative bodies, particularly the

Confederation of Business and Industry (CBI), for the government to remedy this situation. Government responded by a determination to radically modernise Britain's VET system and took up the CBI's suggestion to build 'skills' and 'knowledge' acquisition into a new national curriculum to fill what was now being called a 'skills gap' in the existing and future British workforce.

Curriculum 2000 (C2000) was constructed and introduced nationally by the government in 2000. Its objective was to improve the general standards of education in schools and VET in FE. Within C2000 was a newly devised set of 'generic skills' qualifications in three separate subjects, Information technology (IT), Communication (Comms), and Application of Number (AoN), collectively called Key Skills (KS). There were three other 'Wider' KS introduced in 2000 without a qualification, although they have since been given this status.

When KS were first envisioned, they were intended to span the entire spectrum of education. However, the new KS, which came to be known as KS2000, replaced the existing CS attached to the vocational courses in post-16 education and they rapidly became a system for improving the qualifications of 16-19 year old students who had not achieved C+ GCSEs in maths, English and IT. In effect, KS2000 targeted the least academic students on vocational courses, largely those within the FE sector, which is where the greatest numbers of students with low (C-) GCSE grades resided.

KS2000 initially entered into FE colleges seemingly swiftly and silently. Staffs returned to their posts in the September of 2000 to an ambitious organisational change. The government's radical shake-up of the VET system within FE became a reality at this point. One noticeable change was newly created KS departments and personnel set in place to oversee the introduction and implementation of the KS curriculum across their colleges. In some, the responsibility for day to day KS provision was placed in the hands of the vocational managers from the September of 2000, so their groups of vocational tutors gained more of an idea of what KS were more quickly than in other colleges (the majority), where KS were centrally controlled and provided by KS departments and some newly enlisted KS tutors.

The problems with implementing the KS curriculum were immediate across every college in this study. Some of these problems were with the KS2000 system itself, because of its complicated administrative requirements and it being, in many respects, alien to a vocational setting. Virtually all of the KS management who participated in this

research reported their colleges having struggled with the introduction of KS2000 and all were still grappling with on-going problems. To name but some, there were practical issues with providing the KS curriculum college-wide, administrative problems, staffing deficiencies, clashes with the vocational staffs and major problems with trying to impart the KS subjects of Comms and AoN to large numbers of students with poor academic ability.

The FE vocational staffs

At its inception, C2000, by and large, meant very little to the majority of FE staff, particularly the vocational, who had been vaguely (or not at all in some cases) told about the KS element of C2000, which they were to deliver instead of the CS. Organising vocational timetables, heavy with the influx of hundreds of new students, and having initially considered the composition of KS to be similar to the CS, they were shown little enthusiasm by the vocational areas. Given that KS were an adaptation of the CS (Green, 1998, p. 40), this is understandable. As was shown in the interviews with KS management, they *still* consider CS and KS to be one and the same.

However, as the technical machinery of KS2000 specifications, its elements and algorithmic procedures, became increasingly visible and the huge differences in the *nature*, *application* and *assessment* of CS and KS were realised, problems with the new KS curriculum quickly began to manifest themselves. Unlike CS, KS required separately compiled work in a portfolio and were assessed, tested via an examination and qualified independently of the vocational courses. In effect, KS were applied to the students, not their courses. As far as the vocational tutors were concerned, implementing KS2000 required programme changes, unacceptable alterations to their teaching methods and extensive course preparations that they were not prepared to undertake on top of their existing workload. They also refused to embrace the volumes of literature that accompanied KS2000 and the mountain of paperwork that KS generated, which overwhelmed even the KS staffs. In fact, most of the FE personnel in this study thought the KS systems' requirements were inflexible, bureaucratic and complicated. The element specifications were deemed to be very prescriptive and, because of its academic character, the vocational staffs found they did not sit comfortably with their vocational, practical ideology and with the NVQ/GNVQ methodology. Thus it seemed the vocational tutors, backed by their managers, speedily rejected the idea of their having to impart KS to their students. Whilst some recognised that the CS had not worked particularly well in the past and agreed there *was* a great need amongst their students for improved maths and English, this did not stretch to

their delivering them. Notably, in this study, none of the KS tutors had come from the vocational areas (even those engaged by vocational managers) and none of the vocational tutors delivered KS.

There was an overwhelming sense from the vocational group encountered during this research, that KS2000 had been abruptly imposed on them with little or no negotiation. The vocational tutors in particular appeared to feel disenfranchised from their hitherto role of authority over their students and status within their colleges as a whole, and felt they had been relegated to a lower position than the new invaders, the KS personnel. As many studies on organisational change initiatives have found, someone or some group will ultimately lose or gain power as a result of such changes (Lemmex, 2007). With the introduction of KS2000, this appears to have been the vocational group. Furthermore it is well documented, that if staffs are not consulted before, during, and after an organisational change, and if the people side of change management is ignored, they will likely be disheartened - particularly if the change has a direct impact on their jobs (Lemmex, 2007). Neglecting to do this can put the success of an organisational change at risk of failure.

In the majority of colleges in this study, whilst there was possibly minimal negotiation with the vocational staffs, there was a significant level of empathy from the KS personnel towards their plight. It is felt therefore that although government seemed to view the KS2000 organisational change as merely a technical process, KS management (and many KS tutors) voiced an understanding of the impact that KS2000 had on their vocational colleagues. A 'stand-off', gently, gently type of diplomacy appears to have been adopted by all KS managements, applied over an extended period of time, to appease the vocational managers, thus making them not feel overlooked or discounted. The purpose of this action was to socialise vocational staffs and gain compliancy from them towards KS2000. Their cooperation is an imperative for the KS management (and ultimately the organisation), as lucrative government funding depends on college-wide KS provision and implementation, plus colleges are Ofsted accountable for KS achievement. Collaboration with the vocational staffs is also deemed necessary to help socialise *students* into accepting KS as being valuable to *them* (the students). However, seven years from the introduction of KS2000, these strategies seemed to have had limited success, so a more forceful approach has recently been adopted by many colleges in the study; the vocational staffs are being *made* to accept KS2000 by increasingly making them responsible for the KS achievement of their vocational students.

However, it is believed that the results of this study show two fundamental stumbling blocks to full socialisation of the vocational personnel; their deep rooted vocational cultures and their views on what KS are and how they should not be applied to their vocational students. These blocks are considered to part of the reason why there is currently no cohesion in FE colleges regarding KS. Whilst regimes and policy enforcement are uniform across the colleges and the six groups of participants share similar opinions and experiences of the KS2000 curriculum, the outcomes of KS2000 are different within each case-study. These can be seen from the instructional systems and learning miluex descriptions.

The deep-rooted vocational cultures

FE colleges are large, bustling, universal enterprises and the vocational areas within them are unique, diverse and autonomous micro-worlds with their own distinct sub-cultures. One of the pleasures of conducting this research was being in a workshop amongst student mechanics fixing bus engines one day and hairdressers cutting hair in a salon, the next. Every vocational world was vastly different in nature to another and maintaining and operating its own sub-culture within the shared framework of their college, of which they are all an integral part. These micro-worlds and their particular group of inhabitants, the vocational personnel, are one of the great strengths of FE, its backbone, reflecting vocational and trade history, consistency, cohesion, uniformity of attitudes and traditional morals and work ethics. It has been the vocational areas which have forged and developed links with their local business and industry and have played major roles in creating work placements for their students, bonding the community and its college together. Vocational staffs see their job as being one that takes, for the most part, non-academic, less able students and gives them the means, through a trade training, to go out into the world and earn a living. They care passionately for their students and, as they themselves are largely non-academic, they understand and accept the students' limited ability for educational attainment, working with those limitations to help them gain the maximum practical knowledge and qualifications they are capable of achieving.

However, there are weaknesses to these sub-cultures, which actually derive from their strengths. It was noticeable during the field work for this study that between the vocational personnel there was a great camaraderie - at times the tutors answered questions collectively and spoke as one voice. Being a member of a strong sub-culture requires an individual to adopt the group identity, and whilst this can be a positive thing,

there is a chance that individuals will also take on the negative attitudes and priorities of the peer group as well. If most of one's colleagues adopt a particular stance on KS, it is difficult to stand out against that view.

Views on what KS are and how they should not be applied to their vocational students

None of the vocational group was against KS per se, despite their energetically reported shortcomings. The majority of objections to KS2000 was that FE was *not* the place in which to impart what they considered to be basic, remedial education in maths and English, not 'skills' training as the vocational group knew it to be. Most felt that by teaching KS they were being asked to correct learning that should have happened to students in the school system, but did not. They also had issues with the level of KS that their students were expected to achieve, particularly when a future apprenticeship was at stake. As many of the school leavers entering their vocational courses were very needy, some were almost illiterate and innumerate, vocational personnel believed the KS level 2 criteria (the level of employability) was unrealistically high for these students. This view was reflected in an *'understanding'* from the CBI (Morgan, 2007), that KS *are* a barrier to some students passing their apprenticeships.

The situation may worsen however, for the vocational students. Until now, government has been reluctant to *demand* KS qualifications across the entire vocational spectrum. According to a report by Lightfoot (2007), in the *Daily Telegraph*, this is set to change with the planned introduction of new types of vocational diplomas, possibly *'risking more stress'* (Lightfoot, 2007) for the less academic students and fewer passes in vocational areas. Lightfoot goes on to say, *'the most ambitious education reform for decades may fail because of the number of teenagers who have not mastered basic maths and English,'* and quotes advice from Ken Boston, the chief executive of the QCA, that, *'significant numbers of students could fail the new vocational diplomas because of the requirement that pupils demonstrate a good grasp of "functional" literacy and numeracy.'* Lightfoot (2007) reports a further warning from Alan Johnson, former Education Secretary, that yet another, *'qualification combining academic study with work experience, could go "horribly wrong".'* However, government is poised and determined to push even harder in this direction with these new diplomas.

The KS management

When the vocational areas turned their back on KS2000, the KS management, buried under a landslide of unfamiliar administrative chaos, found themselves with hundreds

of students and few KS tutors to deliver the programmes they had been charged with providing. Unable to call on the vocational tutors, they were left with having to recruit large numbers of academically competent tutors in three subjects. Many of these personnel were enlisted from outside of FE, with little or no experience of VET, or its students. The majority of KS tutors in this study came from business or academia with no prior knowledge of KS2000. Few were specialists in the subjects they were delivering, particularly the AoN and Comms, although all were highly qualified, often to degree level. KS managers found it hard to find staffs who were sufficiently competent in the three main KS and complained about the standard of some recruited by the vocational areas, many of whom they believed should not be delivering anything.

All KS managers had issues of varying degrees with the vocational sub-cultures operating in their colleges and with their vocational personnel's resistance to accepting KS2000. Empathy and understanding of the vocational position aside, all KS managers were willing and determined to persevere with enforcing the government's KS agenda within their respective colleges. Acutely aware of much needed funding for their colleges and of Ofsted inspection regimes, they considered that it was their job to make the KS policy successful and they intended to do it.

The KS tutors

In the early days of KS2000, trying to impart recognisably academic subjects into a largely non-academic setting, inexperienced, vulnerable KS tutors, unwittingly triggered a battle of attrition between themselves and their vocational colleagues. This was a problem, given that in order to do their job KS staffs heavily depended on the cooperation of the vocational areas. There were some consequences to the antipathetic relationships between them, which remain still evident today. The situation has reportedly improved in many cases, but it still appears to underlie some of the persisting problems with KS2000 in the colleges which participated in this study.

Many KS tutors expressed genuine dismay at the attitudes they encountered from the students' main course tutors, believing that by now, the vocational areas should have fallen in line with the government's requirements for KS implementation and achievement. Most thought the vocational areas were just plain awkward and/or obstructive, although some understood their not wanting to be involved with KS, given their own non-academic backgrounds. Many KS tutors believed that negative attitudes towards KS were being transmitted from the vocational tutors to their students, which they then brought to the KS lessons. The KS tutors felt unsupported by their vocational

colleagues and believed that if they cooperated with the KS curriculum more, their student's KS portfolio work, and therefore achievements, would improve.

It was difficult to establish a link between the vocational staffs' attitude towards KS and those of their students because, in situations where the vocational areas were unsupportive *and* those where they were *very* supportive of KS, students' attitudes towards KS were equally negative. It is therefore not conclusive that vocational support *is* an imperative for socialising the students into accepting KS. It is acknowledged however, that it might help in motivating the students to complete portfolios, if they think the work is useful for their main course qualification. This was shown by a small number of case-study KS tutors who had found a way to coexist with their vocational colleagues. They had clearly built up a rapport and working relationship with their students' course tutors, usually with some mutually beneficial way of completing vocational/KS assignments. Where these partnerships were observed, the students seemed more accepting of doing the portfolio work than where KS were delivered separately and isolated from their vocational courses. The greater the collaboration between both sets of tutors, the better chance of KS portfolio work being undertaken. However, this did not mean greater levels of KS qualification.

Some KS tutors thought that the production of a separate portfolio from the students' vocational work was problematic. However, as most found that KS elements were not easily embedded into students' vocational units, a separate portfolio needed to be compiled. KS Awarding Bodies also required a separate KS portfolio from the students' main course work.

Many KS tutors used a vocational 'hook' to persuade students that they should do the KS and constantly told them that their future employers required them, in spite of having no first-hand knowledge to base this on. This was in stark contrast to most of the vocational staffs, who were more in contact with employers. *They* thought that KS were often irrelevant to their vocational courses, were not particularly required by employers, other than some of the larger (national) ones and were therefore mostly a waste of time.

KS tutors considered themselves to be facilitators, teachers and providers of skills training to their students. They firmly believed that KS provision within FE gave young people who have left school with low GCSE grades another chance to gain meaningful

qualifications. The KS tutors referred to KS as CS and basic skills, which presented a rather complex picture of what they really thought the KS was.

There were a number of issues raised during the interviews by the KS tutors concerning their health and well-being. Some found the administrational load of KS overwhelming and hard to deal with sensibly in their paid working hours, requiring many hours of their own, free unpaid time. Their students' consistently bad behaviour placed them under immense stress and college expectations for student KS achievement, was too much to bear. During the observations, a number of tutors regularly struggled to keep control of their classes and appeared to be physically exhausted by the time their lessons were finished. By the end of the field-work period, two tutors and one coordinator/head of KS had left their jobs, which represents a quarter of participating tutors in this study. A fourth KS tutor sadly passed away. It is felt that all KS tutors running formal KS classes should have regular in-lesson effective support and that KS management should take steps to ensure the health, well-being and safety of their tutors.

The common ground between KS management and vocational staffs

The vocational personnel and KS management shared some views regarding KS. Both groups regarded KS very much as *remedial* in nature and felt that providing such basic, fundamental education was not the role of FE and was best addressed by the schools, which they generally believed had failed their students. It was clear from this study that large numbers of school leavers *were* entering FE without a basic knowledge of maths and English language and comprehension. In KS terminology, the students did not have sufficient levels of underpinning knowledge (or techniques) with which to do the KS, even at level 1. As these poor levels of student ability were not regional or district-specific, it would appear to be a national phenomenon.

The Institute of Directors (IoD, 2007, p.2) are, at the time of writing, calling on government to renew efforts to create a learning culture in schools, because, *'too many children currently complete 11 years' compulsory schooling without mastering basic skills.'* The IoD supports government's intention to tackle low-levels of post-compulsory participation but emphasises that, *'the key to success here will be tackling early underachievement,'* i.e., education in *schools*. It was generally felt amongst all staff interviewed for this study, that by the age of 16, the KS initiative was too late for many students.

The majority of participants from both of these groups (and some KS tutors) were unhappy with the KS2000 targeting of their needier students and believed that they (the students) would be better served being taught the lower level basic skills, even if they did not gain a qualification. Whilst they (FE personnel) were being charged by government to deliver the systematic machinery of KS, they were also the ones dealing with the real life VET that goes on in between. This questions the government's KS employability level 2. If it is unachievable by many of our vocational students, then it needs to be revised.

The students

According to government, C+ GCSE graded students should be working at KS level 2. In reality, some C+ students could not do KS at level 1. A number of tutors suggested that the different requirements and focus of GCSEs in English, and Communication in KS were one reason for this situation. The KS, even at level 1 require a considerable standard of grammatical accuracy that is not a part of the GCSE English, which focuses more on comprehension. In this study, some students with B graded GCSEs could barely spell, let alone use the structure of a sentence. It is questionable therefore, why C+ students should be automatically given a proxy KS qualification. This practice also causes divisions within a group of vocational students, by alienating and singling out the GCSE 'failures' yet again.

Until recently, it was stated by some staffs in this study, that the system of claiming proxy qualifications in FE colleges was being abused e.g., KS levels 1 and 2 proxy qualifications were being claimed for A-level students to improve KS achievement figures. The QCA has, as reported by KS administrators, put out more stringent guidelines to curb this practice and it was not happening in any colleges during this study. However, there is no way of knowing that this action has ceased elsewhere. As almost a quarter of all national KS qualifications in this research year (2005) were achieved by way of a claimed proxy (Hesketh, 2007), the system of claiming proxy qualifications would appear to be a failure in terms of true representation of KS achievements both college-wide and nationally.

Efforts of KS staffs to socialise students into accepting KS appears to have been successful in certain respects. The majority conformed by attending lessons and turning up to sit exams when required to do so, although they were penalised if they did not. Students believed what their KS tutors told them, that KS achievement was necessary for their future employment. However, even holding that belief, few students

were found to be motivated to do KS *per se*, rather such motivation came through their wanting to achieve a vocational qualification. In spite of all the socialisation, most students found KS very boring and were more resigned than willing to do them. Fear of failure did not appear to be uppermost in their minds and none actually stated being de-motivated by the KS experience, even when observed being unable to do the KS tasks in lessons and having already failed the exams. KS being made a mandatory part of their vocational training was an annoyance to some students, but in general, as the year progressed, each case-study group of students slowly reconciled themselves to doing the KS and the majority completed some portfolio work.

The most noticeable information to come from the student interviews was the level of self-belief and confidence they had in their ability to do any of the KS. It was very high across all eleven case-studies. These displays of self-esteem may have been, as described by Pollock (2006, p.13) *'wishful thinking'* on the students' part, to make them feel good (or avoid feeling bad) because, in spite of their verbal affirmations that they could do KS, many could not do the simplest of tasks in lessons. The majority of KS tutors reportedly believed that it was a lack of *effort* on the part of their students, which was the main cause of their poor KS results. When pressed however, some KS tutors stated the view that a percentage of their students would not achieve them, no matter how hard they tried, implying that *ability*, or the lack of it, was a greater factor in their non-achievement of KS.

The behaviour of a significant number of students observed in lessons was consistently appalling. Some refused outright to do the work, whilst others regularly had childish, aggressive and sometimes abusive outbursts. These were considered to be avoidance techniques used by students to hide the fact that they could not do the KS tasks (Borkovec *et al*, 2004, p. 3). Others displayed quiet disaffection and did a minimal amount of work. As Rabideau (2005, p. 3) points out, if poor performance is a threat to a person's sense of self-esteem, lack of effort is likely to occur. It is believed that underlying the students' proclamations of self-belief and confidence, there remains a fear of failure, or a fear of *appearing* to fail, both in front of their peers and to themselves.

KS staffs appeared to accept and tolerate a certain level of student bad behaviour, which never crossed over into actual violence towards them during the observed lessons, although one KS tutor reported feeling afraid of his students at times, as he had been physically threatened on more than one occasion. In a number of observed

lessons, a certain compromise over the behaviour, noise levels and computer play seemed to have been struck between the two parties in exchange for doing some work. By and large, this approach achieved that aim. Where the case-study tutors had support in their classrooms, a greater control was observed and the lessons were quieter, there was less computer play and more portfolio work seems to have been accomplished.

The KS 2000

The national qualification system (Tables 1-2 and 1-3) appears to illustrate consistent and progressive routes through and between the educational pathways. However, in reality, there are discontinuities. The paths are not smooth as they should be. This is evident in KS2000, which is meant to have equivalences with certain GCSEs but using completely different models of learning. For example, the KS framework of *demonstrating* the *'underpinning techniques'* bears little resemblance to the required knowledge and its application for GCSE English.

Many FE staffs thought KS2000 was a difficult system to manage and work with and some considered its content basically flawed and not of a sufficiently high quality. Of those students whose skills might be improved upon, the quality of the KS2000 content was deemed to be not enough to significantly improve them. The specifications were judged to be pernickety and their evidencing, at times, pointless.

KS were thought of as being schizophrenic in character; are they skills or are they education? The KS staffs think they are *skills training*, but in general, the vocational personnel consider the term 'skill' to be inappropriately applied to something that is general education. Although the study showed that vocational programmes with their practical foundations, *are* at odds with the *'knowledge-based rationale'* of academic learning (Green, 1998, p. 40) that *is* what at least two of the three main KS fundamentally are. AoN and Comms, particularly at L1, are recognisably the subjects taught in our schools as maths and English. We do not however, refer to such schooling as 'skills training', so it seems strange that the same education changes post-16 in FE. In light of the opposing views on KS, perhaps the whole work–skills-training, work–education conundrum should be reviewed. Applying the term 'skills', to 'education', is considered to be incorrect, given that the traditional, transferable, underpinning *knowledge* of training is a foundational education in reading, writing and arithmetic.

