# Vocational Training in the Performing Arts at Level III from 1987 -2002.

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# Abstract

This research seeks to open up a field of enquiry which has not yet been addressed and which has lacked even detailed description. The Performing Arts is a combination of discrete 'subjects' sharing the common aim of practical performance as a vocational outcome. In 1987 the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts appeared as an important new development in this field. Ten years later, in response to a desire for a unified system of qualifications, a 'General National Vocational Qualification' (GNVQ) in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries was introduced as a vocational alternative, equivalent to A-levels.

The key question of this research is:

1 "What has been the legacy for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the BTEC qualifications in that field from 1987 to 2002?"

Within this question, the research will examine the extent to which the vocational training provided was perceived to be appropriate for students' career ambitions During this period, the Government sought to reform vocational training by introducing the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries. This research also seeks to understand the impact of GNVQ on the BTEC developments and vice versa. There are accordingly two subquestions:

2 "What has been the nature and the cause of changes which have occurred in the BTEC National Diploma qualifications over this timeframe?"

3 "What were the consequences for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the introduction of a GNVQ generated by national policy initiatives?"

The main methods employed in this research were drawn from a positivist/ empiricist paradigm. A form of 'triangulation' was adopted using questionnaire surveys for students and teaching staff complemented by interviews with three specific groups of curriculum developers representing the introductory, implementation and further development stages of the qualifications. In addition, the researcher drew on his personal involvement in the field at the national level giving a unique access to relevant documentation from the bodies concerned.

The main findings are shown to be due to differences in the way curriculum policy was formulated and implemented for the two qualifications. The National Diploma survived the introduction of the original GNVQ despite the strong government support for the latter and the desire to rationalise qualifications. The National Diploma followed an 'evolutionary' development generated by practitioners. It addressed the various component disciplines of the Performing Arts in a balanced way and was predicated upon the assumption that students hoped to have a career as performers. By contrast, the GNVQ was handed down within a predetermined framework that gave little autonomy to teachers, it was generic, overly bureaucratic and based on the assumption that students' performance ambitions were unrealistic.

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# Chapter 1:

# Introduction and Background to the Research


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## 1 Background to the Research

The qualifications which are the subject of this research are published by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) which is the vocational brand name of Edexcel Foundation. The fortuitous opportunity to start this research project occurred in 1997-98 when EDEXCL/BTEC hired the Researcher to participate in an internal project which enabled him to collect data for this research as well as to undertake the tasks required by Edexcel. This was done with encouragement from the organisation and it allowed access to a substantial amount of data. Subsequently the Researcher continued to work on various projects for EDEXCEL/BTEC alongside work on this thesis until 2001/2002.

The BTEC National Diploma and Certificate Awards in Performing Arts were introduced in 1987 and continue to be available at the present time (2002). During the period until 1999 the original course structure was retained while further developments of the programme were established. The BTEC First Diploma and Certificate (a lower level award), and the Higher National Diploma (HND) and Certificate (HNC) were added as well as a number of more specialised programmes such as the National Diploma in Popular Music. During this period a national policy initiative for restructuring the vocational curriculum was under way and being applied to a growing number of subject areas. This took the form of the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). The Performing Arts was added to the list in 1997 and provided an opportunity to analyse the effects of the legacy of the original

BTEC approach upon the new structures being introduced and vice versa. While the National Diplomas and GNVQs were the two dominant sets of vocational qualifications in the Performing Arts field, they were not completely comprehensive in their scope and some other minor vocational qualifications in dance and drama remained outside the new National Qualifications Framework. Nevertheless, the Researcher is aware that the large number of other qualifications has meant that many have been retained and in some cases new ones have been developed. For example there have been additional awarding bodies such as NCFE and Trinity College of Music who have been active in this way but as the remit of this thesis is with BTEC Qualifications and the GNVQ structures of the Awarding Bodies forming the 'Common Accord', they will not be addressed in this research.

This situation enables the framing of the main research question for this thesis:

1 "What has been the legacy for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the BTEC qualifications in that field from 1987 to 2002?"