The greatest reported KS qualification achievements were in level 1 IT (or ICT). In regards to Comms and AoN, some colleges reported their students having completed portfolios but with no exam passes and a number showed some exam passes but no portfolio completions. As either part on its own constituted only half of the KS qualification requirement, this accounts for some of the poor qualification rate. It could be argued that this low rate was not due to students being put in at the wrong KS level, as each college observably followed the NQF guidelines on student placement.

Many reasons were put forward by the KS personnel in this study for the low achievement of their students; unrealistic time-scales in which to teach the underpinning knowledge of KS, not enough qualified staff to teach the KS subjects, overcrowded classes of mixed ability students, lack of tutor support in lessons and disinterest and disdain from their students' vocational tutors. However, in case-studies where none of these problems were observed, there was no greater KS success than in any other.

The failure of KS 2000

The Moser Report in 1999 maintained that about 6% of the adult working population were judged to have 'very low' literacy skills and a further 13% to have 'low' literacy skills (as defined by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) National Framework of Qualifications). According to the report, problems with numeracy were even more common than with literacy. Moser (1999) suggested that nearly half of all adults in Britain had, at that time, numeracy skills below the level expected of an 11 year old. A quarter was estimated to have 'very low' numeracy skills, which meant that they were unlikely to be able to perform even the simplest calculations. A further group of adults were judged to have 'low' numeracy. These adults, while coping with the simplest transactions, would have found it difficult to deal with fractions or percentages and for them, number manipulation would be a slow and arduous task. As surveys of the scale of need for literacy and numeracy skills suggested that levels of need were similar across the population between the ages of 16 and 45, it could be said that these figures were representative of school leavers also.

If this is the case and these figures are accurate, then every initiative that government has implemented across Britain's educational and VET sectors since the 1945 Education Act appears to have *failed*, at least up to the year 2000. However, according to Fernández and Hayward (2004, p. 27), the KS part of C2000 reforms, have also

'been at best neutral and at worst a costly diversion.' CIVITAS (2007) adds its voice to concerns about the value and cost of these government reforms.

Six years after the introduction of C2000, the CBI, in partnership with the DfES, is still expressing *'widespread concerns about the shortfall in basic skills,'* (CBI, 2006). Their employers' survey, which looked at the perceived improvement levels of numeracy skills in school-leavers compared to five years ago, showed the majority were either unsure or did not think there had been any change. Just 3% of employers had noticed an improvement in numeracy among school-leavers over the last five years, while one third of participants claimed to have seen deterioration in levels of numeracy among school-leavers.

In regards to literacy, compared to five years ago, just over two in five of the CBI's survey respondents felt that the standard of literacy among school-leaver recruits had deteriorated. However, half were unsure or did not feel that there had been any change.

There are a number of reasons why the KS2000 policy has failed. It is an algorithmic process devised as some sort of technological fix to deal with Britain's economic problems. Government is in thrall to technical *'witchcraft'* Stronach (1993, p.6). By invoking the *'policy magic'* (Ball, 2006, p.72) of KS2000, with its underpinning *techniques* (acquired knowledge to the rest of us), the process of badging underachieving students, government believed, was possible.

As described earlier, KS2000 are a qualification–led set of extant skills that it was assumed merely needed demonstration in order for qualification. In truth, students do not possess the assumed levels of underpinning knowledge (basic literacy and numeracy). More than that, the majority of underachieving students that KS2000 targets are *hugely below* these levels. One consequence of the introduction of KS is that it exposed and continues to expose, these very poor levels of literacy and numeracy with which our 16 year- olds are leaving school and entering FE.

In many respects, this situation is a result of government's own success. The attention paid to the *'neglected educational territory'* of Gurney-Dixon (1954) and Crowther (1959), which addressed the wasted talent of large numbers of 16-17 year olds not following an academic career (Mackinnon and Stratham, 1999, p. 23), has had a major impact on school leavers, and many are now entering higher education. Since the

1980s, this top third began pursuing academic, professional and white collar careers, leaving the trade training to those of average to low ability youngsters, who are not academically inclined. In effect, the pool of students has changed. As reported by the vocational groups, they are now dealing with different kinds of students than they did even 10 years ago. The lowest ability students entering vocational courses in FE would probably not have been there two decades ago. Amongst these students are some who are virtually illiterate and innumerate and those who have been coerced into FE VET rather than lose their unemployment benefits.

The inclusion of CS in VET did not have much impact in improving the students' standards and neither has KS. In targeting the same students but being more demanding than the CS, the task is now even greater. The reason for CS not effectively correcting the students' poor levels of basic education was not the fault of the FE management, nor the vocational tutors, nor the VET systems as a whole. The issue was the low ability of the students. KS in turn cannot fix what 11 years of schooling has failed to achieve. For the most part, there is little evidence that late-in-the-day educational initiatives actually work.

However, whilst this research shows KS outcomes were poor amongst foundation level students, some *were* achieving improvements in their learning at the lower, entry levels of basic skills, especially when *heavily* resourced by staffs (KS and vocational) working jointly within lessons. In the one case-study which provided the English Speaking Programme, the pass rate was 100%, which was reported, by students, to have given them a great deal of confidence. For these kinds of students, providing entry level basic skills seems the more logical and humane.

Finally, as KS are remedial education, targeting the students with the poorest GCSE outcomes, is it realistic to believe that this initiative will fill any current or future skills gap? According to the CBI (2006) survey, a third of employers reported that the levels of skills needed among employees were likely to increase over the next five years, so the problems experienced at the moment are set to get worse.

Despite all of the shortcomings of KS however, government is forging ahead with its skills agenda and the latest incarnation of KS, Functional Skills, are planned to be operational by 2010.

7.5 Research Directions

There are four areas that might benefit from further clarification.

1. KS2000 has changed the landscape of FE and will continue to do so in the future. KS2000, as a policy, is not necessarily closed or complete (Ball, 2006, p.44), having been a cannibalised product of multiple influences and agendas. Lumby and Foskett (2005, p. 27) make the point however, that, *'changing the way things are done, does not necessarily change either the ultimate outputs of the system or the underlying principles that characterise the sector.'* In the FE sector, these principles run deep and may be hard to remove. Further research might look at the vocational tutors' intellectual culture and the perceived protectionism of it, examining the strategies used to maintain a vocational independence within FE and how important this might be for the continued survival of a quality VET system.
2. The relationships between KS tutors and their students need to be examined more closely, given the behaviour of students, how the tutors deal with it and are affected by it, both physically and emotionally.
3. The optimism of the KS students in regards to their having sufficient underpinning knowledge of maths and English needs further explanation to explore the 'wishful thinking' that appears to be taking place.
4. The changing idea of what a 'skill' is and how it is used in different contexts, looking closely at what employers' skills needs actually are and if the acquisition of remedial KS are meeting and will meet in the future, the nation's perceived 'skills gap'.

APPENDICES

A. Glossary of terms

A, AS Level	(GCE) Advanced, Advanced Subsidiary Level
ABSSU	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
ALN	Adult Literacy and Numeracy
AMA	Advanced Modern Apprenticeship
AoN	Application of Number (Key Skill)
ARG	Assessment Reform Group
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BS	Basic Skills
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
BTEC	Business and Technology Educational Council
CBI	Confederation of British Industries
CCM	Constant Comparative Method
Comms	Communication (Key Skill)
CS	Core Skills
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
CTC	Central Training Council
CVP	Certificate of Vocational Preparation
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoE	Department of Employment
DoEd	Department of Education
EKS (Conference)	Employer and Key Skills
ERA	Educational Reform Act
ETA	Employer and Training Act
FE	Further Education
FEDA	Further Education Development Agency
FEU	Further Education Unit
FS	Functional Skills
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GCT	Gatsby Charitable Trust
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
GT	Grounded Theory
GTC	General Teaching Council
HE	Higher Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology (Key Skill)
IMS	Institute of Manpower Services
IOL	Improving own Learning (Key Skill)
IT	Information Technology (Key Skill)
ITA	Industrial Training Act
ITB	Industrial Training Board
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSN	Learning and Skills Network
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NACETT	National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets
NC	National Curriculum
NCC	National Curriculum Council
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications

NLT	National Learning Targets
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRDC	National Research and Development Centre
NS	National Standards
NTET	National Targets for Educational Training
NTI	New Training Initiative
NTO	National Training Organisation
NTs	National Targets
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PS	Problem Solving (Key Skill)
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning
SCAA	School Curriculum Assessment Authority
SEAC	Schools Examination and Assessment Council
SfL	Skills for Life
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
SSC	Sector Skills Councils
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Initiative
VET	Vocational Education Training
WtW	Welfare to Work
WWO	Working with Others (Key Skill)
YES	Youth Employment Service
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

Abbreviations used in this thesis only

AB	Awarding Body
AD	Administrator
AKSDP	Annual KS Delivery Plan
AS	Additional Support
C2000	Curriculum 2000
ES	Ethnographic Study
EV	External Verifier
flp	Field Log Page
GT	Grounded Theory
HB	Hair and Beauty
HBM	Hair, Beauty and Media
HKS	Head of KS
IE	Illuminative Evaluation
IS	Instructional Systems
IV	Internal Verifier
KS	Key Skills
KS2000	Key Skills 2000
L1, L2, L3	Levels 1,2,3
LM	Learning Milieu
MTV	Motor Vehicle Technology
OSKSC	Open Study KS Certificate
PSV	Public Service Vehicle
St	Case study Student
SF	Sixth Form
ST	Support or Specialist Tutor
VCM	Vocational Curriculum Manager
VSR	Vehicle Service and Repair
VT	Vocational Tutor
WKS	Wider Key Skills

Abbreviations relating to College functions where * represents colleges A-G	
HKS/*	Head of KS
Co+HKS/*	Coordinator/Head of KS ***Note***, that the + symbol is used to combine functions
Co/*	Coordinator
Co+T/*	Coordinator/tutor
T/*1	First case study KS tutors
T/*2	Second case study tutors
T/*1.1	Tutor 1 *within* first case study (joint tutors)
T/*1.2	Tutor 2 *within* first case study (joint tutors)
St/*	Case study students
St/*	General KS students these are identified by year i.e., 2nd year
KST/*	General KS tutors
IV/*and	Internal Verifiers
Co+IV/*	Coordinator Internal Verifiers
VCM/*	Vocational Curriculum Managers
VT/*	Vocational tutors
ST/*	Support tutors
AD/*	Administrators

B. National Targets

(i) Foundation Learning:

1. By age 19, 85% of young people to achieve 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, an Intermediate GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications)[1] or an NVQ L2.
2. 75% of young people to achieve L2 competence in communication, numeracy and IT by age 19. 35% to achieve L3 competence in those core skills by age 21.
3. By age 21, 60% of young people to achieve 2 GCE A-levels, and Advanced GNVQ or an NVQ L3.

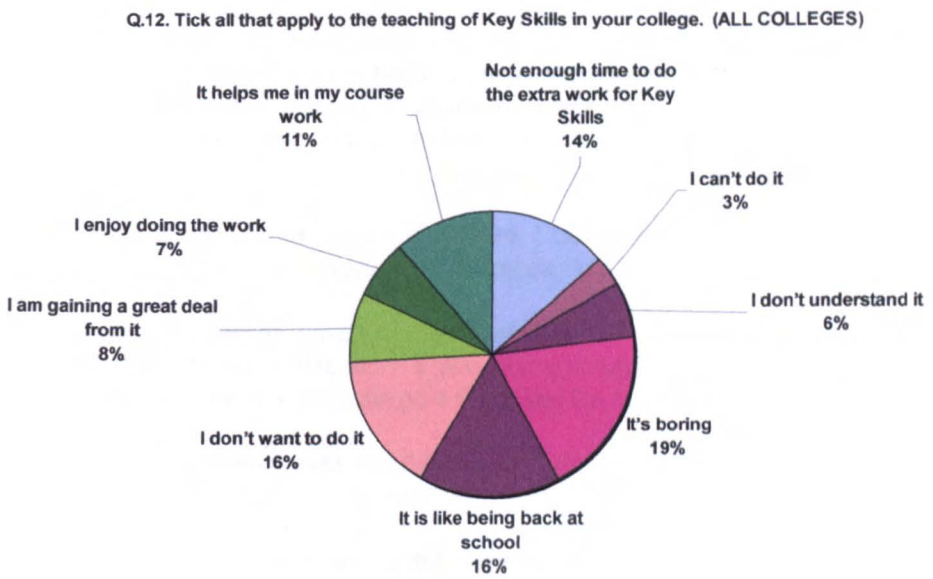
(ii) Lifelong Learning:

1. 60% of the workforce to be qualified to NVQ L3, Advanced GNVQ or 2 GCE A-level standard.
2. 30% of the workforce to have a vocational, professional, management or academic qualification at NVQ L4 or above.
3. 70% of all organisations employing 200 or more employees, and 35% of those employing 50 or more, to be recognised as Investors in People.

[1] GNVQs are specific NVQs designed for certain vocational areas and are 'broader' in their content to NVQs and have more academic content.

C. EKS National Survey

Overall results from the national survey student questionnaires – presented at the Employers and Key Skills Conference, February 2002



D. Correspondence with colleges

Copy of introductory letter to colleges.

Key Skills Coordinator/Manager
XXXXXXX College
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX

Dear Colleague,
I am embarking on some new research for a PhD and am contacting you to see if you would be interested and willing to participate in the project that I am currently planning. It would require some involvement from members of your staff and I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet and discuss the work I will be conducting, in a little more detail.

However, I appreciate you are busy, therefore, I have enclosed a brief outline of what would be involved should you agree to participate in the project.

As the Key Skills manager/coordinator in your college, I am contacting you in the fist instance with my proposed research. If you feel you would like to discuss this further, then I will write formally to your college's Principal for his or her permission.

If, having read the research outline I have provided, you feel you do not wish to take this any further, than thank you for your time.

Should you wish to participate and need more information at this stage, please drop me a line, or email, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

I enclose a SAE for your convenience, and hope to be working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jan Sofair

College Questionnaire

The information given in this questionnaire will be treated in total confidence and will be destroyed if not used in the following research project as outlined. You are under no obligation to further participate in the research if you complete this questionnaire. Please only complete however, if you *are* willing and able to be contacted again.

The number in this box ☐ is for confidential identification of area only

Please tick the boxes below

Q.1. How many students does your college have (approximately)?

1,000	☐
Below 1,000	☐
2,000	☐
Above 2,000	☐
Above 3,000	☐
Above 4,000	☐

Q.2. Which programme(s) does your college provide?

NVQ	☐
GNVQ	☐
AVCE	☐
BTEC	☐
BND	☐
Modern Apprenticeship	☐

Q.3. Are you a specialist college?

Yes ☐ If yes, what do you specialise in?.....

No ☐

Q.4. Which Key Skills does your college deliver?

Application of Number	☐
Communication	☐
Information Technology	☐
Improving Own Learning	☐
Working With Others	☐
Problem Solving	☐

Q.5. Does your college have *current* Centre Approval in Key Skills from your awarding body?

Participation in the research does not depend on a yes or no reply to this question.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q. 6. Which Key Skills and at what level(s) does your college have current Centre Approval for? Please tick next to the *level* number.

Key Skills	Levels			
Information Technology	1	2	3	4
Application of Number	1	2	3	4
Communication	1	2	3	4
Problem Solving	1	2	3	4
Improving Own Learning	1	2	3	4
Working With Others	1	2	3	4

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please return to Jan Sofair in the SAE provided. If you need assistance with this questionnaire, or any points further clarified, please telephone or email Jan.

Copy of letter to principals of colleges

Principal
XXXXXXX College
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX

Dear Sir or Madam,
I contacted your Key Skills Manager at the end of April, asking if they would consider becoming involved in a research project I am undertaking for a higher degree.

Your manager kindly replied to my letter and I am now contacting you to ask for your permission to come along and have a meeting with that person, re following up my proposal.

When I contacted your Key Skills Manager, I also sent an outline of the intended research and what was involved.

If, having discussed the research further and all parties agree to plan the next stage, I shall forward all the information to you for your inspection, consideration and final permission to use your college in my study. If you would like the information now, I shall of course send it to you.

I have enclosed a SAE for your convenience and a letter of introduction from the UCN, where I am based.

Yours sincerely

Jan Sofair

Copy of Tutor consent letter

Dear Tutor,
Your Principal has given me permission to approach you and ask for your participation in a research project I hope to conduct at your college.

I am undertaking a Higher Degree in Education (PhD) at the University College Northampton (UCN), and the specific area that I am researching is Key Skills. I will be carrying out this study in various Further Education colleges across the United Kingdom. The project is planned to begin October 2004. The research will look at:

- The rationale for Key Skills (Curriculum 2000)
- Issues for staff involved with Key Skills
- The impact of Key Skills on Foundation Level students
- Whether Key Skills be discontinued or possibly modified

The project involves my observing a number of Key Skills tutors' classes and his or her Foundation Level students throughout the first year of their Key Skills work. During this period, I will carry out a series of interviews with tutors and students and conduct some case studies and focus group sessions. Other staff members may also be interviewed, such as management and course/subject tutors.

The study is completely independent of your college and the data collected will be totally anonymous and subject to strict confidentiality. Any participation in the research is voluntary and you will have the unreserved right to withdraw from the study at any time. All data collected will be stored securely and be destroyed after the end of the dissertation period (within 3 years of this time) and personal data will be obtainable on request.

I need to gain your written permission for your participation in the research, and for this, I have created a document for you to sign, which accompanies this letter, a copy of which you will retain. My personal details are listed above, should you wish to discuss any part of this document. Your Principal holds a letter of authority from the UCN, regarding my research.

Yours sincerely

Jan Sofair

Copy of Tutor consent form

Consent Form

Name:

.....

College:

.....

Position

.....

Contact Number

.....

I give my voluntary consent to be a participant in the research being carried out by Jan Sofair.

I fully understand the nature of the research and that I can withdraw my participation at any time during the project.

I am satisfied that the data collected by Jan Sofair will be anonymous and subject to strict confidentiality and that it will be stored securely and be destroyed after the end of the dissertation period (within 3 years of this time). I have been made aware that my personal data is obtainable on request.

Signed (Participant): **Date:**

.....

Signed (Researcher): **Date:**

.....

Copy of letter to students

Date

Dear Student,
The Principal has given me permission to write to you and ask for your participation in a research project I hope to carry out at your college. I am undertaking a Higher Degree in Education at the University College Northampton (UCN), and the subject that I am researching is Key Skills. I will be carrying out this study in various Further Education colleges across the United Kingdom. The project is planned to begin October 2004. The research will look at:

- The reason for Key Skills
- Issues for staff involved with Key Skills
- The effect of Key Skills on Foundation Level students
- Whether Key Skills be stopped or possibly changed

The project involves my observing a Key Skills tutor and his or her class of Foundation Level students throughout the first year of their Key Skills work. During this time, I will carry out a series of interviews with the tutors and the students. Other staff members may be interviewed as well, such as managers and course/subject tutors.

My research will also involve carrying out some case studies. This means that I will monitor and interview certain students from your class in more detail. Students who volunteer to participate in these case studies will be fully informed of what their involvement in the research will mean.

The study is completely independent of your college and tutors, and the information collected will be totally anonymous and subject to strict confidentiality. Any participation in the research is voluntary and you will have the unreserved right to withdraw from the study at any time. All data collected will be stored securely and then destroyed after the end of the research period (within 3 years of this time). Your personal information and data will be obtainable on request.

I need to gain your written permission for your participation in the research, so I have created a document for you to sign, which accompanies this letter. You will have a copy of this agreement also. My personal details are listed above and I am available, should you or your parents or guardians wish to discuss any part of my research and/or the consent form further. Your Principal holds a letter of authority from the UCN, regarding my research.

Yours sincerely

Jan Sofair

Copy of student Consent Form

Consent Form

Name:

.....

College:

.....

Course Code:

.....

I give my voluntary consent to be a participant in the research being carried out by Jan Sofair. I am over 16 years of age.

I fully understand what the research is about and that I can withdraw my participation at any time during the project.

I am satisfied that the information (data) collected by Jan Sofair will be anonymous and subject to strict confidentiality and that it will be stored securely and be destroyed after the end of the research period (within 3 years of this time). I have been made aware that my personal information and data is obtainable on request.

Signed (Participant/student): **Date:**

.....

Signed (Researcher): **Date:**

.....

E. Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations adhere to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) code of conduct (BERA, 2004) for education researchers. The four relevant principles of ethical considerations observed throughout the research are outlined below in relation to the person or persons, with the action that was taken to ensure full compliance to the BERA code. These are:

(i) Respect for the person
(ii) Voluntary Informed Consent
(iii) Detriment arising from Participation in the Research
(iv) Full Disclosure Certification and other safety considerations

(i) Respect for the Person

The colleges, as individual case-study sites were considered to be 'persons', and like all participants, were treated with respect. Each organisation was afforded the general ethical principles of social research, reflected in the design of the study and informed the way the data was gathered and later disseminated. All official channels were cleared prior to any participation (Bell. 1993) and a brief written description of the intended casework and the ethical code of conduct being adhered to, were supplied to all relevant levels of management (Stake, 1995,p.57). A system was put in place to give regular updates to management throughout the research process and inform them of any issues that occurred or changes that were made. During the fieldwork, college cultures, dress and other rules were complied with and any 'difficult periods' were acknowledged and respected. No participating college is identified in the study, or its location. No college name, business or activities was discussed with any other in the study.

The staff. Each group of participants within the colleges were involved in a range of interests. Whilst equal *respect* was shown to each group, the ethical considerations applied were sometimes different. As Mason (1996, p.29) points out, where some of the interests may be competing, the ethical route becomes complicated.

Managers and/or coordinators in each college were the 'legitimate' gatekeepers for access to the institute and the people in it (Seidman, 1998, p.38), for whom they had a responsibility. They were also ultimately accountable for all Key Skills operations within them, demanding a high level of respect and an understanding of any loyalty issues that may have arisen from their being in those positions. This 'understanding', although not specified in writing (Stake, 1995), was reflected in the interviews conducted with these individuals. Honesty and openness regarding the purpose of the research was a critical factor with this group of participants. My references, qualifications and previous teaching experience were made available to them.

The KS tutors presented some challenging ethical dilemmas to the inquiry. A number of individuals were concerned not to be critical of their 'employers' and needed regular reassurance of confidentiality, whist others were openly and noisily critical of their college in communal areas, such as staff rooms. A balance had to be kept between my respect for the tutors and respect for my hosts, the college. Occasionally, tutors brought personal problems to the interviews, and every effort was made to discourage this whilst maintaining the relationship that had been built up. Any private information divulged was omitted from the data used.

The vocational (and other) staff members did not (for the most part) appear 'obliged' *not* to speak their mind. The same respect and ethical considerations were applied to this group as given to KS tutors.

The students demanded, because of their age and vulnerability, visibly high levels of respect for their persons, as stated in the research outlines and statements of ethical considerations supplied to every college. All students in the study are referred to as 'foundation level' students, which was the only criterion of academic achievement specified for participation in the research. The tutors selected the student *groups* for the study, but not those individuals that were interviewed from them. The focus of the research was not on students with registered (or assessed) learning difficulties and I had no previous knowledge of, or access to, any student's

learning and/or support records. Selection was not made on the basis of any student's learning needs, gender, ethnicity or religion.

Occasionally, students also bought personal issues to the interviews. During transcriptions, this particular data was omitted. Some students used swear words during both the observations and interviews, a situation that was not encouraged, but not forcefully discouraged either. It was understood that this language was a cultural aspect of the participating group and that the research was of a 'real world' nature. It is included in the transcripts of recorded data, but not specifically logged (in detail) in the observation data.

All participants in the study, both within the colleges, and those outside of it were treated with respect. Comments and views gathered from meetings, interviews, focus groups and observations, were presented as they were intended 'in a balanced, objective manner' (Bell, 1993, p.55), and not altered to justify any personal opinions (Anderson, 1990, p.5). The interview data, prior to presentation was offered to all members of the college staff, stakeholders and interested parties for final agreement and any alterations. It was not physically possible, due to sheer numbers, and the fact that students moved on a year, to offer each student the interview data prior to presenting it. No student asked for it, but had they done so, it was available. All colleges were given a summary of the research and its findings. All other participants were told where they would be able to view the complete dissertation.

(ii) Voluntary Informed Consent
Voluntary informed consent was sought from every research participant. Each individual was given a letter introducing myself and explaining the research, and guaranteeing anonymity in reporting and confidentiality with respect to their responses. It clearly emphasised that participation in the research was voluntary and that participants had the right to withdraw at any time during the study. The letter also stated that any data collected would be stored securely and be destroyed after the end of the dissertation period (within 3 years of this time) and that personal data would be obtainable on request to me. The letters given out to students differed from those given to the tutors, but only in respect of the complexity of the language (made simpler for the students). Voluntary informed consent was sought directly from the participants who were all over 16 years old (no participants were under 16 years old in the sample). The consent forms were signed and dated by both parties (myself and participant) a copy of which was given on demand. If the participant did not want to print their name on the form, a signature and date sufficed. Prior to conducting the interviews, where required (always with the students), the main features of the research were repeated and the implications for their involvement restated.
There were issues regarding the identity of tutors to their line managers, as it was impossible for them not to know who was participating in the study. This was discussed with each individual tutor and found to be acceptable, given the reassurance of confidentiality of any data collected from him or her.

(iii) Detriment arising from Participation in the Research
It was not anticipated that there would be any detriment to research participants, but throughout the study, a reflective log was kept noting any incidents that occurred as a result of my fieldwork activities, particularly when conducting participatory observations, where relationships between myself and the participants were established to gain the data required for the study. Regular assessments of the situation, at regular intervals, ensured no detriment to any parties involved in the research project. The research design did not disadvantage one group of participants over another, or one individual participant over another.

The colleges
None of the seven participating colleges is identified in the study, either directly or indirectly. The areas in which the colleges reside are not disclosed either, due to the fact that some of the colleges are the only institutes in those areas and therefore could be identified through that disclosure. No college reported experiencing any detrimental effects by participating in this research.

The staff

No member of staff found any aspects of this research to be detrimental to them in any way, nor did any member of staff from any of the seven participating colleges withdraw from the research or refuse interviews or observations from fear of detriment or for any other reason. On the contrary, some tutors found their involvement in this research to have been very beneficial, and one incorporated the 'experience' into a reflective log for his degree programme. No data collected from any member of staff was disclosed to any other member of staff or to students.

The students

All student participants were volunteers from various groups of individuals on foundation level (or equivalent level one KS) courses. No suggestion was made, nor was it the case, that they were selected on the basis of their difference from the others in the group, nor that they would be given a special advantage. No student's identity or comments were disclosed to staff or other students. There were very few issues relating to reactivity, other than those earlier discussed in accessing student samples. Some students (mainly male) 'showed off' a little at first, but mostly this was short lived and of a good nature, and some interviews were terminated where the behaviour of the student(s) was deemed to be getting out of hand. The main concern with interviewing students individually or within a focus group situation was over-disclosure, either of themselves or peers (Branthwaite and Lunn, 1985; Debus, 1986). Clearly stated ground rules were set in place prior to conducting interviews and focus groups and maintained throughout the procedures to protect every student in the peer group (at large).

(iv) Full Disclosure Certification and other safety considerations

A copy of a Full Disclosure Certificate from the CRB was given to the management in each college and held on file. A copy was carried at all times when conducting the fieldwork and shown to all interviewees prior to an interview. At no time during the study was I alone with any student, either male or female. All contacts were made in public areas, or within a classroom setting with other students present. College identity disks were visibly worn at all times whilst on college premises, the visitor's book signed accordingly, and health and safety information was adhered to. At no time in my role of classroom *assistant* was I left in sole charge of a class or made responsible for their actions. Where I took on the class as a teacher, my work history, qualifications, experience, and CRB clearance were already established with the respective colleges.

F. Interview framework

Framework for carrying out interviews

- Develop the interview schedules
- Pilot them and make changes
- Identify and organise the components of the interview process
- Carry out an on-ongoing evaluation and progressive focussing of the interview questions
- Record the context of interview data collections in the analytical log
- Phase the interviews
- Record the interviews
- Transcribe interview data near to the session as possible
- Note emerging theories in analytical log
- Handle interview data in order to evaluate its worth
- Give codes to data
- Categorise incoming data
- Evaluate, present and analyse interview data

G. Tutor Interview Schedule

Tutor Interview Schedule – 3 Interview Series

The research is to:

1. Investigate issues for tutors who teach Key Skills. The tutors will be interviewed about:
   - their understanding of the Key Skills curriculum
   - their experience of implementing it in their particular contexts
   - their evaluation of the efficacy of the Key Skills curriculum in achieving the intended learning outcomes.
   - Their views about student capacity and motivation
2. Investigate the impact of Key Skills on students at Foundation Level. Students will be interviewed about:
   - their understanding of the Key Skills curriculum
   - their experience in college as learners
   - their perceptions of the value of the Key Skills curriculum in terms of personal development and career development
   - how the Key Skills curriculum and methods of delivery have affected their motivation to learn and seek a particular career.

Tutors interviews- 1st- during/at the middle of course
2nd/3rd at the near end of course

1. Investigate issues for tutors who teach Key Skills. The tutors will be interviewed about:
   - their understanding of the Key Skills curriculum
   - their experience of implementing it in their particular contexts
   - their evaluation of the efficacy of the Key Skills curriculum in achieving the intended learning outcomes.
   - Their views about student capacity and motivation

Opening Questions:

1. Name
2. Position
3. Job description

Interview One: This session is in two parts.
Part one puts the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to briefly tell about him or herself in the light of the topic up to the present time.
Questions around:

- own experience of school
- before the college (job) – how did they become a teacher
- before teaching KS/the programme they are on
- views on KS in their professional life
- own professional development

Part two concentrates on the concrete details of the participant's past, and current experience of Key Skills
Questions around:

- what they do on their job
- views and opinions, and if possible, details of experiences upon which they place/have placed these opinions
- Their relationships with their:
  students/course tutors/managers/college/other (such as other Key Skills staff, i.e. class assistants)
- reconstruct a day in their teaching from the beginning of the day to the end of the day
- stories about their experience in teaching KS

Interview two/three: In the second interview, participants are asked to reflect on their experiences/views and opinions expressed during the earlier interview (and any other points that arose from that interview), and to relate them to what they feel/experience now, given that the first year course is finishing/completing. Results of their year's work is discussed, its successes and failures reflected on, enriched and/or developed, to look for any changes, new information.

Interviews

Interview No:.....

Date of interview.....

Place of interview.....

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Researcher's signature.....

NOTES:

H. Student Interview Schedule

Student Interviews- 1st- during/at the middle of course
2nd at the near end of course (wherever possible/desirable)

Investigate the impact of Key Skills on students at Foundation Level. Students will be interviewed about:

- their understanding of the Key Skills curriculum
- their experience in college as learners
- their perceptions of the value of the Key Skills curriculum in terms of personal development and career development
- how the Key Skills curriculum and methods of delivery have affected their motivation to learn and seek a particular career.

In some circumstances there will be two interviews. These are when:

1. at the time of the first interview the students have only attended one of the three main Key Skills lessons, i.e., they may have concentrated on ICT the first term, Communication the second, etc.
2. the first interview was difficult and later a greater trust has built up making the student more responsive
3. to view portfolios, assessments, and discuss the end of students' first year, coursework, exam results, learning outcomes

Opening Questions:

1. name
2. position/status in college
3. course description

Interview One:

To tell briefly tell about him or herself.

Questions around:

- own experience of school
- what Key Skills are in their NQF – what Key Skills (and at what level) do they have to do?
- what are their views on KS; what are they, why do they think they have to do them, who requires them to do them, can they do them?
- If they can't do them, do they know why, and/or what might help them to achieve?
- what do they want to do in the future, and what part does Key Skills play in that?

Interview two:

The second interview will be used to cover areas listed earlier. If the reasons for the second interview are either or both 1 and 2, the questions asked would include and/or repeat be the same as in the first interview.

For the 3rd reason (i.e. to view portfolios and/or discuss the end result of first year, coursework and exams, and/or learning), the questions in the second interview will focus on the *outcomes*, i.e., if the portfolio was not completed-why not, if the exam was passed/not passed, how does the participant feel etc.

Notes:

I. Observation Recording Sheet

Observation Sheet – Date:.....Place:.....Time:.....

No	Noisy	Co-operated	Talked	Argued Or was rude	Aggressive Behaviour	Disruptive Behaviour	Left class	Used phone or audio	Refused to work	Late	Did any of the task C = Completed	Motivated to do tasks	Stated inability to do task	Ignored tutor	Stated confusion
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
14															
15															
16															
17															
18															

			1	2	3	4	5				1	2	3	4	5
Noisy – scale of noise -	Y	N						Refusing to work	Y	N					
Co-operative	Y	N						Late	Y	N					
Talking	Y	N						Completed task	Y	N					
Argumentative or rude	Y	N						Appears motivated	Y	N					
Aggressive behaviour	Y	N						Stated inability to do task	Y	N					
Disruptive behaviour	Y	N						Ignored tutor	Y	N					
Leaving classroom	Y	N						Stated confusion	Y	N					
Using phone/other	Y	N							Y	N					

J. Events

An explanation of what the events of behaviour included and of the levels of acceptance for Levels 1, 2, and 5, are:

Event	Behaviour	Levels
1	*Noisy*	0 None, 1 Acceptable, 3 On verge of being a reasonable amount i.e. talked instead of working and were told to stop talking by the tutor. 5 Unacceptable - possibly meant removal from the classroom.
2	*Co-operative*	Responded to what the tutor requested i.e. logged on to their computer, listened to him or her, worked etc.
3	*Talking*	0 None, 1 Acceptable, 3 On verge of being a reasonable amount i.e. talked instead of working and were told to stop talking by the tutor. 5 Unacceptable - possibly meant removal from the classroom.
4	*Argumentative or rude*	More than 'banter' and told to stop or verbally warned by the tutor
5	*Aggressive behaviour*	0 None, 1 A verbal warning, 3, Tutor showed signs of, or expressed concern. 5 Serious incident and a security issue. Student could face disciplinary charges by the college (or police action).
6	*Disruptive behaviour*	A multitude of things were included in this event e.g. tapping keys on the desk loudly, singing, loud coughing constantly, swinging around the room on chairs etc. The recorded events were those where the tutor told the student to stop or gave a verbal warning...which, if not heeded, was recorded as aggressive behaviour (event no. 5) at level 1.
7	*Leaving the classroom*	Leaving without permission.
8	*Using phones etc.*	Making/taking mobile phone calls, text messaging, or playing games etc. As these events might not be noticed by the tutor, if observed by me, I noted them down
9	*Refusing to work*	Verbally or silently (sitting doing nothing).
10	*Late*	In arriving (without prior permission).
11	*Completed task*	Finished set work or work from earlier lessons.
12	*Appears motivated*	Doing work.
13	*Stated inability to do tasks*	*Said* they could not do the work and asked for help.
14	*Ignored tutor*	Talked over tutor, did not do any work tutor set, did not stop behaviour when tutor asked i.e. kept talking.
15	*Stated confusion*	*Said* they needed extra help to understand what the task requirements were.

K. College Profiles

This appendix presents portraits of 5 colleges B, C, E, F, G. (Colleges A and D are presented in the main text Chapter4.)

College B

General description

College B was situated in a small city, which was mainly a commercial region with some light industry. It was a highly populated area in a semi-rural community. College B was the largest FE provider in its county, with three substantial sites across busy adjoining towns, and a student base of over 17,000. It operated beyond its immediate area, supplying training to three other bordering counties. The college offered KS with its entry, foundation, vocational, and academic courses. The vocational provision was aimed at light to medium industries, commerce and business. It did not provide heavy industrial VET.

The management was proactive and had established the college as a supplier of skills training with the local authorities and employers, having taken up government initiatives such as 'Signposts', 'Learndirect' and 'Next steps'.

College B serviced an increasing number of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which gave the college a multi-cultural atmosphere. At one site, there was a high proportion of students who were disabled and with learning difficulties.

The main case-study was carried out at the central city site, which did not always feel comfortable to be in. It was very noisy throughout the building, which often felt crowded and stuffy. There was security, in the form of guarded entry to the college.

The college appeared to be well resourced and generally in good order. Student facilities were good at the main site, with two refectories and areas for parking. The learning environment was reasonably good also, but the KS IT room was uncomfortable during the summer months, and the computer stations had limited space for students to work away from them. Printers occasionally broke down and the students were not particularly respectful of the equipment, hence the room was sometimes untidy, had dismembered chairs, and the computer equipment did not always function properly, in spite of the rooms being locked when not in use.

Staff facilities were reasonable. The KS tutor in the main case-study worked from her own desk in the vocational area's staff room, which was a pleasant room and well equipped with computers and some storage space for materials. There were cupboards on the third floor also however, to save the tutor from having to carry large amounts of materials up the stairs (three flights and no general use of the lift). There were no separate areas for staff to get refreshments or relax, so tutors shared the main refectory, which was often extremely noisy. Parking was sometimes difficult (no separate staff car park).

The plan of KS room (fld p.18a) was similar to college A's (see chapter 4).

The second case-study was carried out at college B's other, newer site, which was situated in a bordering town. Student facilities and the learning environment there were exceptional, and because the building was large and open, its atmosphere felt

pleasant. Staff facilities were good - a very large staff working area, which housed dozens of staff members from across different vocational and administrative departments. Each KS tutor had his or her own desk, computer station and filing cabinets within this area, which was light and pleasant. The refectory was shared by students and staff, but reasonably quiet and pleasant to sit in. Parking was often a problem there however. The KS rooms at this site were varied. Spacious classrooms were used for delivering Comms and AoN, and a large, main IT suite serviced the business courses and IT.

Organisation of KS

KS were monitored overall by one coordinator, but each *vocational* area's VCM was responsible for engaging KS staff, qualifying its own groups of students and negotiating BS provision and learning support if required.

The main case-study was conducted in the Communities Study (CS) department, and the vocational area was Childcare. Its VCM had a hands-on approach and, along with the vocational tutor for Childcare, worked closely with their KS tutor, who was technically the vocational coordinator for the CS department (referred to in this study as T/B1) and it was her job to organise and implement the delivery of KS on a day-to-day basis to all of the departments' Childcare students. College B made KS mandatory for the Childcare students' vocational course, but not for the vocational qualification.

The second study was conducted in the Art, Design and Media (ADM) department at the second site, with a KS tutor (referred to as T/B2) and one of her groups. The students were on an Edexcel Foundation GNVQ - pre-vocational course. The ADM VCM/B had a hands-off approach to the KS organisation, and it was T/B2 who, although line managed by the coordinator, was largely responsible for its implementation and worked in conjunction with the group's ADM foundation level vocational tutor. The KS were set by the course entry requirements for the following year.

There were IVs who worked across curriculum areas and liaised with EV visits and moderations, the results of which were fed back to all VCMs and tutors. The following shows the college organisation:-

Head of Key Skills

Vocational curriculum managers

KS vocational coordinator / KS Tutor

KS Administrator

There were no qualification requirements to become a tutor, but sufficient levels of ability in the KS subjects were. Some specialist tutors, mainly in AoN, were engaged by the VCMs to deliver them.

The college used various awarding bodies across its vast selection of courses. The awarding body for the vocational qualification in Childcare was the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE), and Edexcel was used for KS.

The ADM foundation course awarding body was Edexcel.

Provision of KS

The provision of KS at was believed by staff to be in line with government policy - the KS level was pitched to that of the students' programmes, i.e., foundation programme - level 1, intermediate – level 2, advanced – level 3. The programmes that students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades on college entry. Re-sit GCSE courses were not offered to students entering vocational courses.

For the main case-study, the CACHE qualification did not depend on students passing KS, but the college made it a mandatory component of the Childcare course. On-line practice test and full tests were available to students.

The three main KS were mandatory for the second case-study ADM GNVQ Foundation course and KS passes required by the ADM vocational qualification.

The KS staff

KS were delivered mostly by KS tutors and subject specialists (who were *not* KS tutors as such). No vocational tutors delivered KS to the case-study areas.

The KS staff who participated in the study comprised the coordinator/tutor (T/B1), the main case-study tutor at the central city site, and a KS tutor (T/B2) in the second study.

Both tutors came from industry or business backgrounds. T/B1 joined the KS team as a qualified teacher from a vocational background with a degree in Education as Curriculum 2000 came in. She taught special needs students before KS. T/B2 joined tyhe department in 2002 from another college, where she had taught BS for some years. T/B2's background was in the commercial and business sector, IT and education, and she had a degree in business studies.

T/B1 – the main case-study tutor

When T/B1 first began to teach, KS was run from a central department, which oversaw its entire organisation across the college. In 2003, however, College B integrated its provision into each vocational area, making them responsible for their own KS implementation. T/B1 applied for, and got the post of KS vocational coordinator within the Communities Study department, where she delivered all six KS up to level 3 to its Childcare students.

T/B1 initially experienced inadequate support from the vocational areas, but this situation had improved over the years - everyone was fully on board with KS now. Vocational staff worked with her, checking and controlling their students' attendance and coordinating their vocational assignments with KS portfolio work.

T/B1 worked full time, 26 hours per week, which included administration and lesson preparation time. 14 hours were spent in the classrooms delivering KS. T/B1 fully supported the idea of improving students' knowledge and skills, but had some serious issues with the demands placed on her as a KS tutor, which on occasion were considered to be 'overwhelming'.