In order to provide a meaningful frame of reference from this there are two subsidiary questions which will be explored fully throughout the thesis

2 "What has been the nature and the cause of changes which have occurred in the BTEC National Diploma qualifications over this timeframe?"

3 "What were the consequences for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the introduction of a GNVQ generated by national policy initiatives?"

While the first subquestion looks at the cause of changes, it should be noted that in this thesis the Researcher will not be addressing the issue of progression to Higher

Education and its impact on curriculum development in the 16 -19 curriculum.

At the present point it will be helpful to have some knowledge of the structure of the thesis. In Chapter 2 the Methodology of the project will be explained and the fieldwork undertaken will be described and justified.

In Chapter 3 there will be an historical section which presents data from a search of documentary evidence and literature sources and is a necessary pre-requisite to understanding the questionnaires and interview survey findings which are reported in Chapter 4. There follows a discussion of these findings in Chapter 5. Finally the Appendices are separately bound and include the edited transcripts of all of the interviews which have been held as part of the data gathering procedures.

On investigating the literature it was not possible to detect any academic research which directly concerned the BTEC Performing Arts qualifications. Indeed in general the BTEC 'own brand' qualifications have not attracted the level of research attention that their popularity would seem to demand. Certainly the vocational approach to the Performing Arts does not appear as a specific topic. One study on A-Levels and GNVQ points to the BTEC National qualification as presenting a 'real alternative' (to the A-Levels) for students who wished to have studies "which were more practical and have a direct bearing on future employment" and this is borne out in a review on student expectations in the same study (Edwards et al 1997). However, so far as the GNVQ was concerned, Performing Arts was not included as a subject until after that study had been completed. Another piece of research dating from before the introduction of GNVQ concentrates upon the career patterns and 'identity' of groups of students on vocational courses and includes two contrasting

categories of BTEC Nationals - in Hotel & Catering Industries and in Fashion Design (Bates 1992). Beyond this, the Researcher has been able to find little of relevance for the BTEC Nationals and nothing at all about the Performing Arts in the research literature. There is a literature on the developments of NVQ and GNVQ but in the main this tends to be generic rather than subject specific.

Consequently this research project is important because it opens up a fresh field of empirical inquiry. There were indeed two compelling reasons for researching this particular family of qualifications. First, from 1987 onwards, there were several national policy initiatives in the field of vocational education and training, including the government-inspired National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). It is the unique interaction of these qualifications with the BTEC 'own brand' qualifications in the Performing Arts that makes the research project particularly interesting on an historical level.

Second, the Performing Arts field provides an important research area in its own right especially in relation to pedagogy and assessment on which the NVQ and GNVQ approaches had a distinctive impact:

> In the current climate of education, with its increasing centralisation I feel that there is likely to be a growing tension between the transient nature of practical examination performances in Drama, Music, Dance and Media Studies and the need to criterion reference such performances and maintain reliable standards from institution to institution and from year to year. (Wood, D. 1988 page 41)

What has been generally missing, however, from curricular debates is the voice of the students who are taking these courses and the voice of the staff who are teaching them.

Due to a long personal involvement in the Performing Arts (documented further in Chapter 2) the Researcher has a particular awareness of these inter-connected themes. This has resulted in an historical focus to the research project in which the evolution of the BTEC Vocational Qualifications in Performing Arts is examined from both a national policy and a 'user' perspective.

## 1.1 The Economic Importance of the Performing Arts

Awareness of the scale of the economic contribution of Performance Arts to the GNP was first raised in a seminal report on the 'cultural industries' which included all of the 'arts' (e.g. design, literature, heritage) from the Policy Studies Institute (Myerscough 1988). Since then many reports have contributed updated information on the scale of these activities and, by implication, the public lack of perception of it. " The Institute of Employment Studies estimated in 1993 that 61,000 people were employed in Drama and Dance related roles. The United Kingdom Council for Music Education and Training estimated that in 1993, there were 252,000 people working in Musical Performance" (FEFCa). At a slightly later date we find a reference to Government investment in 'arts guidance and learning' with 500,000 workers producing in the region of £60 billion per year into the economy (Metier 2000).

Despite this economic profile, one can argue that the subjects contained within the performing arts have long been regarded by staff and students as the 'Cinderellas' of the curriculum and have not received the attention and treatment that their economic status deserves. Indeed, the Performing Arts were among the last subjects to be introduced into both the BTEC National Diplomas and the GNVQ programmes.

## 1.2 The National Policy Context

One can argue that the last two decades have witnessed an 'initiative overload' in education, with one initiative barely introduced when the next one is overlaid on top

of it. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in vocational education and training. The pace of directives concerning training accelerated at the same time as the BTEC Performing Arts qualification made its belated appearance on the scene in 1987. This has had, one can argue, some interesting positive, as well as negative, effects which will be explored in some detail later in this thesis.

For this present introduction, it will help the reader to have a brief overview of the range of initiatives which impacted upon vocational training in the Performing Arts in the period in question. These are set out schematically in Figure 1.1

## Figure 1.1

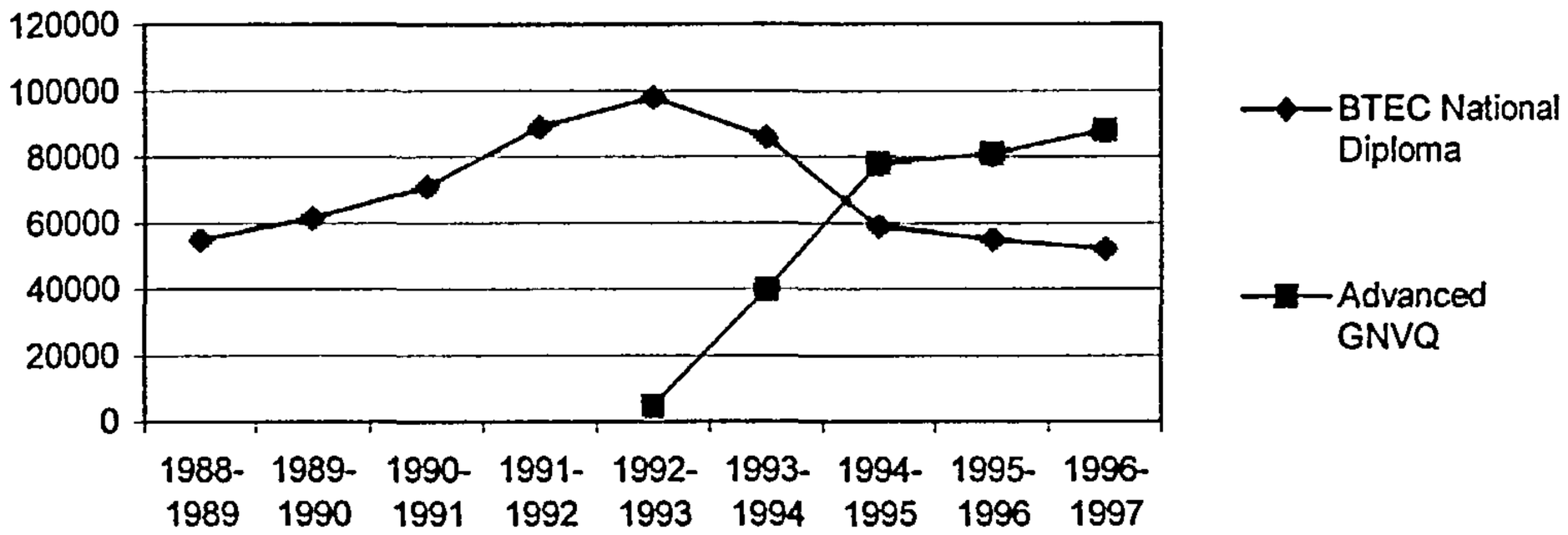
| | NATIONAL POLICY INITIATIVES | PERFORMING ARTS QUALIFICATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| 1985 | | BTEC National Diploma (ND) in Music Technology - at Newcastle College of Arts & Technology |
| 1986 | NCVQ established in Dept of Environment (DE) To devise NVQs | |
| 1987 | | BTEC ND in Performing Arts released |
| 1988 | | |
| 1989 | | |
| 1990 | First Awards recommended for schools (DES) | First Awards in Performing Arts Introduced |
| 1991 | Government White Paper "Education & Training for the 21st Century" | Letter of 'Guidance' for HNDs in Performing Arts |
| 1992 | | ND Popular Music Guidelines Available |
| 1993 | GNVQ pilot in 5 subject areas | |
| 1994 | | |
| 1995 | Capey and Beaumont Review of GNVQ & NVQ | |
| 1996 | Dearing Report on 16-19 education and training | GNVQ in Performing Arts & Entertainment Industries piloted |
| 1997 | Election of New Labour Government<br>Retention of some existing qualifications.<br>NCVQ & SCAA merged into QCA | National Diploma in Performing Arts retained alongside the GNVQ |
| 1998 | National Qualification Framework (NQF) established | |
| 1999 | | Revised NDs in Performing Arts (6 Pathways) released |
| 2000 | | GNVQ (ADV) re-named AVCE<br>Second revision of NDs begins (to fit the NQF)<br>NDs (6 Pathways) life extended to allow introduction of a replacement |
| 2001 | Re-Election of Labour Government<br>DfEE changed to DfES | Revision of GNVQ (INT) and AVCE released |
| 2002 | | New structure approved for Performing Arts Nationals by QCA. Diploma, Certificate & Award thirty-seven titles in all. Intended to be available for use in Sept. 2002. Problems of getting the information to centres in time. |