Inadequate time to do her job properly was a problem, especially with students such as those in the Childcare group, who '*were very needy.*' The students, who had different levels of ability and knowledge, needed different types of help, and T/B1 could barely cope with the intense demands this placed upon her, working, as she was, alone in those KS lessons. The pace with which she was required to work in order to control bad behaviour, teach properly and contribute effectively, she maintained was '*inhumane.*'

T/B1 thought it was futile to force the CACHE students to do KS exams, but believed KS could be successful if students' learning was *'paced'* better and they were *'motivated'* to do them. The CACHE students were considered to be capable of doing the KS, but were not always convinced of their need, therefore not motivated to do them. With the VTs help, the students' attendance in T/B1's lessons had risen by 50% on the previous year. Integrating the KS as much as possible into coursework had also helped motivate students to complete their work and qualify in KS.

CACHE course design and delivery

The CACHE Certificate and Diploma in Childcare and Education had a staged course structure and qualified students to work at many levels, with a variety of vocational options, from a nursery assistant at NVQ level 1, up to a fully qualified nurse at degree level. The course therefore attracted students with a wide range of abilities. There were no qualification entry requirements for the CACHE Childcare foundation course and on completion of the foundation programme (year one), students were qualified to NVQ level 1 in early year's settings, as playgroup assistants, nursery assistants or classroom assistants.

Although KS were not a mandatory requirement for CACHE, to progress further, students who entered the course with D- grade GCSEs would need C+ GCSEs (or equivalent KS). College B's vocational staff, aware of this rerquirement, fully endorsed KS provision at foundation level and encouraged their students to do them. The awarding body (CACHE) was not considered to assist the 'motivational' battle. Coverage of KS in their literature (and qualification structure) was considered as minimal and their view on the importance of KS, low down on their priority list.

The KS delivered by T/B1 were ICT at level 1, Comms at level 1, and IOL at level 1. AoN did not form part of the first year foundation Childcare course.

The assignments used sections of the students' main coursework for their portfolio, including materials from 'work placements', which were a part of the CACHE programme requirements. The KS were delivered in a formalised way, their content were, for the most part, vocationally related. The assignments and worksheets were delivered in separated KS lessons, and the language used in those sessions was that of KS: specifications and assessment sheets.

T/B1's students

The group comprised twelve students. Fourteen had initially joined the course in September 2004 but two had left by the end of that term. The students attended college for five days per week. One, two hour period was allocated to KS per week. The rest of the time students attended their theory lessons in Childcare, or went outside of the college on work placements. The students' average age was 16½ and they had all come to college straight from school.

Every student was given a diagnostic test on joining the course, to ascertain which level of KS they should subsequently do. Amongst the Childcare group, the students GCSE grades varied quite considerably. Those with grade D- GCSEs in English, and IT, were required to do both parts of the KS. Those having C+ in English, and/or IT GCSEs were exempt from some or all of the exams, but completed portfolios at level 1 or level 2, depending on their scores in the diagnostic test results (some students who had C+ grades, but scored low in the diagnostic tests did KS level 1, but the portfolio only). No exams for IOL were required, only a portfolio (there were no qualifications for this KS in 2005 programmes).

Some of the students in the group with D- GCSE grades (and low diagnostic test results) received extra LS, but not during the KS lessons. They attended LS outside of them. T/B1 had no records of this support or regular assessments of students' progress.

T/B1 appeared to get on with her colleagues in the vocational area, and for the most part, maintained she got get on well with her students. She enjoyed her job and was enthusiastic for her students to learn KS, but found it required immense energy and great effort to do her job.

T/B2 – second study tutor

T/B2's background was business, commerce and education. She was a qualified teacher with a degree in business. Pre Curriculum 2000, T/B2 had taught core skills at a different college, where she gained a level 3 KS qualification before teaching KS in College B.

T/B2 was a tutor for the Art, Design and Media (ADM) department, delivering KS in dedicated, formalised sessions for media students, and integrated sessions for its art students, primarily at level 2 and 3, and mainly Comms and ICT. The ADM Foundation course was the only course for which T/B2 delivered KS at level 1.

T/B2 viewed KS as important for her students' vocational learning programmes, and another chance for them to gain knowledge and qualifications, as many students in the foundation group had poor English and maths. Most came to College B lacking the basic skills necessary to complete their main coursework with a high enough profile for them to be able to continue doing the subject at higher levels. For those students who came to college with C+ GCSE qualifications, T/B2 felt that KS reinforced some of their earlier learning.

T/B2 had some issues with certain aspects of KS. Time was one factor, both for her to teach adequately and for her students to gain sufficient underpinning knowledge, especially with so many of her group having 'poor basic skills'. As College B took on students whatever level they were at, this was causing some problems.

Mixed ability groups, doing different levels of KS, made it difficult for T/B1 to isolate students' individual needs, even within the ADM foundation group, which was not excessive in size. T/B2 found some LS supplied by College B useful for this group, but their input was considered insufficient to 'fill' missing gaps in her students' knowledge. That year, for the first time, T/B2 had received extra assistance (from VTs) with her KS groups. Its continuance however, relied on successful KS results that year. T/B2 was confident that this arrangement would remain, given that her foundation students' performance and behaviour in class had consistently improved, and they had all turned up for their Comms and ICT exams, some weeks earlier. T/B2 operated a 'trade off' with her students. They did KS in return for her help with their coursework.

T/B2 believed that support for KS from curriculum areas helped motivate the foundation level students to improve their KS. Most of this group struggled to do KS, but some of the group achieved their level 1, because they had been given intensive, double tutoring. Those that failed, T/B2 thought it doubtful that they would all get their KS. In T/B2's estimation, these particular students should have done BS literacy and numeracy instead of KS, and gained BS qualifications. Completing KS portfolios, on top of getting through the test was also considered to have been too much for those students to cope with.

ADM course design and delivery
The ADM GNVQ Edexcel Foundation course had a staged course structure and qualified students to work at many levels in a variety of vocations linked to Art, Design and/or the Media, from foundation GNVQ up to foundation degree level. The course therefore attracted students with a wide range of abilities.

KS were a mandatory component of the ADM course. They were required at foundation level in order for the students to progress on to the next stage of the course, and, although *within* their NQF, students could gain their vocational qualification at this level, without the KS elements being passed. KS provision was endorsed by the ADM department, but it was felt that more encouragement for KS would help the KS tutors.

There were no qualification entry requirements for the ADM at foundation level, but there were for each further stage of the ADM programme after that (GCSEs or KS equivalents). The KS delivered by T/B2 were ICT at level 1 and Comms at level 1, all other KS and WKS, at any levels, were delivered by subject specialists.

The KS Comms and IT portfolio contents were based on the students' main coursework - vocational related assignments and worksheets. KS were delivered in separate KS lessons, but with VTs assisting. The language used was more in line with the vocational areas than with KS, but students knew they were doing KS. Three hours per week were allocated to Comms and IT, one hour to AoN (not with T/B2).

T/B2's students
The group comprised twelve students who had all joined the course in September 2004. The students attended college for five days per week. One, three hour period dedicated to Comms and IT KS, one hour's group tutorial in a class, followed by a break, then a two hour KS session in the IT suit. An hour of AoN was conducted during another period in the week. The rest of the time students attended their theory lessons in ADM. The students' average age was 16½ and they had all come to college straight from school.

The entire foundation group had been given a diagnostic test on joining college and all had D- GCSE grades. Some of the students in the group received extra LS, but not during T/B2's KS lessons, they attended LS outside of them. T/B2 had records of this support and regular assessments of students' progress.

College C

General description
College C was geographically widely spread, operating from one large central site and five satellite centres across the county. The main college site is situated in a very busy town, which is the business and commercial centre for the region. College C is surrounded by countryside with rural and light industries. The college has eight centres within its grounds and, because of its location and provision, is an active and popular FE provider in the county, offering unique and interesting incentives to attract students. The college provides KS alongside a range of vocational courses to over 13,000 students, as well as apprenticeships in vocation areas i.e., motor vehicle and hairdressing.

College C services a culturally diverse group of students, within a multi-cultural community, as well as a large number of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. College C had embraced government initiatives, such as the 'Increased Flexibility Programme for 14-16 year olds. The college seemed well resourced and well

maintained throughout. Its general atmosphere was busy and active, but genial and welcoming. The college was not noisy, anywhere in its complex. Security was in evidence, but the students appeared respectful to their surroundings. The students' and staffs' facilities are good, with a large refectory selling freshly-cooked food and parking.

The learning environment was good also. The main case-study was conducted in the central site, where some of the KS were delivered within a spacious classroom that included both computers and separate desks, so that students could work at either when required. It was a comfortable and light room. The equipment was always in good order and respected by students. The second study was conducted at the same site, but the KS were delivered from two locations:- the KS room discussed above (for IT and AoN), and within a training salon in the town's high street for other sessions (ESB-discussed later). Although initially this did not appear to be practical (as there were no desks in the room), it actually worked reasonably well.

The plan of KS room (fld p 97 and 88a) was similar to college A's (see chapter 4).

The tutor's working area was somewhat restricted, in a large room that felt slightly over-populated. It was functional however. VTs, Support tutors (STs) and KS staff also shared the room. There was no separate staff refectory at college C, but the shared facility was comfortable, well maintained and reasonably quiet, even when full. There are a number of staff lounge areas where staff can prepare admin and eat food. Because it had some secluded areas, it was possible for staff to relax and meet there if required.

Organisation of KS

The skills provision came under the direct control of one department and its senior manager, referred to in this study as HKS/C. The provision included KS, BS and additional support (LS). The department also oversaw all provision for students with Learning Disabilities (LD), and the Foundation programmes. Each area however, was managed separately. One manager looked after KS, another, BS and additional support, which included numeracy and literacy needs for foundation education of students with LD, and a third manager looked after students with 'English as a second language' (ESOL) and English for Learners (EFL). All managers and departmental staff meet regularly to discuss operational and strategic issues.

HKS/C, an experienced practitioner and manager in her field, set the direction and policies for College C's, through national government and local LSC initiatives, KS, BS and LS. College C's managers implemented both policies and relevant operational procedures.

Each of college C's CVMs were responsible for the delivery, assessment and internal verification of their students' KS. Their VTs, for the most part, did not deliver KS; specific tutors were engaged. The main case-study tutor, a KS 'course leader' (referred to in this study as T/C1), worked in unison with another tutor (T/C2), delivering KS to the vocational area of Hairdressing and some Foundation programmes. Foundation courses combined vocational groups for KS sessions, i.e., students from carpentry, drama, and building courses worked together in KS sessions.

There was a small team of KS staff, all qualified KS tutors, who moderated portfolios and dealt with all the external verifying procedures. The KS 'team' worked with the course teams, to monitor their standards and produce separate contextual assignments where there were shortfalls in KS within specific vocational areas (e.g., AoN in

Hairdressing). The English Speaking Board (ESB)[1] programme supplemented Comms at L1 in the foundation or level one programmes.

Below shows the organisation of of KS at College C:-

Head of KS
KS department / BS and AS (LS) department / ESOL department
KS coordinator
KS team
KS course leader and team
KS Administration

Edexcel was the AB for KS in the Foundation and Hairdressing courses. The ESB was the AB which assessed and accredited the oral English with both groups.

College C provided mandatory VT staff development for KS, external support team training, and KS staff development days. Tutors are not required to have KS qualifications to teach in College C but are expected to be qualified tutors. Once engaged however, tutors were required to undertake BS teacher training up to level 3 (in BS). College C tailored the BS course slightly, so it also developed the tutors' own BS.

Provision of KS

The provision of KS at college C was deemed to be in line with government policy. The KS level was pitched to that of the students' programmes i.e., foundation programme - level 1, intermediate – level 2, advanced – level 3. College C provided the three main KS and ESB, but not the WKS. The KS and academic programmes students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades at college entry and results from the screening tests. Students entering with D- GCSE grades were placed at level 1 KS (if considered capable by the KS tutors).

Each programme area provided its own KS. For the foundation programmes, college C put good KS and BS resources in place. Case-studies conducted at College C, on average, had two or three members of staff present during the sessions, the case-study KS tutor(s), a classroom assistant and/or LS.

Both case-study groups did ESB. These were delivered by T/C1. AoN level 1 was delivered by T/C2. Any students who had Maths C+ grade GCSE were exempted from AoN exams. Those with English C+ GCSE grades were exempted from the ESB assessments. Proxy applied to both group.

It was College C's requirements that students at L1/2 and 3 had to undertake KS and E3 and below BS.

[1] The English Speaking Board is an awarding body dedicated to promoting and encouraging all aspects of oral communication in English.

The KS staff
The staff who participated in the case-studies comprised the course leader/tutor (T/C1), and a member of T/C1's team, T/C2.

T/C1 came from a vocational background and joined college C as a qualified teacher in her field before going into the KS area when Curriculum 2000 was introduced. T/C2 came from a business and academic background and joined college C as a qualified teacher three years earlier, and worked in both KS and LS positions.

T/C1- the main case-study tutor
T/C1 was a course leader, which meant that she was responsible for administering the foundation course at level 1. T/C1 worked 37 hours a week at college - 21 teaching hours and 13 administration hours. She had joined the college eight years earlier.

T/C1 taught Comms (and ESB), not AoN or IT and enjoyed her job. She felt that her students achieved something from doing KS and was very positive about their effect on them. For those students who came to college with no GCSEs and required them for their vocational courses, T/C1 believed that KS were a good option for them to qualify in. For those who could not achieve a KS, BS were considered to be a 'safety net' for them to gain some qualifications. T/C1 used students' career choices to motivate them into doing their work. She found this was the best 'way in'.

T/C1 recognised that college C's VTs did not want to deliver KS to their students, but as they were increasingly being integrated into coursework believed it would be beneficial for students to have KS delivered by tutors who were familiar with their own subject areas. However, T/C1 understood the problems VTs had with some KS subjects. T/C1 believed however, that having their KS delivered by separate tutors did not adversely affect students, and enjoyed a productive and positive working partnership between her and the VT staff.

As a KS tutor, T/C1 had 'targets' and 'objectives' that were linked to achievement and retention of her students, and reflected in T/C1's performance related pay (PRP). T/C1 had been given six objectives, three of them personal, three of them were achievement, retention etc. T/C1 was penalised by not being given the financial increments (a pay rise). This was an issue for T/C1. According to management however, if TC/1 did not achieve her objectives, which would include KS results, it would impact on her pay-rise, but she still got one.

T/C1 screened her students in literacy and numeracy (BS) at the beginning of the year and placed them on the appropriate course for which they were deemed able. The test was done on-line, so T/C1 got the results immediately, and students at level 1 (in BS – not KS), students entered at foundation level. Below that, students went into a Design for Living course, which was not in her domain.

T/C2 the second tutor
T/C2 taught a number of different subjects, but they were all numeracy-based, including AoN and BS numeracy, at all levels, pre-entry, and in LS.

T/C2 had been with college C for three years, had gained a *7307* teacher's certificate, and was currently completing a Cert Ed. He had not been given any mentoring to be a KS tutor - he had developed his own teaching strategies. T/C2 taught both the foundation group and hairdressing students AoN at level 1, working with BS and/or LS tutors in his lessons.

T/C2 was comfortable in his job and was planning to extend his teaching into delivering IT at three levels. He considered that his responsibility was to try and instil some skills into his students to improve their chances for achieving employment. Most of T/C2's students came to college with a negative perception of anything mathematical, having left school hoping they would never have to do maths again. It had been a struggle for him to get his students to do the subject.

T/C2's students' attitudes towards KS were negative. Their attendance was poor and achievement was very low. T/C2 had issues with the focus of KS themselves and how they related to reality. They were considered to be flawed thinking and impractical, although T/C2 believed that some aspects of KS were useful for his students.

The (i) Foundation and (ii) Hairdressing course design and delivery
KS and ESB were delivered by T/C1, and AoN and IT by T/C2, on both courses. Practice sheets and tests were used in the sessions to give the students exposure to the KS language, requirements and specifications.

(i) Foundation
The foundation course was a course designed to improve students' BS and KS in order that they could enter the next level of their vocational course the following year. Students were not classed as apprentices. They would achieve a level 1 qualification in their vocational areas during the first year and some or part of the KS/ESB qualifications at level 1. Many students reportedly had learning difficulties or social/emotional problems.

There were no course entry requirements. A judgement was made from the initial BS screening test as to whether or not the students were capable of doing the work involved (with or without extra support). The KS were mandatory components of the foundation course, but the students could qualify in their foundation *vocational* qualification without them. It was anticipated by management that they achieved their KS alongside the mandatory element of their course. Achievement of KS is a mandatory option as a development and transitional process.

The KS programme was designed to get the students through their L1 AoN, IT, and Comms exams. T/C2 used practice worksheets and on-line practice tests to familiarise the students with KS AoN specifications, requirements and language. The AoN portfolio was completed in the second year. The foundation course was only one year, therefore students had to complete all three KS in that time.

The ESB exam and portfolios were required to be completed in the first year. There were qualification entry requirements for the vocational courses beyond foundation level.

The vocational departments endorsed the KS/ESB provision, but it was felt that more encouragement from them would help the KS/ESB tutors.

(ii) Hairdressing
The course was a first year of a GNVQ in Hairdressing. There were no course entry requirements. It was college C's decision to make KS level 1 requirements for the students on this course. GCSE grades and results from the screening tests, which were college policy, decided which level of KS individual students should undertake. Level 1 vocational students took L1 KS.

Students entering the course with C+ GCSE grades in maths and English were exempt from the KS exams. All students did the ESB.

Common units used in all vocational courses were utilised for some written work in the Comms (Health and Safety). The ESB was not a requirement for hairdressing, only KS.

Although KS were within their NVQ, students could qualify in the vocational course, Hairdressing GNVQ level 1, *without* passing KS. The vocational departments endorsed the KS.

T/C1 used students' main coursework to build the Comms portfolios, (a Health and Safety assignment). T/C2 used worksheets and on-line practice tests to familiarise the students with KS AoN specifications, requirements and language. The KS AoN portfolio was completed in the second year (within the vocational areas), not in the first year of the Hairdressing GNVQ course.

T/C1 and T/C2's students

(i) Foundation
The foundation group comprised 7 students. They attended college for five days per week of which a one hour period was dedicated to ESB and a further one hour to AoN. ESB was only a requirement for students on the Foundation course as a supplement and confidence builder to the Comms presentation. It was very effective for these students.

The students' average age was 16½ years and they had all come to college C straight from school.

Each student had been screened in BS literacy and numeracy and placed in the foundation course accordingly. Many students in the group with D- grades in English and maths had higher GCSE grades in other subjects.

The students came from across the college's vocational areas and worked together to do KS and ESB, so there was a diverse mixture of students and abilities within the foundation group. Common units used in all vocational courses were utilised for some written work in the Comms and a small amount of the ESB units. ,

Some of the students in the foundation group received extra LS in the area of AoN, which was given during the AoN KS lessons. T/C2 was aware of his students' progress.

(ii) Hairdressing
The Hairdressing group comprised 9 students. They attended college for five days per week. A one hour period per week was dedicated to Comms and a further one hour to AoN.

The students' average age was 16½ years and they had all come to college C straight from school with a diverse range of abilities.

Some of the students in the Hairdressing group received extra LS in the area of AoN, which was given during the AoN KS lessons. T/C2 was aware of his students' progress.

College E

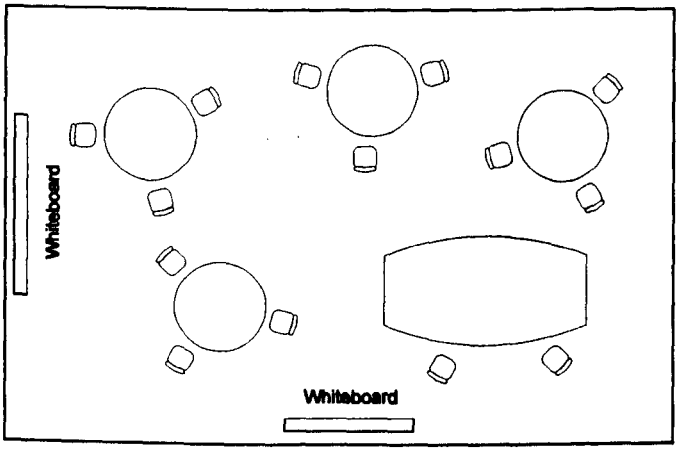
General Information

College E was the largest vocational college in its county. It had two main sites, one situated some miles inland, bordering a large, busy town centre, and the other at a coastal location some miles away. Both areas had light to medium industry, business and commerce. College E provided courses to over 10,000 students each year. They provided KS to a range of courses from pre-foundation level, vocational and academic, in a wide range of subjects. College E had a strong emphasis on business, but also offered apprenticeships in light industrial vocations and work-based training courses. The college was involved in various government initiatives, such as Learndirect, e2e – (Entry to Employment), and Lifelong Learning, as well as servicing an outreach centre. College E had built good working relationships with local schools and universities.