It is clear from Figure 1.1, as Williams (1999) argues, that "since the 1970s policy-makers have been concerned to institute appropriate vocational curricula..." In its early form this concern encompassed the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and qualifications such as the Certificate in Pre-Vocational

Education (CPVE) as well as some reliance on organisations such as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). By the mid-seventies, the Technician Educational Council (TEC) had been formed closely followed by the Business Education Council (BEC). A central purpose of these initiatives was to base curriculum structures on units of work and a requirement for unambiguously worded objectives. This was derived from a behaviourist vision of learning in America during the '50s (Bloom 1956) (Bloom, Krathwol & Masia 1964).

In October 1983 TEC and BEC were combined into what became known originally as the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) and a wide range of diverse vocational qualifications was progressively introduced. Next, in 1986, the then Government arranged for a National Council of Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to be established. This was funded by the Department of Employment (DE) and was required to liaise with designated 'Industry Lead Bodies' in the preparation and provision of competence-based NVQs in a range of occupations. Shortly afterwards, in the government White Paper of May 1991 'Education and Training for the 21st Century' (DES/DE 1991), there was a suggestion for the introduction of a "General" NVQ (GNVQ) as a vocational alternative to A levels with 'equal standing'. This desire for equal standing opened up what was to be a running dialogue/argument that continues to the present time (e.g. Smithers 1993; Spours 1997). The NCVQ remit extended to the attempted rationalisation of the large number of qualifications which then existed for a considerable number of vocational areas. The apparent intention was to establish the GNVQ and NVQ as the only national standard vocational qualifications.

**Figure 1.2**




It was factors such as this which at the time of the earliest discussions on the development of a 'general' vocational qualification, led BTEC to expect that the structure of its National Diploma would be adopted as the model for the Advanced GNVQ (Williams 1999). The chart in Figure 1.2 above is from Wolf (1997) and demonstrates that from its introduction in 1993 the Advanced GNVQ (in all subjects available) had reached 80,000 registrations within three years -- which was 20,000 fewer than BTEC 'Nationals' had been in 1993. Moreover, while the GNVQ had risen from 0 to 80,000 in three years the 'Nationals' had dropped from 100,000 to 60,000. From that point both qualifications show less dramatic movement up to 1997. The Performing Arts GNVQ qualifications are introduced in 1997 and, interestingly, the recruitment patterns take a different form. (This will be explored in Chapter 3)

Thus by 1994, a new framework for the 16-19 age group had come into being as expounded by the then Secretary of State for Education:

"We have also set in place a new post-16 qualifications framework comprising three types of qualifications, giving an extensive menu from which students can build up a

study programme best suited to their abilities and aspirations. They can pick between general education GCSEs and GCEs; vocational education and training through GNVQ; and job specific training through NVQs. GNVQs are the newest component of this qualification framework, and are already proving extremely popular. According to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, some 150,000 students will register for GNVQs this year. It is right that the three types of qualification should remain distinct." (Shephard 1994)

The call for a unified curriculum for vocational education had prompted the setting up of the NCVQ in 1986 and throughout the period of this study there have been calls to reconceptualize the relationship between working and learning (e.g. Evans et al 1997, Young et al 1998 & Oates 1998). Parallel with this concern has been criticism of the continuing stratification of inequality within education and training in which 'academic' provision such as A levels has been seen to have higher status and worth than vocational courses (Banks et al 1992). To address these concerns the influential Dearing Report on 16-19 Education (1996) recommended a system of qualifications with three 'tracks': an academic pathway to be led by A levels; a vocational 'middle pathway' to be led by GNVQ but on equal terms with the academic pathway; and the NVQ work-based route (which is not a part of this research).

At the publication of the Dearing reports two of the component disciplines in the Performing Arts were already catered for 'academically' in A-level curricula (Music and Theatre Studies) with Dance soon to follow. In the 'vocational' field the BTEC

National Diploma in Performing Arts of 1987 was already beginning to blossom and the GNVQ arrangements which had appeared for larger scale areas in 1992 were to be applied to 'the Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries in 1997. There was thus considerable room for debate as to where this field should be placed in the new tripartite system, and it is interesting to note that none of the Dearing Report's 198 proposals made specific mention of the Performing Arts or the issues in vocational training that are unique to it.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Dearing tripartite proposals came to be interpreted by commentators and curriculum planners as a continuum rather than three separate pathways. They were seen as a means to "establish *conditions* for a more unified system" for 16 - 19 vocational education (Young 1997 with Researcher's italics). The 'middle' pathway (i.e. vocational A-level equivalent) was quickly identified as the most problematic. The Dearing post sixteen curriculum had to be delivered within three very different institutional settings - Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education Colleges. There was "enormous variation in terms of curricula, institutional size and mission, traditions, culture and ethos within these institutional types" (Gleeson & Hodgkinson 1995). Additionally commentators could see a danger that the GNVQ provision and institutional commitment to it would be subject to 'a process of academic drift' (Edwards et al 1997). Furthermore, the difficulties experienced during the introduction of GNVQs had by then been widely reported and there was extensive criticism of the qualification from both teachers and academic researchers. "There was evidence that student completion rates and progression

possibilities were inferior to those in the qualifications that they had replaced" (Robinson, 1996; Spours, 1995). Such views were also reflected in growing criticisms from OfSTED (1994) and the FEFC Inspectorate (1994) which had resulted in the Capey and Beaumont reviews of GNVQ in 1995. Capey (1995) was concerned with the GNVQ assessment systems and Beaumont (1995) was specifically for the NVQ and SVQ where it proposed the removal of lingustic complexity and the use of clear English. It is highly significant that all of these things happened before the launch of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and the Entertainment Industry which, it was believed, would replace the BTEC National Diploma in the Perfoming Arts that had been in existence since 1987. In a policy analysis of the GNVQ assessment regime Ecclestone (2000) investigates the implications of the imposition of outcome-based assessment as a challenge to "deep-seated assumptions in mainstream assessment policy about reliability and validity, parity of esteem between vocational and academic assessment and about links between formative and summative assessment". In October 1997 NCVQ was merged with the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) to become the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the new body was given responsibility for a single national qualification framework (NQF). All programmes of vocational study in the FE Sector would now need to be accredited by QCA if they were to attract funding by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Accreditation carried with it certain constraints e.g. a requirement that both GNVQ and any other qualifications would only be acceptable to QCA if they incorporated some form of external testing. This was likely to present certain problems for the Performing Arts as the only type of material in the

curriculum which can be tested easily and economically by external means is written work.