The case-study was conducted in the town site, which was a large, spacious, and well equipped college. It had excellent facilities with a number of well laid out refectories and a large parking areas. The atmosphere and learning environment at college E appeared exceptionally good. There was security in evidence, in the form of a guarded entrance. No instances of swearing or bad behaviour were witnessed during the period of field study.

Staff facilities were good. There was no separate staff room, but the numerous refectories on site had areas of quiet where staff could relax. The case-study tutor worked out of the main KS office, which was shared with the Head of KS, an administrator and the IV. Although the room was compact, it was adequate and well equipped. The tutor had her own desk, computer and storage area.

KS facilities were well resourced. The KS room was large and well equipped with a number of computer stations and desks. It was a comfortable room, laid out to facilitate different activities within the same lesson i.e., students working at computers, students with their learning-support tutors, those working in small groups at tables, and others working with tutors from a board at one end of the room. The organisation of this area appeared to work well. The vocational workshop area classroom where KS were also delivered was good.



College E. The plan of KS room.

The Head of KS (referred to as HKS/E) was proactive and operated a hands-on approach to the overall operation across the site. However, the curriculum areas were responsible for the daily running of KS in their own vocational areas.

The case-study at college E was conducted with a KS tutor and her cohort of students on the Apprentice Vocation Certificate (ABC) 165, in Welding and Fabrication. KS were included in groups' NQF, and were mandatory for their apprenticeship status.

The KS room was very large and well equipped with a number of computer stations and desks. It was a comfortable room, laid out to facilitate different activities within the same lesson, i.e., students working at computers, students with their learning-support tutors, those working in small groups at a table, and others working with a tutor from the board at one end of the room. The organisation of this area was very impressive and appeared to work well.

Organisation of KS

KS at college E were not managed centrally. Each department recruited their own staff, timetabled their KS to their programmes and implemented them. The VCMs were responsible for their department's KS achievement rates, not the HKS/E.

HKS/E oversaw the management of KS data centrally and organised the staff training in process and procedure. HKS/E was responsible for monitoring the quality of delivery, but had no input into the recruitment or actual training of KS staff. The IV internally verified all portfolios across the curriculum. Once processed, the results were then sent to each VCM for their records.

The KS department had only one KS tutor, a newly established post of 'Advanced Practitioner (AP) KS tutor', who was the tutor in the case-study (referred to as T/E1). T/E1 worked in certain vocational areas partnering KS or VT tutors, and worked alongside the VT (VT/E1 in this study) for the ABC groups. T/E1 organised and delivered the KS to the case-study 'Welding and Fabrication' students from the Engineering department.

The following shows the organisation of KS.-

Head of KS

Vocational
Curriculum Manager

VT/KS Tutor

AP KS Tutor

KS Internal Verifier

KS Administration

College E used various ABs for its KS - Edexcel, Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR), C&G, CASH, and Engineering, Manufacturing, Technologies Awards (EMTA).

Provision of KS

College E's provision of KS was deemed to be in line with government policy. The KS level was pitched to that of the students' programmes i.e., foundation programme -

level 1, intermediate – level 2, advanced – level 3. The KS programmes that students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades on college entry. Students entering with D- grade GCSEs were placed at foundation BS or KS level 1. Students with C+ GCSE grades were exempted from taking the exams, but completed portfolios.

College E had recently embraced the 'Skills for Life' programme, which was in the process of being implemented across the college's vocational areas, but the emphasis was still on KS at the time of data collection. VCM's future self-assessment reports and course levels would include Skills for Life achievement targets, but not for that current year.

College E tried to focus on an idea of a twin learning. The KS were balanced with the vocational - each supporting one another, and KS were integrated as far as possible into the vocational areas.

The three main KS were provided to all students, but for some foundation groups, including FMAs, KS IT had been dropped and was therefore not being delivered to those students. AoN and Comms level 1 were. A mixture of KS and VT tutors delivered the KS across college E. In the case-study, T/E1 worked alongside the VT, who supported T/E1's delivery of KS.

There were no overall qualification requirements to become a KS tutor at college E. HKS/E ran workshops which taught numeracy and literacy up to the KS levels, to give tutors the skills themselves. College E also ran strategy workshops to support teachers' delivery of KS.

Students are allocated up to 3 hours a week of KS in which to acquire the underpinning knowledge for the exam and also to build a portfolio. The level of support for students was very good.

The KS staff

The members of staff who participated in the case-study comprised the AP KS Tutor (T/E1) and the VT/E1.

T/E1 came from an educational background before joining the team as a tutor some years earlier, and then progressed on to become an Advanced Practitioner in KS. VT/E1 came to teaching from many years in industry, qualified as a teacher, and had been a VT at College E for the last ten years.

T/E1 – the case-study main tutor

T/E1 worked full-time at college E and had become an AP of KS a year earlier (at level 3), which meant that she could support other KS tutors and act as a 'rescue tutor', turning around failing classes. Before teaching KS, T/E1 worked as a teaching assistant. T/E1 was highly supported by college E in any training required for her AP role, and felt that overall, the college was increasingly becoming pro-KS. T/E1 considered her job to be one of helping VET students to improve their communication and maths skills in order to progress in their courses. T/E1 was very enthusiastic for her job and how KS could benefit her students.

She did not generally encounter too many behavioural problems with her students, but did with some students who already had qualifications (C+ GCSE grades), and who felt they were doing unnecessary or patronising exercises, especially within the ABC group, where there were some level 3 students working alongside BS level students. However, T/E1 believed that such a mixed ability group helped motivate the lower-level

students, but felt the level 3 students were justified in their complaints and needed extra workshops to benefit them.

VT/E1 – the case-study VT

VT/E1 worked full time at college E in the Engineering department. The ABC students were VT/E1's vocational group in the Welding and Fabrication course. VT/E1 partnered T/E1 in all lessons, working with her to support his students KS work.

VT/E1 had gone to college E from the vehicle engineering industry some years earlier and trained as a tutor. He enjoyed his job and was a firm believer that KS 'opened a path' for previously failing students, many of whom had joined his course not being able to read or write. He tried to make the vocational course and KS interesting for them, by using KS in a practical setting, rather than as a separate entity. He was having some significant success.

ABC 165, Welding and Fabrication course design and delivery

The ABC 165 course was a full-time course, within the Engineering curriculum area. It was a first year foundation course of a three year programme leading to a National Certificate in Fabrication and Welding and level 3 qualifications. The group comprised thirteen students. There were no qualification entry requirements.

VT/E1 delivered the vocational programme and some incorporated KS, i.e., some aspects of AoN applied to students' practical work, such as taking measurements and working out areas. The rest of the KS were delivered in a separate one hour lesson per week, by T/E1, and assisted by VT/E1. T/E1's KS lessons were delivered in a formalised, structured way, using some vocationally orientated task sheets and assignments. As the ABC students were all working at different levels, there were a number of activities happening within the one lesson and students either worked individually, in groups or with the tutors. BS and ST worked with the students in the lessons.

Level 1 AoN and ICT were mandatory in the foundation course, ICT replacing Comms and IT. Students could qualify in the ABC 165 without KS, but could not go on to the next year without these qualifications.

ABC 165 Students

This group of thirteen students were on a foundation course, the first year of the ABC 165, which was a full time course. It was very much a mixed ability group, ranging from students who were at entry level BS and being given high levels of LS, to students who joined the course with A* grade GCSEs. Roughly half of the group were working towards KS level 1, the other, level 2. Of the level 2 (A*) students, four had been identified as level 3 students. There was also a wide age range in this group. Some students had joined straight from school, others had worked for a year then joined. Some had been at college E the previous year improving qualifications or on different courses.

T/E1 had joined the group as a rescue tutor, following some major problems with the students in this group and their KS tutor, who had been moved away from the group.

The ABC 165 group were given one hour per week AoN and ICT in a separate, formalised lesson with T/E1 and VT/E1. Work for course assignments was used wherever possible in this lesson. VT/E1 used practical lessons to teach some underpinning knowledge.

College F

General description

College F was one of the largest providers of FE and HE courses on the part of English coast in which it was situated. College F had three substantial sites in the region's main town and another site within a large, light to medium industrial area, some miles along the coast. College E offered a wide range of courses from BS and KS to university degrees, including vocational, trade and professional qualifications, as well as pre-university diplomas, to over 16,000 students. College F had a focus on training for business, but also offered apprenticeships in light to medium industrial vocations. It provided adult and flexible learning. Two of its sites were large, spacious, and very well equipped for students, two were smaller and older, but the facilities at these sites were still good, well maintained refectories and adequate parking at each site.

The site where the case-study was conducted was situated within an industrial complex. The building and its atmosphere was very much of a vocational, 'workshop' environment, but clean, pleasant, well maintained and friendly.

Staff facilities at this site were good. There were designated, well-equipped staff working areas, and a separate staff room for relaxation. The refectory was shared with students and was sometimes noisy, but at acceptable levels. Most staff used their own area to sit in.

The students were work-based and on day release from their companies. The KS sessions at college F were different in nature to those in other colleges and they were not delivered in the same way either.

Organisation of KS

There was a HKS management change whilst the study was in progress, but both HKS were 'hands on' and active across all four sites.

College F's Head of KS (referred to as HKS/F) managed KS across the college curriculum. HKS/F was responsible for the Skills for Life (SfL) provision, as the skills provision had just become known, from Entry 3 (BS) to KS levels 1 and 2, literacy and numeracy. HKS/F coordinated all of KS and ran a team of sixty KS assessors, thirty STs and three IVs. HKS/F set up all KS working systems and the team of IVs implemented them. Part of this system was training and support programmes set up for KS tutors/assessors. College F potentially offered all six KS.

College F operated mixed ability groups at all years and used different tutors within the same groups i.e., BS and KS, to deliver skills to students working at each level. In year one, students did BS at entry levels, which meant they concentrated on gaining knowledge, not passing exams or completing portfolios. In year 2, students did the KS level 1, exams and portfolios. College F's policy was to have small groups of students who were placed at their correct levels, doing assignments relevant to their host programmes, and focussing on improving skills with no exam or portfolio pressures.

HKS/F had produced a model for college F's skills implementation. Students, pre-entry, would sit an initial diagnostic test called a 'KS builder'. Once an 'area of learning' (course pathway) was established with the students, they would then be placed on an appropriate programme and level of BS/KS. However, although HKS/F was charged with providing KS, HKS/F was not in control of the implementation of BS/KS across the college, the different VCMs were. Curriculum areas had autonomy over how they

implemented their own KS. HKS/F could recommend, but had no actual authority to impose the 'best model'.

Some vocational areas signed students up on courses at induction, and carried out the diagnostic tests later. HKS/F would then allocate appropriate support, where appropriate, to their students. If there were five or six students at BS Entry levels 3-1, then a BS tutor was provided for the group. If there were one or two students, then LS was given to those individuals. If the group were all at level 1, both BS and LS was provided.

College F had placed the new SfL programme with a Quality manager to oversee the skills provision and make sure it remained consistently good.

The vocational school in which the case-studies were conducted was the Aeronautical and Automobile Engineering department and the vocational course was Automobile Engineering (AE). The KS tutor in the study (referred to as T/F1) delivered and assessed the KS to AE students.

The administration of KS was undertaken by general college administrative staff. Below shows the organisation of KS:-

Head of KS/SfL (HKS/F)

Internal verifiers (IVs)
Vocational curriculum managers (VCMF)
KS tutor/assessor - tutor (T/F1)

KS administration (AD) BS and LS

The college used the city and Guilds (C&G) awarding body for most of their vocational courses.

Provision of KS

College F was deemed to be in line with government policy. The KS level was pitched to that of the students' programmes i.e., foundation programme - level 1, intermediate – level 2, advanced – level 3. The KS and academic programmes that students were placed on were determined by their GCSE grades on college entry. Students entering with D- grade GCSEs were placed at BS Entry level for year 1 of their course and level 1 KS the following year. The college potentially provided all six KS across the curriculum, but it was up to the individual VCMs which KS they offered their students (they were funded for three KS).

The case-study students were doing the three main KS - AoN, Comms and IT at level 1 and 2, but not the WKS. They were work-based students attending college one day a week (day release) and had one hour of KS per week.

Some KS staffs were provided to the curriculum areas by the HKS/E, some vocational areas supplied their own. The KS staff comprised both part time and full time tutors and assessors.

There were no qualification requirements to become a KS tutor at college F. The tutor in the case-study had been given no specific training in KS, but had developed her own

knowledge. Support was given by college F to attend external workshops/training days however.

The KS staff
A Programme Area Tutor in KS (referred to as T/F1) was the principal member of KS staff who participated in the study.

T/F1 – the case-study tutor
T/F1 had come from a background of nursing, and later business, before becoming involved in special needs teaching in FE and then moved into KS from there by chance. T/F1 began working at college F as a part-time tutor but increased that to a full time post. T/F1 taught AoN, Comms an IT up to level 3.

T/F1 was a Programme area tutor in KS for the Aeronautical and Automobile Engineering department and was responsible for overseeing the KS for students from both sections of the department. Some of T/F1's students were full time, and some were on a day release from their companies.

T/F1's day started at 9am and she was given adequate administration hours during her working week to complete the paperwork involved with her job.

T/F1's experience of being a KS tutor at college F was a very happy one. She loved her job and felt supported by her college. Although T/F1 strived hard to qualify her students, no targets were set for KS passes and there was no pressure to 'achieve', either from the vocational areas or HKS/F. T/F1 got on very well with all her colleagues, KS and vocational, and had a good relationship with her students.

It was T/F1's role to administer and assess her students' diagnostic tests and results and place students on appropriate KS levels. T/F1 was satisfied with the levels of LS provided for her students where required.

AE course design and delivery
The course was a two year, part time programme, to qualify students in Automobile Engineering up to a BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND). The course had sixteen day release students who were MAs to engineering companies, and attended college F one day a week to do vocational theory and practical work and gain KS qualifications. AE's NQF included KS as mandatory components of their qualifications - level 1 AoN, Comms and IT for the first year, level 2 AoN and Comms for the second year. There were no course entry requirements. The AE department was very supportive of their students doing KS.

KS were delivered to this group through task setting. Students attended an hour long group tutorial and were given the tasks, mostly in the form of assignments or occasionally worksheets. Students then went off to do them individually. After the group tutorials, T/F1 saw four or five members of the group separately each week to check through their task/portfolio work. Ten minutes were usually allocated to each student for this. If the students were experiencing problems doing their work, T/F1 would help them during these sessions. Further work was set for students to complete by certain dates. However, T/F1 had no sanctions to use against students who did not complete their work.

There were some set formalised lessons available to students, in which extra tuition was given in certain areas of KS. It was up to the students to attend them if they required the underpinning knowledge to complete their tasks. Students were also

guided to on-line, IT-based KS lessons called 'Blackboard', and T/F1 used that facility frequently to up-skill and improve her students' underpinning knowledge.

AE students
This group of students were in their first year of their course. They were day release students attending college F one day a week. Every student on the AE course was an MA, and worked for a company full time. It was a mixed ability group, but all students were deemed capable of working to level 1 KS, although some were given LS to help them.

The AE were allocated one hour per week for KS out of their one day attendance. The rest of the day was spent doing theoretical and practical work in AE. Work for course assignments were used wherever possible for the AE students' portfolio evidence.

College G

General description
College G was a Sixth Form college situated on the outskirts of a city, and offered a wide range of academic courses and some selective vocational coursesm - NVQs, GNVQs, and BTEC courses in business, IT, care, public services, and tourism. The college serviced around 1,500 full time students in the 16-19 age range. College G was a bustling, very popular and efficiently run. It was a large, spacious college, and the atmosphere was noisy but organised and friendly. College G had a school-like culture, which the students appeared to respond well to - bells marked the end of set lessons during the day. The college corridors then became virtually impassable.

The students were very respectful, and in spite of its size and business, college G achieved a distinct sense of community and purpose. Facilities for students were very good - a large, well-maintained refectory, good parking and extensive sports equipment/areas.

Although largely an academic institution, college G took its provision of KS seriously and they were given a high profile in its literature and departments.

Some IT rooms were a little on the small side, but other KS work rooms were large and comfortable. There was good equipment for students to use and the rooms were well maintained.

The plan of KS room (fld pages 31b and 150a) was similar to college A's (see chapter 4).

Staff facilities were good. College G provided a separate general staff room, where tutors could relax/work/eat. The students' refectory was the only facility for refreshments however, apart from some vending machines and it got very busy at break times.

The KS tutors in the study shared their working areas, but every tutor had his or her own desk, computer station and storage cabinets.

The case-study at college G was carried out with the Head of KS (HKS/G), who was also a KS tutor and her cohort of students on a Leisure and Tourism course, and a second KS tutor, who jointly worked with the same group delivering their IT KS.

Organisation of KS

The HKS/G controlled all college KS provision, which were the three main KS - AoN, Comms and IT. HKS/G line managed one coordinator in each of the KS subjects who helped her implement them across the college. There was a small team of tutors working under HKS/G.

The KS department also oversaw some part A-level courses (AS and A2) and Enrichment[1] programmes.

There were 'academic support staff', which supported students doing their coursework literacy and numeracy needs across the curriculum (including KS), but were not actually under the KS department. An exams and assessment department assessed and verified the KS.

Head of KS

KS Coordinators

Aon Comms ICT

KS/specialist tutors

KS Administration

Academic support (AS) / Exams department

Internal Verifiers

Every student was informally interviewed when they applied to college G. College G then took their applications, called for references from their schools and got the students' predicted grades etc. If the references were in order, students attended an induction at which college G's requirements were outlined; KS were included in the induction. The college then gave the students a computer-based "quick scan" to identify and assess who might need special consideration due to dyslexia and other issues.

College G used Edexcel as the AB for its KS.

Provision of KS

Most students entering college G had GCSE grades A-D, and were following an academic educational route. If they had the required course entry grades, they did. Others, without the sufficient levels of GCSE grades (usually D-), were placed on vocational courses for a year whilst they gained relevant qualifications for progression. The case-study students were one such group.

College G emphasised that their 'skills' training (Comms, AoN and IT) provision was based on general educational subjects. It was their policy to put students who came to them with D- GCSE grades in maths, through a maths GCSE re-take rather than a KS AON, and D- students in English were put through a re-sit English GCSE rather than

[1] Enrichment within colleges includes personal development activities, such as community projects eT/C. They are not usually qualification led, but increasingly are including some of the WKS.

KS Comms. In fact, for those students who entered with D- grades; it was a *condition* of their being there and remaining at college G, that they re-sat their English or maths GCSEs. Students were given up to three terms in which to do this. College G had a very high success rate of getting those students through. IT at all levels was offered through the KS route, because most students did not have GCSEs in IT on joining. *(Not all vocational students at college G intended to go into an academic stream).*

For some students who had entered college G with GCSE D+ but wanted to improve their number, KS were being offered and taught at level 3. Level 2 KS Comms were provided to some vocational course students; on GNVQ and BTEC courses in particular. Maths (and AoN), English (and Comms) and IT lessons were delivered by KS tutors who were also subject specialists and taught their given subject in other college departments.

KS IT was delivered to the LT group once a week in a two hourly session.

Originally, there had been no specified qualification requirements to become a KS tutor at college G. However, KS were seen as a progression from the CS delivered to GNVQ students and GNVQ tutors (who largely became the KS tutors) had to be qualified in all CS to teach them. Also, under the supervision of the three subject coordinators, the majority of tutors who were delivering KS were now subject specialists. Some KS tutors/subject specialists were also LS tutors. HKS/G1 however, had been self-trained, but supported in that by college G.

The KS staff

The HKS/G1 was the main member of KS staff who participated in the study and came from an academic background. The second KS tutor was T/G2, who delivered IT to HKS/G1's LT group and came from an academic background.

HKS/G1 - case-study main tutor

The HKS/G1 had been working at college G as a geography teacher for many years when she was approached to set up the Curriculum 2000 changes and organise all of the KS in the college. HSKG1's background had always been academic, firstly teaching children, and then moving into teaching sixth formers when college G changed from a school to a sixth form college some years earlier. HSKG has always maintained her geographical link and tutored the LT vocational course within the Geography department.

HKS/G1 took on her role without any specific KS training. Only subsequently did the college bring in local trainers and send HKS/G1 for eternal courses. Although slightly muddled, the programmes, much like the 'old' vocational KS (CS), did equip HKS/G1 with the basic understanding and knowledge of the 'new' KS. A more extensive course at the local university improved on HKS/G1's knowledge.

HKS/G1 delivered Comms to the LT vocational group, as lesson time for the college IT was delivered by another tutor (T/G2 in the study).