### 1.3 Problems of Assessment

Prior to the introduction of the BTEC National qualifications, the difficulties of assessing practical performance were a stumbling block for those trying to establish training programmes for the Performing Arts. As a consequence, the 'fall-back' position for intending performers were the general education structures on offer as a prelude to specialised training in Higher Education if this could be obtained. At the heart of the available general education provision was the 'A' Level system which tended to concentrate upon what was readily assessable by external means – i.e. written work. The A Level qualification therefore had no clear rationale for the very substance of any performing art which is actual, practical, performance. As a consequence, the A Level in Music for many years had a requirement for passes at "Grade six or above in the Practical Examinations of The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music or an equivalent awarding body". However, due to the growing demand for greater integrity in public examinations, the (potential) low reliability of such practical tests caused them to be dropped as a requirement. Similarly the A Level in 'Theatre Studies' tended to concentrate upon learning 'about' the theatre rather than actually 'doing it'. In the view of many teachers the subject was frequently regarded by potential drama students as a duplication of English Literature.

As outlined above, the developments brought about in the 1980s by means of the BTEC Performing Arts qualifications were paralleled by national policy initiatives

centred around the development of NVQs (and subsequently the GNVQs) as articulated by NCVQ.

> "Qualifications in general education and in many vocational and professional areas, have traditionally been awarded for success in written examinations at the end of a course or programme. The assessment of skills, except for those which can be tested through writing essays, has tended to contribute very little if anything to the overall result. Skills have not been taken very seriously. (Jessup 1991 page 46)"

Jessup makes a convincing case for 'outcomes based' assessment which was central to the NCVQ agenda for the future of vocational education and training. The achievement of clearly stated outcomes would constitute 'competence'. The measurements would depend upon a comparison to a 'standard' as opposed to a comparison to other students following the same course which was the more usual 'norm referenced' assessment used in A-levels. Jessup presented a strong argument for 'criterion based assessment' and criticised the A Level system where norm referenced assessment ensures that there are similar numbers of students achieving 'A', 'B' or 'C' each year, despite the overall quality of the candidates. The movement gained momentum and generated research interest in the new GNVQ qualification (e.g. see Ecclestone 1998) and training materials for teachers and lecturers (e.g. see Walklin 1990, 1991).

In spite of the merit of Jessup's arguments there does not appear to have been any consideration by the policy makers at the time of how appropriate their recommended assessment procedure would be for those subject areas which, by their nature, do not necessarily fit well into a competence model. As far as the Performed Arts are concerned it is argued in this thesis that despite the many advantages of the competence-based assessment systems, 'one size' certainly did not 'fit all'.

## 2 The Nature of the Subject Area

The Performing Arts is not a single subject - it is a collective name for a group of disciplines which share a common type of activity. They all result in an active public performance. However, apart from this common aspect, one can argue that they are all significantly different from each other. The major areas of performance within this BTEC National Diploma and Certificate are Drama, Dance, Stagecraft and Music. Each of these disciplines has a culture based on different perceptions, needs and traditions. Because of this diversity the disciplines had, in the past, evolved different training methods and demanded different types and levels of underpinning knowledge. However, owing to the fact that the various disciplines work together in 'productions' requiring mutual support, the collective term 'Performing Arts' or 'Performed Arts' has gained common currency within education and training as if it were a single conceptual entity.

It will therefore be helpful at this point to give a brief resume of the background to the BTEC Qualifications in Performing Arts and also of their antecedents by examining the training situation which existed prior to the qualification's introduction.

- In drama, presentation is based upon the use of the human body and voice to interpret meanings as part of literary situations made manifest through theatrical performance.
- In dance, presentation is based upon the refined use of the human body alone in situations supported by music and the need to interpret dramatic purpose without the use of the voice.

- Stagecraft, is a multidisciplined area. It covers all support activities (technical and organisational) which enable a performance to take place.
- In music, the performance options are stylistically varied as they include possible interaction with any of the other Performing Arts together with a whole range of different types of music performance, each of which has a particular set of expectations and requirements.