Although HKS/G1 had an overarching role in KS, the three coordinators carried out most of the day-to-day running of it within their subjects. HKS/G1 timetabled KS and sorted out any problems for staff, students and funding as well as for some AS and A2 programmes. She was a very busy person, who enjoyed good working relationships with her colleagues and her students. HKS/G1's main issues were not with KS, but with university's ignorance of them and their reluctance to include the students' KS in their applications of entry. It did not help to encourage her academic students to do them or give KS credibility, if they were not going to be recognised by universities. This

situation did not affect vocational students, unless they wanted to take up vocational degrees.

T/G2 – second tutor
T/G2 delivered IT to the LT vocational group and ICT to other students. He also created and managed college G's KS Intranet, which was very good. T/G2 joined the college four years earlier from secondary schooling, where he had taught the 11-16 year old sector for some seven years.

T/G2 was very proactive in the IT department and was also in college G's Information Learning Technology (ILT) group, which encouraged IT learning. He used his students coursework as much as possible but was finding some subject area tutors not as helpful as they could have been in helping to integrate the KS he was delivering. T/G2 was enthusiastic for IT skills and believed they were important in the workplaces of all types of jobs.

University non-recognition of KS was found to be a big hurdle for motivating T/G2's academic students, but he had no knowledge of how employers viewed KS for the vocational students.

T/G2 had no specific training in KS, but was a highly qualified IT subject specialist.

LT course design and delivery
The LT course was a one year, full time BTEC 1st Diploma vocational course. Although within the LT's NQF, qualifications (GCSEs or KS), KS were not mandatory in the first year of the course. However, the students were placed to improve qualifications in order to progress to higher LT courses or other vocational/academic courses the following year. College G made re-sits in GCSE Maths and English compulsory and KS IT mandatory for students on this course (most entered with D- grades in maths and English).

The maths and English were delivered by tutors who were subject specialists and KS IT was delivered by a KS IT specialist in one formalised one hour session per week. The rest of the week, students attended their vocational sessions. LS was available to students who required extra help, but this was given outside of the KS sessions by the academic support group.

LT students
The group of 10 students were on a one year course. They were a mixed ability group, with varying GCSE grades. Although these students were on the LT course, most wanted to follow an academic educational pathway, or join courses that required GCSE grades of D+. Their whole purpose of joining the programme was to be able to improve their GCSE maths and English grades and get a qualification in IT. The intention was not always to do the LT BTEC Diploma.

L. College Data Summary Tables

The seven colour-coded tables list all collections of data made from each case-study within every college (A to G) and are set out in order of:

- date of collection
- field log page entry (flp)
- method of data collection - interview, group interview, meeting, pilot observation, observation, participant observation, taped lesson-participant observation, tutor-participant observation, focus group-discussion, focus group-interviews, tutorial observation.
- number of data items - separate pieces of data collected in the session or day e.g. numbers of interviews, observations etc.
- the participants

Abbreviations relating to College functions, where * represents colleges A-G, are:-

HKS/*	Head of KS
Co+HKS/*	Coordinator/Head of KS ***Note***, that the + symbol is used to combine functions
Co/*	Coordinator
Co+T/*	Coordinator/tutor
T/*1	First case study KS tutors
T/*2	Second case study tutors
T/*1.1	Tutor 1 *within* first case study (joint tutors)
T/*1.2	Tutor 2 *within* first case study (joint tutors)
St/*	Case study students
St/*	General KS students these are identified by year i.e., 2nd year
KST/*	General KS tutors
IV/*and	Internal Verifiers
Co+IV/*	Coordinator Internal Verifiers
VCM/*	Vocational Curriculum Managers
VT/*	Vocational tutors
ST/*	Support tutors
AD/*	Administrators

College A

Date of data collection	Flp entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
5.01.05	7b	Interview – meeting	1	T/A1
19.01.05	8	Interview	1	T/A1
26.01.05	11	Interview	1	Co+T/A2
26.01.05	12-13	Interview	1	St/A2
23.02.05	38a/b	Participation Observation	1	T/A1 and St/A1
9.03.05	51a/b	Participation Observation	1	T/A1 and St/A1
23.03.05	84	Interview	1	Co+IV/A
23.03.05	86	Interview	1	T/A1
13.04.05	90	Participation Observation	1	T/A1.and St/A1
20.04.05	110	Participation Observation	1	T/A1.and ST/A1
20.04.05	113	Interview	1	T/A1
20.04.05	115	Interview	2	St/A1
20.04.05	116	Interview	2	VT/A
11.05.05	160	Focus Group – discussion	6	St/A1
25.05.05	176	Interview	4	St/A2
25.05.05	174	Observation	1	St/A2
25.05.05	175	Interview	1	Co+T/2A
25.05.05	177	Participation Observation	1	T/A1
15.06.05	207	Participation Observation (taped lesson)	1	T/A1 and St/A1
15.06.05	210	Interview	1	T/A1
15.05.05	212	Interview	3	St/A1
20.06.05	213	Observation	1	2nd Yr St/A1)
20.06.05	221	Interview	1	St/A1
27.06.05	233	Observation	1	2nd Yr St/A1
27.06.05	235	Interview	1	St/A1
27.06.05	236	Interview	1	St/A
27.06.05	237	Interview	1	VCM/A
27.06.05	238	Interview	1	St/A1
27.06.05	239	Interview	1	Co+T/A2
13.07.05	245	Interview	1	T/A1
13.07.05	244	Observation	1	3rd Yr St/A1
13.07.05	246	Interview	2	T/A1
18.07.05	247	Interview	1	T/A1
14.10.05	266	Interview	1	HKS/A
14.02.06	269	Interview	1	T/A1
3.07.06	274	Interview	1	Co+T/A2
3.07.06	276	Interview	1	AD/A

College B

Date of data collection	Flp - entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
3.12.04	4	Pilot observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
21.01.05	9	Interview	1	T/B1
28.01.05	15	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
31.01.05	25	Interview	1	KST
4.02.05	26	Focus Group – interviews	1	St/B1
25.02.05	39A	Interview	1	T/B1
25.02.05	40	Interview	3	St/B1
25.02.05	41	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
2.03.05	45	Interview	1	T/B1
11.03.05	52	Interview	1	AD/B
11.03.05	52	Interview	1	Co/B
14.03.05	54	Observation	1	T/B2 and St/B2
14.03.05	54	Interview	1	T/B2
14.03.05	58	Interview	2	VT/B
14.03.05	59	Interview	2	VT/B
18.03.05	70a	Interview	1	T/B2
18.03.05	70aa	Observation	1	T/B2 and St/B2
18.03.05	70b	Interview	1	T/B1 and St/B1
18.03.05	75	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
15.04.05	102	Observation	1	T/B2, St/B2 and VT/B
15.04.05	106	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
6.05.05	152	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
6.05.05	152a	Interview	1	T/B1
13.05.05	162	Group Interview	3	St/B1
13.05.05	163	Group Interview	3	St/B1
20.05.05	169	Interview	6	St/B1
27.05.05	185	Interview	3	St/B1
27.05.05	185a	Tutor/Participation Observation	1	St/B1
27.05.05	185b	Interview	1	St/B1
27.05.05	186a	Tutor/Participation Observation	1	St/B1
27.05.05	186b	Interview	3	St/B1
10.06.05	196	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
24.06.05	231	Participation Observation	1	T/B1 and St/B1
24.06.05	232	Interview	1	T/B2
4.08.05	259	Interview	1	VCM/B
4.08.05	260	Interview	2	KST
27.09.05	262	Interview	1	T/B1
19.10.05	267	Interview	1	AD/B
31.10.05	268	Interview	1	KST

College C

Date of data collection	Flp - entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
17.03.05	65	Interview	1	T/C1
17.03.05	66	Participation Observation	1	T/C1 and St/C1
24.03.05	88a	Participation Observation	1	T/C1 and St/C1
24.03.05	89	Interview	1	T/C1
14.04.05	96	Participation Observation	2	T/C1 and St/C1
14.04.05	100	Interview	1	T/C1
28.04.05	129	Participation Observation	1	T/C1 and St/C1
28.04.05	129	Interview	2	St/C1
28.04.05	134	Interview	1	St/C1
19.05.05	165	Interview	1	St/C1
19.05.05	166	Participation Observation	1	T/C1, T/C2 and St/C1
19.05.05	164	Interview	1	St/C1
26.05.05	179	Interview	2	St/C1
26.05.05	180	Participation Observation	1	T/C2 and St/C2
9.06.05	187	Observation	1	T/C2
9.06.05	194	Interview	4	St/C2
28.07.05	253	Interview	1	T/C1
28.07.05	252	Interview	1	T/C2
28.07.05	255	Participation Observation	1	T/C1 and St/C1
27.09.05	261	Interview	1	HKS/C
28.02.06	270	Interview	1	Co/C

College D

Date of data collection	Flp - entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
16.10.04	2-3	Pilot observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
1.02.05	19	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
1.02.05	23	Interview	1	T/D1
8.02.05	30	Interview	3	St/D1
22.02.05	33	Observation	1	HKS+Co/D and St+HKS+Co/D2
22.02.05	33	Interview	7	St/D2
22.02.05	35	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
22.02.05	33	Interview	1	HKS+Co/D
28.02.05	44	Interview	1	ST/
1.03.05	46	Interview	2	ST/D1
1.03.05	46	Interview	7	St+HKS+Co/D2
1.03.05	47a/b	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
1.03.05	48	Interview	4	VT/D
14.03.05	60a	Interview	1	KST
15.03.05	60b	Interview	1	VT/D
15.03.05	61	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
18.03.05	62	Observation	1	KST and St/D1
21.04.05	117	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
21.04.05	121	Interview	1	T/D1
21.04.05	124	Interview	1	St/D1
21.04.05	127	Interview	1	KST
3.05.05	142	Observation	1	HKS+Co/D2 and St/D2
3.05.05	143	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
3.05.05	147	Interview	1	T/D1
3.05.05	148	Interview	1	St/D2
10.05.05	154	Group Interview	3	St/D1
10.05.05	159	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
24.05.05	171	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
14.06.05	197	Participation Observation	1	T/D1 and St/D1
28.06.05	240	Interview	1	KST
26.07.05	249	Interview	1	T/D1
23.05.06	272	Interview	1	HKS+Co/D2

College E

Date of data collection	Flp - entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
29.04.05	140	Interview	1	HKS/E
29.04.05	141	Interview	1	T/E1
29.04.05	141a	Observation	1	T/E1, VT/E and St/E1
23.06.05	225a	Observation	1	T/E1, VT/E and St/E1
23.06.05	227	Observation	1	T/E1, VT/E and St/E1
23.06.05	228	Interview	1	VT/E
23.06.05	228	Observation	1	VT/E
23.06.05	230	Interview	1	IV/E
1.07.05	242	Interview	1	T/E1
29.09.05	263	Interview – data	1	HKS/E

College F

Date of data collection	Flp – entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
24.01.05	10	Interview	1	T/F1
24.01.05	10	Tutorial Observation	1	T/F1 and St/F1
7.02.05	29	Interview	1	T/F1
7.02.05	29	Group Interview	5	St/F1
7.02.05	29	Tutorial Observation	1	T/F1 and St/F1
7.02.05	29	Interview	1	VT/F
7.02.05	29	Interview	1	VCM/F
9.05.05	153	Tutorial Observation	1	T/F1 and St/F1
1.07.05	243	Interview	2	St/F1
27.07.05	250	Interview	1	HKS/F
7.10.05	265	Interview – data	1	HKS/F
7.10.05	265	Interview	1	T/F1
...07.06	279	Interview	1	HKS/F
07.06	280	Interview	1	T/F1

College G

Date of data collection	Flp entry	Method of data collection	No. of individual data items	Participant(s)
27.01.05	14	Interview – Questionnaire	1	HKS+Co/G1
10.02.05	31a	Interview	9	St/G1
10.02.05	31b	Tutor/Participation Observation	1	St/G1
10.02.05	31b	Interview	1	HKS+Co/G1
10.02.05	31b	Interview	1	T/G2
10.02.05	31b	Interview	1	KST
10.02.05	31a	Interview	1	ST/F
5.05.05	150	Interview	2	St/G1
5.05.05	150a	Participation Observation	1	T/G2 and St/G2
5.05.05	151b	Interview	1	KST
30.06.05	241	Interview	1	HKS+Co/G1
30.06.05	241	Interview	1	St/G1
10.06	;;;	Interview data	1	HKS+Co/G1

M. Sample of Transcriptions

Note:,- personal details have been edited out.

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1. Tutor

Q What is your name?
R XXXXXXXXXXXXX
Q What is your position at the college?
R I'm a key Skills lecturer for the school of motor technology
Q Do you have ant other position?
R No
Q How many days do you work?
R 5
Q And how many hours approximately do you work in a week?
R 37and a half
Q So it's full time
Q When you started at the college were you given a job description?
R I was, yes
Q And does the job you do reflect that job description?
R It does to a certain degree, but it does because it actually prevents me from moving forward. For instance, I'm a Band 2 lecturer and the main scale lecturing at the college is Band 3. And because my duties only perform a certain degree of Band 3 description, it means I can't move into a Band 3 position.
Q Does the pay reflect the different levels of pay?
R They do reflect the levels, my salary scale is about £3,000 less per year less
Q Did you understand all the bands when you took the job on?
R Yes, I understand it because I was at the forefront of the banding changes that were introduced here at the college. I was a originally a technician here and I went from technician duties on to the academic Band 1, gained my teaching qualifications, Cert Ed etc, and then moved on to Band 2
Q Was your training funded by the college?
R Yes they gave me, paid for the Cert Ed, but didn't give me any remission hours
Q So you did it in your own time, it was your own personal development?
R Yes. Currently I am doing the BA Hons at XXXXXXXXXXX in Post Compulsory Education
R And when did you start doing that?
R I started it last year in October and I'll complete the first modules this current year, this summer.
Q What sort of period does that cover, how many years?
R It's two years initially for the ordinary BA level. Because I'm doing the Honours, it will be a further two years after that
Q What is your job description?
R Basically I deliver Key Skills to level 2 in English, Maths and IT and the way that it's formalised here in the school of technology vehicle is that the students come to me and have all of those three composites in the one lesson, so my lesson plans and my scheme of work has to reflect that. And the way that I've done it is around assignment base and in fact I don't call this Key Skills. It is not called Key Skills; it's called 'Assignment Workshop'. Also this encompasses the NVQ. The work they do for me in Key Skills can be transferred into their NVQ and also for the new technical certificate, so one of the assignments that they do for me is used in the technical certificate, so there's qualifications there. So in fact it's quite a role over of assignments that cover these three areas that students take
Q That's the one you have given me here?
R That document is the assignment workshop welcoming pack. It tells them what they are going to do and that forms the basis of my scheme of work
Q Who designed this?
R I did
R Who verified this?

Q Nobody
Q So...
R But the assignments are quality controlled checked by the NVQ lead tutor here at the college
Q So the assignments given out to the students are quality checked prior to their being given out?
R Yes, by a peer, but a person designated to do that particular job
Q You are satisfied with that are you?
R Yes...but the contact with that individual tends to be just by email and sometimes that can be a bit loose. But things happen and things get done.
Q So you do the assignments, but then make sure they are checked to meet the criteria?
R Yes
Q Prior to your teaching Key Skills here, what was your pathway?
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
I worked for XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and did sub contract work, mainly in precision engineering. I got a job with one of the utility companies, water companies as a telemetry service engineer and whilst working for them I received an injury, had to cease that job and it was then that I got a job here at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and I worked in the engineering department as a technician. I then changed locations within the college and moved across to motor vehicle technology from mainstream engineering provision and it was in this dept that I actually moved on to band 1 provision and when the Key Skills lecturer that covered the provision here walked out they asked me to cover that provision. In taking up that role, there was absolutely no support whatsoever
Q How about training?
R No training. I had pick up the dragon reigns and run with it.
Q So when was this, what year?
R That was 2 years ago
Q 2001, 2002?
R Yes, 2001. 2002. It was very problematic. Because the lecturer, for whatever reasons, failed to keep records of students' work, never saved their work allegedly, his Land Rover's boot was full of students' work and he drove off site with it and that the last he was ever seen. So consequently, I had quite an uphill struggle not withstanding the fact that I was trying to learn about these processes of Key skills, but also to manage what had happened before and to put it into some sort of organisation. In fact I spent six weeks going through paperwork trying to find students work and in the final analysis, I found very little work but lots of evidence of the structure of Key Skills but very little evidence of students work. In fact that left quite a bad sort of reception towards the managing agents who look after the students and the employers too. So it wasn't a very happy situation
Q Were you doing your Cert Ed at the time?
R Yes. I was I was going through the process, because I was only Band 1.
Q So at that time you were not even a qualified teacher, you hadn't finished your own training and you were put into that situation?
R Yes
Q Do you think that could have been done differently?
R No, because there was an imperative that they had cover and there was nobody prepared to take on Key Skills so they had to get a member of staff and I suppose because I had a certain amount of expertise in terms of information communications technology, I have a level 4 qualification in that they see me as an easy option to work in that area
Q So you have a level 4 qualification in IT?
R Yes
Q What about communication and Application of number?
R No
Q In your past, your engineering training/work, would you have used number? I'm speaking as someone who doesn't know engineering.
R Yes it is. It is very much around in engineering technology
Q So did you feel confident to deliver the application of number and communication?
R Yes I did, probably because my own spelling and grammar and punctuation and understanding of setting out a document, and a report are fairly robust and also my ability with maths is OK too.

Q So you think you had the life experience if not the qualifications at that time and do you think you were the right person at that time, given the problems that may have been around with in the college, to be taken on for that job?
R No, because I had no experience and there was no support for me when I actually took the role on. If I had been given some training and had some support whilst I was doing it, then it might have made me think a little more differently about what was going on. But in actual fact I had to run with information that was limited and it left me fairly exposed.
Q What about actually managing the students?
R Managing the students I find it comes quite easy to me and I suppose really. It's who I am and the background I come from
Q So you're using your own experiences and your own strengths?
R And I'm translating that in terms of trying to understand the student's position too.
Q So you're identifying with the students at some level?
R Yes
Q Why the switch from technician to teacher?
R Two reasons: money, and medical-a hip operation and I did see it as an opportunity to take me away from heavy lifting to an environment that was a lot easier for me to manage in terms of my health and I suppose I did grab the pound note as well. It was a substantial increase in my pay by £60.00 per week, which was a nice thing to go for I have to say at this point that my move on to the academic scale was not welcomed by my technician colleagues and also by some members of staff who are the teaching staff.
Q Can you give me an example experience of that?
R I can give you an experience, which is within this year's cohort. One particular lecturer has sent me students who are below Key Skills and should be working toward basic skills and when questioned on why he has done that said 'well you can do that, that's easy for you to do'. And I had a bit of an atmosphere when I moved in to Key Skills and the academic scale. He or she's attitude was that I wasn't qualified, I shouldn't be doing it and I devalued the lecturer's role. That continues to this day
Q It's an on going thing?
R Yes, we don't talk
Q What about other support from support staff?
R From support staff, it's fine
Q From the staff designated to support you it's fine?
R I do get some support, but it's only happened this year
Q So this year you now have some learning support? What about support from the college, from colleagues, other staff, management?
R I'll start with the support from my colleagues. And this is my interpretation of their view; that Key Skills is something to do with me and not to do with them and that Key Skills is a waste of time anyway
Q Are these the course tutors, the technical staff that you were a part of at one time? R Yes, those on the floor doing the technical delivery. They don't regard Key Skills in any way shape or form. Why that is I don't know, but maybe there's an historical thing with them. Three of those tutors were delivering Key Skills at one point and they were taken out of that framework. I'm talking about the school of PSV engineering because I cover PSV and light vehicles. I cover two schools. And also because of the way those other members of staff, teaching staff have reacted towards Key Skills. They don't give me any assignments to work with the students on they don't give me any support in terms of coming in and finding out about their students' attending. This sort of thing. Now that seems very...
Q This is from the course tutors?
R Yes.
Q Would you say this is a cross college problem?
R I would say that, from my experience, I would say that yes
Q Are you encouraged to attend staff meetings? Do you actually have a cross college communication system?
R We do have staff meetings, but they are very few and far between, maybe one a year
Q So the possible support that you may get...
R In fact, there was a meeting recently, between some members of staff, but I wasn't invited to that and yet they were discussing Key Skills. It was by pure chance I happened in on that meeting. Then I was included on the meeting. I found that quite insulting to me in that respect, but then again it's something that happens.

Q So there is really a support issue?
R There is a support issue
Q How do you see the whole area of Key Skills?
R I'm doing the degree, I'm conducting some research of my own to get an understanding of the what the students' perceptions are about what they need to do for Key Skills and also to find out weather there's enough time within their delivery framework of their attendance at college for them to complete their Key Skills, because there has been a change and the change is that originally they would have three years to complete - for employed youngsters it was a three year programme. That's changed...now they have to complete within one year, their first year of attendance.
Q And this is level 1?
R This is level 1 and level 2, within their first year
Q These are apprentices?
R I do have unemployed students who are mainly level 1, because they are not foundation apprentice students and they have to complete their level 1 in the first year. If they move into an employed situation through the college agencies and they become apprentices then I would have them again for level 2 and that's the reason.
Q I'll come back to some of these issues later if I may Peter, at another interview. Can I ask you now, where do you see yourself going with Key Skills?
R Initially, when I first started I was very enthusiastic about it and I see the value of Key Skills too, especially as a second chance. I feel myself, that I will be leaving Key Skills because I've had the experience of it and I don't feel it's been a happy one. But there again, I don't know any other way, so I've just worked with what I had. It has reduced my confidence.
Q So as a tutor, the experience of teaching Key Skills has been a positive one?
R It's had some positive events, but unfortunately the negative dealings have out weighed the positive ones
Q What do you actually do in your job?
R I feel that I'm somebody that trying to enable youngsters to progress in their qualifications and to do that I find that I'm more helpful to them then they are to themselves. So I'm an enabler in one respect and you might have seen that when you arrived today. I was sitting with a particular student going through an assignment and setting it out for him and bringing it down to their level of understanding about what they need to do. And some of these kids need that little bit of a jolt to get them launched, to get them started. The problem is, the students that I have need that launch and that jolt at each stage and step of the way. So I find I am the facilitator I tend to be looking at their work to kick start them into their work at every turn and twist, because I know that Key Skills should be their work
Q So are you saying...?
R That I do have some in put into their work
Q That might be their assignments, but what about their exams?
R Their exams are on-line, which is this year's format. It's the first year it's happened, which has been a God-send really because we can put them in for number 1 when we feel they are capable of it
Q That's a positive reform?
R Yes, rather than waiting for the exams room to be free from people taking exams at a particular time and trying to fit everything in, it's been a real move forward. And I've had some really good results from the exams that some of these students have taken. With me they have to go through some exam prep, we go through some problematic areas that they might come across especially in numeracy and we work through those as examples. And I also get them to do an on line practice paper and from that I can get a feeling of where they are and with individuals, we can go over certain areas of possible weaknesses, especially in numeracy. And that's useful too. Keyskills4u.com is the site that I use
Q Tell me about an average day
R I start at 7 o clock in the morning I arrive here at 7, and in that short period of time between 7 and 9, I find I can get quite a lot of my file management stuff completed and out the way. Especially if I've brought stuff from home from the night before that I've marked. I can get it back into their portfolios and keep everything organised. Without that time I couldn't do this job
Q Are these hours that you are paid?
R No
Q So this is unpaid work?

R Yes, basically. Then my day starts a t 9 o clock. Then I usually have in my working day, three groups. Although on a Wednesday I work until 7 o clock, when I have an additional group from 5 o clock to 7. I've been given 2 hours remission to do my degree work which is really useful, not enough, but useful. After I've attending the degree course, I come back on Friday and I work through to half 4.
Q Do you go to the university?
R Yes
Q You physically leave the college and come back?
R Yes
Q Tell me some of your stories about Key Skills. Particular stories with students
R I find in Key Skills that the students use their inabilities to do the work, and to direct those inabilities in other directions and generally speaking it becomes a personal thing
Q Towards you?
R Towards me as a tutor, I have experienced theft of personal property. I haven't experienced an assault, but I have experienced a 'close to' situation, a near on assault. I've had to withstand threats against my car being smashed up and trashed and all this is really about students who can't cope with what they need to do for Key Skills and they react in a different way when they come here. Never the less, it is very unsettling and not fair
Q What is the regularity of this?
R With one particular group, an implied threat towards me is every time I have the group
Q That's constant?
R Yes
Q Do you have support in your class when this is going on?
R No
Q Do you record this?
R Yes I have done
R And is this given back to your management through your line management?
R Yes it is
Q And these instances are recorded?
R Yes
Q At some point during the year, can I have a copy of your records? You keep copies?
R Yes I do, yes.
Q So if I want to have a copy, not the names of the students, the people involved, but the details of the instances. That would be ok?
R Yes it would
Q Any other experiences you would like to tell me about?
R Failing to get students to achieve...is another experience, which doesn't sit very well with me as a person
Q So you take that as personal?
R Yes, as a personal reflection on my abilities. But I know that generally, well in every case, it's down to the individual not doing their work, what they need to do
Q Is it that they don't do the work or they can't do the work or they just don't want to? And what do you put this down to?
R You get two different levels of candidate. You get a candidate who hasn't achieved well at school, who's had a real bad experience at school and is then placed in a Key Skills position. You also get a candidate who's done fairly well at school that's not going to take him in to a high flying job, but he enjoys motorcars and working on cars and he feels he's learnt enough to equip him for life. So I get two extremes. I get the extreme where the person is qualified to a certain degree saying I don't want to do this. Then I get the other extreme where the kid says I can't do this and I won't do this. I never did enjoy this at school and I never went to school anyway. Occasionally I get the person that's in the middle who wants to do something. I'm hoping for good things this year with some students. I'm hoping that there will be some positive outcomes.
Q Thank you. *At this point we looked at the questionnaire and I made notes.*

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2. Tutor
Q NAME
R XXXXXXXXX
Q This is just a catch up really and to see how you are getting on with students now and the position with them

R The students have done really well in the KS, all have passed Comms L1, 2 students are now beginning their journey towards Comms L2 very positively, 5 have completed IT L1 portfolio, all have got thro IT L1 test. In addition to that we just had the annual exhibition at xxxxxxxxx and all students had work exhibited in the group and they have all been so chuffed and pleased that their work is displayed and they've been eager to talk about it. The change that we have seen in the students since the beginning of term in September is phenomenal and everyone has commented on it and all except 2 of the students have agreed to enrol on the intermediate course...they are all coming back...not necessarily down to the fact that they've done KS, but it is true to say that because they have had 2 tutors, at least half of that time they have had the attention, individual help and this is meant that their confidence has improved so that they've been able to tackle problems they've had, with spelling, they've been given the confidence to try and overcome some of those difficulties
Q Good. You bring up the point of attention, how important is that an issue for you, to have a certain ratio of staff to students...how many all together roughly
R We've got about 12 in the group, so that gives us a ration of 6 students to 1 tutor and that works very well
Q Do any of those students have LS?
R Erm yes, most receive some LS, but it's not in class support. They have LS in a lot of their theory lessons, and some go to see support tutors in addition to that to help with the numerous problems
Q So that's more attention
R More attention
Q So you've got the 2 tutors portfolio building, getting them thro tests and outside of that, to help with the underpinning knowledge you've also got LS who are putting the foundations there whilst you apply that in the portfolio? Is that a good picture?
R Yes, that's correct
Q And that's quite a lot of those students?
R Oh yes
Q So you would class those students as a needy group?
R Oh yes, very needy group, very needy
Q So, clearly you think that works, because it has worked? And do you think that had their been just 1 tutor trying to struggle thro and very little LS, do you feel that you might have had the same outcome or...
R That's very doubtful, very doubtful. The students are not very motivated to do things off their own backs. They are very keen to be directed and to have some help. Once they get going on something, they're ok, but they do need that help, they are very much level 1 students
Q Ok, how do you see them progressing towards L2, do you think they've got the ability to do L2?
R I think possibly 3 of the group have got a L2 capability. They passed their L1 very convincingly and the quality of their work has improved really beyond all measure because they've now got the confidence to get their ideas down on paper and the main problem with innovative work is to be able to get the ideas out of their heads on to a written format. They can do it creatively, in their artwork
Q And verbalise it?
R Yes, and verbalise it, through their pictures and their vocabulary is wide enough to suggest that they could actually put together a piece of written work, now they have the confidence to do that
Q So do you think that a lot of what you've done is actually helping them to find this...whatever it is you have just highlighted and how would you say you've done that?
R It's been a team effort. They've been given the opportunities to find ways of expressing new ideas thro their artwork and that's an opportunity they haven't had before. They've been given a goal to go for and that's been sufficient and that's important because then they get the recognition for their work
Q That's been motivating?
R That's a big motivating factor. We've given them individual goals to aim for and we've helped them achieve those goals. We've given them the confidence. We've also given them the opportunities to do things like using things like PowerPoint to do presentations, not strictly speaking L1 comms, but it's been another outlet for their creativity. It' got them up in front of their peers and they've received peer feedback, which is a new experience for them, and they have been able to take on board criticism delivered very supportively and they do accept it

much more readily from their peers. So, if they're getting the same message from their peers, as they're getting from their assessors then they are more likely to act on that. And we've seen that
Q That's good. It sounds like a positive outcome
R We're very pleased, very pleased. Parents are pleased, students are pleased. One they passed their courses, the KS results have been very good and they have re-enrolled for their next level up with a great deal of enthusiasm and a lot of encouragement from our part. We haven't had to drag them a long. They wanted to come to college, they've enjoyed their experience of college and that's been useful for them.
Q So they're going in to the next year, barring a couple?
R Barring a couple
Q Do you know what's going to happen to the couple that didn't?
R Yes. 1 student has financial pressure at home preventing him. There are some thoughts around trying to make him into a PT student to give him some kind of help, because he's one of a twin and his twin is actually coming back FT. the other student enjoyed her course; she's not L2 material. She's been given some opportunities to have FT job and she wants to do that, but I think she's enthusiastic to keep up her artwork, so we are trying to pair her up with one or two older students to give her some guidance on how she might keep her artwork up and we'll try and keep in touch with her as well
Q The group that are going up, they'll all work towards L2?
R Yes
Q You say at this point that a few of them are obviously L2?
R Yes
Q Is their NQF for their particular course include L2 pass?
R It' an intermediate course, so we just hope they will get a L2
Q But it' not a requirement?
R No, their course does not depend on it. Students who are not capable of achieving their comms at L2, which as a department is our main focus, we are giving them the opportunity to work on their IT from L1 to L2, or for those who have not finished their portfolios, to get them finished first, then we will go on to look at them doing one of the wider KS, so we are trying to add value
Q Value?
R Yes, it adds value to what they can do, because they also have Saturday jobs, as most are old enough and they've discovered they need things like team work and they value the relevance of having those skills. They're more applicable to them on the intermediate course; they were too young for most of these jobs on the foundation course
Q What about AoN?
R AoN skills? We're trying to find a way of embedding them in their main learning programme and that's on hold at that's our main hold-up at the moment. The students aren't very keen on doing number work
Q So they haven't done any AoN this first yr?
R No. we wanted to build their confidence up. We didn't want to hit them with a subject that they are obviously going to be very, very anti.
Q Did they voice they were anti?
R They did, they did. And because we had a lot to aim at for the comms, we decided to concentrate on that. We're going to try and look at some ways of embedding the AoN in their intermediate course over the summer, so we're going to wait for that. We don't want to go down the route of setting them lots of extra work to do
Q So you're really using it as a progressive route and building on it instead of throwing it all at them?
R Yes
Q How do you feel now, at the end of this yr, as a tutor in this department, college?
R I feel positive. I can see where the work needs doing
Q Which is?
R Which is actually moving away from the group we've just been discussing, more looking at the media industry and getting them towards comms L3. Most of them are capable of a L3 comms qualification. It will take the 2yrs of their diploma course to achieve it, because I want to take a progressive route, I think we've got the time to build sufficiently on their work. Their main course work involves them in writing documents that are too long. They write 3,500/4,000 words
Q This is their vocational course

R Yes, their vocational course
Q And that can't be changed can it?
R It can' be on the face of it, but what I've had a look at with the other tutors is 2 or 3 units and we've managed to break down the assignments to sections which can be handled in a different way so they could do an evaluation for example as one part, an analysis of information in a table format, so we're getting away from this bulk...
Q The big documents and you're looking at bite sizing it really?
R Yes, looking at 3 or 4 units so that we hit them at different times in the yr and gives them a progression thro. What I'm going to do is see almost every assignment they produce anyway and get them written feedback with special form we use. I do this on line so, they receive a legible copy, so they understand it and it goes back with their assignment and that's where I comment on their grammar, their layout, maybe the vocabulary they use, the way they've sorted info, so they can receive constructive feedback and it' not necessarily all negative. We've introduced L1 that the 1st yr students to this format and they said they like getting feedback in this format because they can see what it is they've done wrong, they get specific feedback sheet, with their assignment at the same time as the feedback they get from their main course tutors. That's beginning to gel quite nicely and then I give them time when I see them each week to address the feedback points specifically and they are not having to look for time ion their own study time. If they want to address the particular point and have their assignment re-assessed by me they are given the opportunity to do it and the time. I help them with particular points.
Q So how do their VTs eel about this?
R Broadly very supportive. I'm working with 2 Key tutors and I'm just looking at the work they do, so I'm just building up a relationship with these 2 tutors, and I've now got set parts of the assignments to deliver myself, so that my name appears on the briefs that they are given
Q So that's pulling KS into it
R Exactly, exactly. And they know I'm there to look at their KS. Its not sort of masked from them, but because they're doing an assignment they would be doing anyway, because nothing about the assignment has been changed as far as their concerned, nothing's been added to it, its just that they have extra support and extra time and they get extra feedback form an additional tutor and I have responsibility for delivering certain parts of the grading criteria and we try to pick those that will generate evidence that is b=very relevant and very useable for their portfolios.
Q Have you had experience of it working
R Yes, we've introduced it over the last term and its worked very well so far and I think it's a model we will definitively pick up. Because, the students we have got currently in the first yr, will be our 2nd yr student's next yr, so they will be familiar with it
Q Sounds worth looking at
R It's definitely a model worth looking at because in addition to that I've put some resource books which are really a series of handouts together, which cover all the things they need to be able to do at L3.
****

Q Apart from that, you moved across from another college. Are you glad you made that move?
R Yes, I very much look forward to working in this environment and the staff I'm working with are very open to new ideas
Q Good, because this is one of your new ideas isn't it?
R Yes, I've got a lot of ideas. I'm fairly confident it should produce results. At the very least it will up skill the students...our main role
Q That's what you're here for
R Exactly. It will help them to revise things they've learned but forgotten how to do, give them confidence in multi assignments...never done before but we expect them to miraculously do it...it should work
Q Thank you xxxxxxxxx

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3. Student
Q Name?
R XXXXXXXX
Q What course are you on?
R It's called Light Vehicle Engineering...I think. I'm not sure what it's called

Q is this a Modern Apprentice or NVQ or...?
R I think it's an NVQ. I go into work placement next year. I do two and a half days at college this year and then do my tests and if I pass I go on to an apprentice
Q So this is a pre-apprentice year. A pre-course, to see if you can go on to the MA, which is next year?
R Yes
Q What KS are you doing at the college?
R Errrr
Q Do you know?
R Assignments on life, the working life out there, in the workplace on H&S, dangers, possibilities, them sort of things
Q So, you're using your course work?
R Yes
Q So, are you doing some IT, like today? You're doing AON, are you doing some number work in amongst your course, scales and stuff like that? What are you doing in your portfolio?
R What do you mean?
Q What sort of work are you doing? Do you do any AON; do you do any arithmetic, adding up?
R No
Q What about communication, writing and spelling?
R Yes, typing, spelling, power graphs, English
Q English stuff? OK
R That's about it
Q You don't know...do you do any scale diagrams or anything like that?
R That's the next assignment
Q That's the next assignment which you haven't started yet?
R Yes
Q Ok, can I ask you how old you are Ben?
R 17
Q You're 17, and how long have you been at college?
R Since last September
Q Straight from school?
R Yes
Q You didn't go on to do any work, then come on to college?
R No, I came straight into college
Q Are you on a work-based situation?
R No
Q Are you classed as a full time student?
R Yes, just a full time college student
Q But you actually attend two and a half days a week?
R Yes
Q And this day that you're doing all the work in this is today?
R Yes, today
Q Somebody said it was called a theory day, is that right?
R Yes, we just do class work today and then we're in the workshop tomorrow and Friday
Q Actually doing?
R Working on cars...engines and stuff, getting to learn it
Q So what do you think you are doing the computers and the English ands spelling and all that for? Why do you think you're doing all that?
R To help us learn about H&S, cus I didn't know much about H&S, and nowIm doing this 1,000 word assignment, I've learned a lot about H&S in the workplace and precautions and stuff that I should take before I do certain things
Q Do you find that's useful, yes?
R Yes
Q What about IT? Do you think that's important to be able to learn how to use computers and things?
R Depends on what you're doing. You do have to use computers yeh with cars, but that's sort of like, you'd use certain programmes, not like typing sort of thing
Q So, do you think you should be doing that on the course?
R Erm, I dunno, because I don't know what it's like...what you have to do. I don't know what you'd have to do to programme a computer board on a car

Q Right. So, in this theory day, tell me what you do...all day
R In the morning we have hour and half of electric, so that's the like, batteries, all the electrics on a car. And then we have engine tack, which is just engines, engines, engines, and then we have KS
Q How many hours a day?
R Hour and a half. We have four lessons that are hour and a half, and next I've got with Barry, the course tutor, and he does like transmissions, wheels, the other half of H&S.
Q Right, but its still all to do with your vocational training?
R Yes, it's the theory side that you can't quite do. You can't always get in the workshop, so we have to do theory for that
Q Sure, did you come into college with any GCSEs?
R Yes. I'm not quite sure what they are, I didn't do too good
Q Why do you think you didn't do too good?
R Cus I didn't pay attention at school
Q Are you paying attention now do you think?
R Yes, well...
Q You look pretty good in the class, you're working aren't you?
R Yes, but...I don't put all my effort in...I'm too lazy
Q You think its just laziness?
R I have a lack of concentration
Q OK. Do you find it hard to concentrate?
R It depends what I'm doing
Q So, if you really, really like what you're doing?
R It depends on what mood I'm in
Q Right
R Sometimes I'm in a mood and I just sit here...do some typing, do my work. Other days I won't. I just sit in for fun; just go on games and the Internet, if I don't want to do it
Q So what was today, a good day or...?
R Yes, today was a good day
Q So you did some work?
R Yes
Q But, if you are going to go to do a course, you're going to have to work?
R Yes, I've got to do the work to get where I want to be
Q But you say you're prepared to do that?
R Yes
Q Do you think you'll get there?
R Yes...hopefully
Q Do you think the computer and the spelling and the writing and all that do you think you should do it?
R I suppose it helps in the future, like with typing and after getting information off the Internet, which helps me to learn about different things as well, which I wouldn't have if I had to go the library or something
Q You prefer to get it off the Internet?
R Yes, it's easier
Q Than looking through books?
R Yes, I don't read that much
Q You never read?
R No
Q What about magazines? Trade magazines?
R No. I buy Motorbike Britain and that's it
Q Mountain bike mags?
R Yes, I don't really read that, I just look at the pictures and see what's on offer and stuff like that
Q Do you think you should read?
R Yes...it would help me out in the future...I might need it somewhere
Q So you think its sort of OK to do this, the reading and writing bit, because basically, you're going to be using it at some point in your life?
R Yes. Maybe not even with what I'm like working up to, but it may earn me money
Q So you think its right that to include it in your course?
R Yes

Q You don't have a problem with it?
R No, because if I didn't and I was just in the workshop, then I wouldn't learn all the health and safety. I wouldn't know as much as I did now about safety and stuff like that.
Q So, it's got an importance to you?
R It's got value?
Q So what do you plan to do after this? You want to do a MA course hopefully
R Yes
Q And who knows, after that, there's an Advance MA?
R There's another year
Q All together there's three years?
R I'll just see how this year goes, then go on to another year and then do the last year
Q So you've got a long-term plan?
R Yes, see where it takes me, yes...go as far as I can
Q That's good. I'm hoping to be around in the college after September as well, can I have another interview with you at a later date?
R Yes, I'm only here for another 6 weeks, then I've got exams and then it's like a 9/10 week holiday. Then I'll be back again
Q Yes, when you come back?
R Yes
Q Thank you

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4. Student
Q Name?
R No name
Q OK. You are doing KS today yes?
R Yeh
Q What do you think of KS?
R It's all right. I dunno. I just don't really like being taught stuff
Q What about school; did you like being taught at school?
R They didn't really teach us
Q They didn't really teach you at school?
R No. I just done what they told me to do and just keep quiet really
Q By the sound of it, you didn't really enjoy school much?
R No, no one did
Q Nobody did in your class?
R No one in my class did, no. We never really done work, just sat and talked
Q Did you do your GCSEs?
R Yeh
Q Did you get any GCSEs?
R Yeh
Q What did you get?
R I got E for maths, D for English
Q That's pretty good
R Yeh, and I think I got D or E for science and that
Q Were you pleased with that?
R Yeh, better than nothing
Q So you must have done some work to get that, mustn't you?
R Some work...not a lot though
Q So why do you think you're doing KS at college?
R I dunno, cus...I dunno, cus you just have to do it
Q If you had a choice, would you turn up or not for your KS lessons?
R No
Q Which one don't you like? You do 3 don't you? AON?
R Yeh
Q IT?
R Yeh and the English one
Q Comms, yes? So which one do you prefer out of the 3?
R English
Q You like the comms best? And do you feel comfortable doing that? You enjoy doing it?
R Yeh

Q What sort of things do you do in that?
R Err
Q Do you write assignments and things?
R Yeh, you can write an assignment on what you want so...
Q You get a choice?
R Yeh. With this work, I don't understand computers and I don't really want to know how to use one, so I'm not really interested
Q So you're not interested in doing this anyway?
R No
Q What about if you got your own salon and you needed to use a computer?
R I don't want to work in a salon
Q You don't?
R No, and I don't want to have my own salon
Q What do you want to do, what's your plan?
R Err
Q Have you got a plan?
R Not really. I don't really worry about things like that
Q OK, you just want to do your hairdressing?
R Yeh...it's really just for like when I start my own family and that, so I can cut the kids hair and stuff like that, so I can do my family's hair and that. I ain't really doing it for a job
Q Right...so how do you see yourself in the future? You want to be married with children?
R Yeh, just married with children...I don't really...I will work but I just...
Q You're not sort of doing a career thing?
R No
Q What about maths though, adding up and taking away and stuff, what if your children need help...they're going to go to school aren't they, what if they come home and ask you? Do you feel confident enough to give them a little bit of help?
R No
Q So do you think it's at all useful, in any way?
R Yeh, sort of, help me out a bit but...it's there if I want it but I just think...I don't really want help
Q And the AON the same, you just don't really want help?
R Yeh, I just ain't really bothered...just...I think there's better things to do
Q So if I said to you tomorrow you don't have to turn up for any of these lessons what would you do?
R I'd be all right. I'd just stay at home and mess about with the horses and that
Q But you'd come to your hairdressing wouldn't you?
R Yeh, that's all right...it's easier but, I don't really, I'm not bothered about that really either. I sound really bad...I'm sorry but...I'm not bothered today to tell the truth...I'm not bothered
Q I can see you're not bothered today, but are you not bothered everyday?
R I'm not bothered every day. I'd quite happily stay at home, mess about with the horses and feed me dad and that rather then...
Q You've got horses have you?
R Yeh
Q How many horses have you got?
R My dad buys and sells them
Q Does he...that's interesting
R I'd rather just be doing that
Q So why don't you do that for a living; if you really like horses...?
R Because like it's not for girls...it's for the men
Q Right
R You can help but you can't buy and sell horses
Q Ok, but what about working with horses, perhaps veterinary stuff or that sort of...?
R That's just not done in my family
Q Oh
R No, they don't like...my dad like thinks I'm a bit stupid being at college and that
Q Does he?
R No, he don't like it. He thinks I should be at home...
Q Just doing...?
R Just doing women's stuff
Q What do you think then?

R Probably rather be doing that...yeh...its just sort of...I dunno...I don't really want to be at home and that cus like that's like what my mum does, so there isn't much for me to do, but I haven't got anywhere else I can go and I haven't got a partner or nothing so its just to fill some time in away. And I'm actually learning something, which is helpful later in life so...
Q So you think you're learning something yes?
R Yeh, not quite sure what...but I'm sure I'm learning something
Q Well, you do know your way around a computer, because I'm watching you and you can do it
R Yeh, I know the Internet so...
Q You probably know a lot more than lots of other people out there
R We don't have a computer at home
Q Would it help if you had one at home, or would you not bother to use it at home anyway?
R Probably wouldn't bother to use it...I wouldn't have one anyway
Q No, they're not for everyone
R My mum don't use em and me dad can't read or write so
Q OK, so he manages to survive without reading and writing? But you can read and write?
R Yeh
Q Are you glad you can read and write?
R Yeh, cus I go with him and read everything
Q Right
R Yeh so then I go with him and read everything
Q Right so...
R So, yeh, so I go around with him all the time
Q OK, so being in school you have learnt something...you learnt how to read and write?
R Yeh, I learnt to read and write
Q And you're glad you can?
R Yeh
Q That's fair enough?
R Yeh, my dad is yeh, as long as you can read and write then there's nothing to worry about. That's my dad's opinion
Q Well, that's an opinion, right, thank you for that, thank you.

N. Data recording sheets

Sample of data recording sheets

P.1

Instructional systems: College A
Group: Manager ~~— CF — Assistant Principal — HVS/A~~
College: CA
Umbrella Category: Organisation of KS

Cat code	Trans line no	Quote	Notes
	19 –56	quality assurance — Proposed KS staff [illegible] delivery Plan	Responsibility Q [illegible]
	23 –29	coordinator	Roles of 2x coordinators
	34	ABS – C.&G & LCCI	ABS
	76 160	staffing is a more significant — a lot of people don't feel confident	Problems with staffing
	106 119–134	open Studies KS Cert	Training for KS
	171– 188	full time – rare posts	Full / P/Time Posts
	215 –237	look at inspection ———	Issues over inspection

P.2

Instructional systems: ~~College A Assistant Principal HVS/A~~
Group: Manager ~~— CF~~
College: CA
Umbrella Category: Organisation of KS

Cat code	Trans line no	Quote	Notes
	304– 325	LSC funding	Staff training
	356 368	college funding	↓
	438– 457	underpinning knowledge ———	Students & VTS
	507	complacency	Not advancing
	759	and the KS programme will be determined by what GCSE grades	KS placement

O. Category Breakdown Sheets

Sample of Category Breakdown sheets.

5

Umbrella category Understanding SU College D Page 1 of 4 MR

[redacted]/Code The KS being done 1/SU

Sections:

① Doing ② Level doing

Pos / neg

FPL	Section	Student no.	Line no.	Quote	Comment
33	1	2	8	Excel, just using the little [illegible] Matthew	✓
33	2	3	30	I [illegible] not sure	✗
33	1	3	17	IT I find quite hard	✓
22/2	1	4	8	IT at moment — Yes	✓
22/2	2	4	11	Were on L3	✓
3/5	2	1	21	done L2 — Yeh	✓
3/5	1	1	21	Level 1, IT — Yeh	✓
3/5	1	2	23	[illegible] English & stuff	✓
3/5	2	2	30	[illegible] on L2	✓
1/3	1	3	14	English Maths & IT	✓
1/3	1	4	36/8	IT — yeah — at the moment yeh – 1 &	✓
22/12	1	1	10	we do maths, English, IT	✓
22/12	2	1	51	1 — dunno	✗

cat ① 8

cat ② 5

Students analysis form.doc

6

Umbrella category Understanding SU College D Page 2 of 4 MR

[redacted]/Code The introduction of KS 2/SU

Sections:

① The reasons ② not known why

pos / neg

FPL	Section	Student no.	Line no.	Quote	Comment
22/12	1	2	14	it is [illegible] my education	✓
22/12	1	3	34	[illegible] daily stuff	✓
22/12	2	4	34	its good for jobs [illegible]	✓
3/5	1	2	96	[illegible] GCSES	✓
3/5	1	1	36	[illegible]	✗
1/3	1	3	156	If [illegible] definitely	✓
1/3	1	4	57	useful later on	✓
22/2	1	4	76	[illegible] — Yeh	✓
1/3	1	4	92	The college doesn't really explain	✗
1/3	1	4	142	[illegible] had to do	✓

cat ① 9

cat ② 1

Students analysis form.doc

Umbrella category: Understanding SU

College: D

Page 3 of 4

[redacted]/Code: Doing KS with vocational 3/SU

Sections: ① do not know why ② get job ③ get better job ④ qualification ⑤ next level course ⑥ government

FPL	Section	Student no.	Line no.	Quote	Comment
22/2	1	2	12	None of this will be relevant to my career	
22/2	4	3	34	need them all your life	
22/2	2	4	20	its good for jobs	
3/5	4	3	26	up grading	
3/5	2	1	75	Going to be able to [illegible] stuff	
1-3	5	3	61	helps with my course [illegible]	
1-3	2/3	4	31	it can be useful later on [illegible] your skills	
22/2	4/5	1	40	Apply some [illegible]	
3/5	4		45	[illegible] to be qualified	
22-2	4-5	4	70	[illegible] to get a lot of everything in so	

Sut ① 1

② 3

③ 1

④ 5

⑤ 7

⑥ —

Umbrella category: Understanding SU

College: D

Page 4 of 4

[redacted]/Code: The KS Qualification 4/SU

Sections: ① worth ② value ③ usefulness ④ vocational relevance ⑤ remedial ⑥ better GCSEs ⑦ easier GCSEs ⑧ [illegible]

FPL	Section	Student no.	Line no.	Quote	Comment
22-2	4	2	72	Relevant? No	X
22-2	4	4	20	its good for jobs	✓
3-5	4	2	163	Anything to do [illegible]	✓
3-5	4	1	77	So when they [illegible] out	✓
1-3	4	3	24	I need to build up on IT more	X
22-2	8	1	37	I don't actually know why we are doing IT again	X

Sut ① —

② —

③ —

④ 5

⑤ —

⑥ —

⑦ —

⑧ 1

P. College staff roles and responsibilities

Head of KS - included senior college managers and KS departmental managers. The difference between the two parties was in the level of control and organisational responsibility they had for their college's KS provision. The senior managers decided college policy, controlled the funding, set quality systems in place, oversaw the KS operations and delegated the running of KS to teams of managers who applied them. The KS department managers managed teams of KS tutors and reported back to Senior Managers.

Coordinator + Head of Key Skills - were classed as middle management although they performed the role of head of KS, but were called coordinators. These staff did not have *overall* control over the KS in their colleges, but did over its management and made many decisions regarding its implementation across their college and coordinated the day to day KS operations. Unlike the departmental managers, coordinator heads of KS also delivered KS to students for a set number of hours per week (usually around 23 hours).

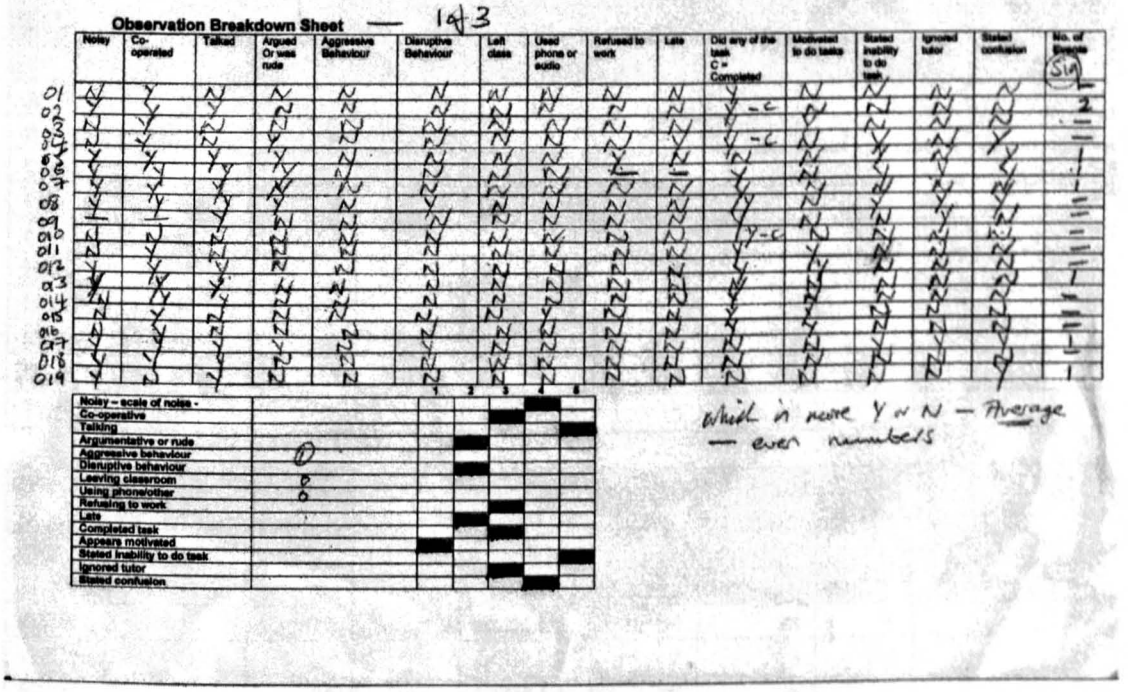
Coordinators - were also from middle management and performed a variety of tasks within the KS departments. They managed some but not all of the KS provision and usually had input into its implementation e.g. responsibility for developing KS quality assurance across the college. The majority who participated in this study did not deliver any KS themselves.

The Internal Verifiers - job was to internally verify (and pass) students' portfolios once they had been assessed by the KS tutors and then oversee the whole external moderation process, liaise with Awarding Bodies and organise their visits. In this study, they also performed other duties, such as administrative, KS quality control, and overseeing KS staffs training and class delivery.

Administrators - These staffs deal with much of the KS administration within their colleges in regards to applying for student proxy qualifications and maintaining the KS databases, which hold all the statistical data on KS assessments and qualifications.

Q. Observation Breakdown sheet

Sample Observation Breakdown sheet.



R. KS Results

Two samples illustrating incompatible formats.

Sample results from College B

WBL Key Skills Full Awards achieved main key skills 04/05							
	Com1 04/05	Com2 04/05	AON1 04/05	AON2 04/05	ICT1 04/05	ICT2 04/05	Total
AAT		2	1				3
Administration	4	2	7	1			14
Catering		4	9		2		15
Comm Studies	4	2	6	1			13
Construction	13		14				27
E2E	2	1	2				5
Hairdressing	6		7				13
Motor Vehicle					2	1	3
Sports Science	1	1		1		1	4
Total	30	12	46	3	4	2	97

WBL OCR key skill portfolio achievement summary 0405	
AON L1	59
AON L2	5
COM L1	36
COM L2	16
ICT L1	3
ICT L2	1
Total	120

WBL OCR key skill test summary 0405				
	Pass	Fail (n)	Fail	Total entries
AON L1	64	14	6	84
AON L2	7	8	5	20
COM L1	29	4	3	36
COM L2	20	4	2	26
ICT L1	18	6	6	30
ICT L2	1	1	1	3
Total	139	37	23	199

Sample results from College F

Prog	Funding	Course Code	Level	Qual	Qualification Name	Enrolled	Retained	Achieved
AC	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Communication - level 2	13	9	9
AC	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Information Technology - level 2	13	9	9
AE	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Communication - level 2	33	28	0
AE	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Application of Number - level 2	34	29	0
AE	FEFC	*****	3	*****	Key Skills - Application of Number - level 3	19	14	0
AE	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Information Technology - level 2	34	29	1
AE	FEFC	*****	X	*****	Tutorial and enrichment studies for students studying GCE A levels; AS levels; GCSEs and short course GCSEs	31	28	28
AU	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Communication - level 2	19	16	0
AU	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Application of Number - level 2	2	2	0
AU	FEFC	*****	2	*****	Key Skills - Information Technology - level 2	1	1	0
AU	FEFC	*****	3	*****	Key Skills - Information Technology - level 3	20	12	0
AU	FEFC	*****	1	*****	Key Skills - Communication - level 1	31	20	1
AU	FEFC	*****	1	*****	Key Skills - Information Technology - level 1	42	33	1
AU	FEFC	*****	1	*****	Key Skills - Application of Number - level 1	48	35	2

S. AoN Key Skills Pass-rate Estimate - 2005-6

Reference is made to DfES (2007a) - *Award of Key Skills Specifications: 2005/06* - which covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For the purposes of this estimate, I focus on the **Level 1, Application of Number qualification**.

- 53% of all KS awards were made in FE/Tertiary Colleges (DFES, 2007a, p.2)
- DFES (2007a) Table 3 shows 99,200 AoN awards were made at level 1 in 2005/6 from all institutions (*There is no breakdown of level 1 by age*)

An estimate of the number of level 1 AoN awards rate for level 1 within FE is

53% of 99,200 = 52,600

There are listed 496 FE colleges covering the whole of the UK including Scotland (http://www.hero.ac.uk/uk/reference_and_subject_resources/further_education/fe_colleges3786.cfm)

Government statistics (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=6) show that there are 60.5 million people in the UK, of which there are 5.1 million in Scotland. Factoring the FE colleges by population leads to

55.4/60.5 x 496 = 454 colleges in England, Wales and N. Ireland

The average level 1 AoN award rate in FE is

52,600/454 = 115 awards per college.

A typical college size is around 10,000 students, with approximately one third in year-one studies, say 3,300 students, normally *all* being entered for KS, mostly at level 1.

The award rate is therefore about:

115/3300 x 100 = **3.5% of FE level 1 entry at AoN**

If proxies at 25% (Hesketh, 2007) are taken into account, and the fact that in Wales, the qualification is based on portfolios only (Dysg, 2006), with no students taking exams, this reduces the estimate to *below* the 3% level.

T. Grubby Whiteboard

"Like your tie sir!"

"Now settle down you lot."

I survey the class of twenty Key Skills students, sprawled out in this grey, colourless, airless room. Despite the temperature gauge showing over thirty degrees, they were all snuggled into thick track suits with the hoods up over baseball caps. Long ago had I given up on getting them to sit in allocated places, and they were sprawled around the room higgledy-piggledy. Josh had his back to me, as usual.

"Just remind me what you were doing this morning," I asked

"Strippin' engines," came various mumbled, and randomly-timed replies.

"Ok, so we are going to look at percentages today."

"Again!" bellowed Josh to the rear wall.

"Are you having sex with Miss Muffett?" someone asked – Miss Murphy, actually.

I stumbled and bumbled as if *they* knew something I didn't know and ought to know, despite never ever having spoken to Miss Murphy.

"Fractions," I spluttered.

"You said percentages," sneered Josh

"Sorry, percentages."

They shuffled and sprawled out even further as if to confirm disinterest.

After many years both in industry and teaching, here I am. I can't get an ordinary teaching job – where *exactly* is this maths teacher "shortage"? So I end up with AoN at an FE college. Despite their bad behaviour and lack of interest, my heart goes out to these kids. Most of them just can't do it and never will. Actually, most of the population can't do it either. If I doled out the level one test to a hundred people off the street, ninety-five would fail it. That's reality. So, what are we asking from this hapless lot? Even arriving dressed as a clown and handing out mobile phones wouldn't hold their attention for very long.

I am jolted to attention by the class.

"Sir, are you going to start?"

"Can I leave sir?"

"Sir, what about Miss Muffett? Was it good?" I think that was Jerrol that delivered that remark. I ignored him and carried on.

"Er, sorry – fractions," I mumbled.

"Percentages!!" the class screamed and laughed in their usual, forced, adolescent manner.

"Yes. Does anyone know why the percent sign is written the way it is?" I draw a large % on the grubby whiteboard, the one that the Ofsted inspector complained about in their last report.

"It's a quick way of drawing a fraction over a hundred. The two Os and the line represent *out of* one hundred," a lucid explanation from Josh. Despite his behaviour, he understands this stuff in a way that the rest couldn't even figure.

"Aw, shut up Josh," the class crows.

There is a crash at the back. Wayne has picked up a computer keyboard and punched it with his fist, just to see if it would continue to work after an insane hammering. Wayne has problems.

"Wayne, you haven't been told to turn your computer on yet."

"It's still working sir," he replies as if I butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

Exasperatedly I scream at him, "Put it down! Now!"

The rest of the class start to wheel around the room on their office chairs. They were new last month, but now all the backrest support bolts have been removed,

leading to a "leaning-back" posture preferred by the students. I give up at this point. They're not going to listen to me any longer today.

"Ok, ok. Turn on your computer screens and log in. When you've done that, click on the percentage trainer and start the exercises."

"Sir, mine's not working."

"Well *switch* it on Brian, what's the matter with you?"

A certain relative peace descends on the class. I say "relative", because the level of noise would be unacceptable in other classes, but it's the best I can hope for.

I sit there already exhausted, and my mind drifts over my years in various industries. The surprising thing is that despite all the high-tech, I never needed more than a few techniques from primary school arithmetic. Most work these days uses systems that take all the hard maths away from us. There is no need to understand maths, any more than motorists need to understand the mechanics of cars in order to drive.

"Sir, sir, Wayne's at it again."

"Put it down Wayne!"

I start to wander about the class. Josh has logged in, completed the module with a 100% score, and is pretending to sleep. I know that come exam time, he just won't turn up.

"Waste of time," he says, "I'm better than my own tutors at maths," which is probably true.

All the rest are trying to log into porn sites, which are, thankfully, blocked. Rajiv, for some reason, is obsessed by 1950's film stars.

I glance at my watch as the digits glide into place showing that it's three o'clock. There is an almighty shuffling and the class disappears before I can turn around, leaving chairs and tables scattered over the room, some upside-down, looking as they are floating sedately on a flood of sweet wrappers, soft-drink cans, half-eaten hamburgers and a barely heard, "Bye Sir." As I clear up, Simon, one of the vocational tutors wanders in. He stares at the mess dispassionately.

"They won't pass this Key Skills stuff you know, but they don't care."

"I know."

We paused briefly, avoiding each other's eyes.

Eventually, breaking the silence, I exclaimed, "D'you know what?"

"What?"

"It would be easier to put this lot in for GCSE maths."

"Why?"

"Because I could continually resubmit them until the C grade level *drops* to meet *their* standard!"

We laugh knowingly and Simon wanders off.

Coffee! Strong coffee! And then out of this hellhole... until tomorrow.

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