These separate subjects are grouped together as the Performing Arts within the BTEC qualifications and also in the education and training structures such as in FEFC where it was to be combined with Art and Design as "Subject Area No. 9"

## 2.1 Training Traditions of the Component Disciplines

Prior to the introduction of the BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts there had been no comparable vocational qualifications that contained practical performance elements in Drama, Dance or Music. 'A' Levels were the most favoured route but as described above the practical elements of all of these disciplines were largely left out of the curricular scheme and a variety of outside agencies provided 'qualifications' of their own to compensate.

### 2.1.1 Drama

Traditionally drama careers have been prepared within a 'conservatoire' system. The Drama Schools are independent conservatoires mainly in London dealing with a considerable number of applicants each year wishing to train for the professional stage. Previously students would have entered repertory theatre as a first professional job and many continue to regard this as the most realistic training ground for all-round acting. Financial support for study has always been a problem as most of the

courses in the Drama Schools attracted only discretionary awards. One of the attractions of the drama schools system has always been the valuable networking they offer owing to the fact that agents and impressarios visit the final productions and identify potential talent. However, the system has not been without influential critics. For example, the distinguished actor Tom Conti lamented the passing of the 'Rep' and lambasted the Drama Schools' curricula with characteristic candour:

> "In my opinion, the three year courses now offered by most drama schools are a waste of time and money. The curricula are filled with subjects which are unhelpful to the true development of the performer. As every working actor knows, the only way to learn is by doing it, rehearsing and performing the play, not talking about it endlessly, improvising or pretending you're a bloody snowdrop" (Conti 1997 page 8)

At the time of this item the BTEC programmes were well established and going some way towards providing the kind of practical experiences with the regularity he recommends. Experience has shown that this approach has proved to be attractive to students and is a strong point in recruitment on the BTEC Performing Arts qualifications.

The Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) has traditionally been the focus of the main vocational preparation for actors. The 18 member schools mostly offer a three-year diploma course in acting together with a number of one-year postgraduate or specialist courses, frequently in technical areas such as stage design or property making. The National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) was set up following a report to enquire into professional training for drama (Gulbenkian 1975). The CDS represents the drama schools and the NCDT represents the "industry".

The drama school tradition has long been the most favoured route into the acting profession and most of the programmes require that the students are 18 years old or

over. Most sources of reference (e.g. the British Performing Arts Year Book from 1988 onwards) have concentrated on these programmes and paid scant attention to courses of vocational training in the 16 to 19 years category. One study reports that "the drama schools see the value of much prevocational provision as very variable" and later continues -"it is slightly surprising to us that schools did not seem to have very close links with those involved in training at the pre-vocational level"(I MS 1994).

The biggest issue to face the drama schools in the last decade has been the accreditation of their courses. The move to offering degrees is perceived to some extent as 'opportunistic' in that it is "merely a response to the collapse of the discretionary grants system" (I MS 1994). However, an important requirement of this change, whether or not it has been opportunistic, has been the need for those organisations to face the rigours of a validation process for their courses and to make a case suitable to achieve the necessary degree level accreditation. The pre-vocational courses for the 16 - 19 year group within the BTEC National Level programmes had already come to terms with these processes.

### 2.1.2 Dance

Traditional training for entry to the profession as a dancer occurred in different stages. Prior to the actual professional training from age 18, there would be some form of prevocational training which probably would have started at a very early age in local dancing schools through Saturday or after school classes. As students approached the age of 16 and had to focus on their GCSEs and then A Levels, many found it difficult to continue training at the intensive level required to audition

successfully for a professional course. Despite the recent introduction of the A-Level in Dance, the necessary amount of performance activity is only effectively provided by a pre-vocational course such as the BTEC National Diploma. It has also been suggested (IMS 1994) that dancers can expect a form of post-vocational training provided by the employers. This training takes the form of continued professional development which for a dancer means continual attendance at 'class'. This is a central part of a dancer's professional existence. It is the means by which a dancer remains 'in shape' and ready for any work opportunities that present themselves. It is analogous to the all-important practice to a musician. They are activities which the artists never cease doing irrespective of whether or not they are in employment, otherwise their skills will decline.

A regulatory body for the independent sector which accounts for most dance training is the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET). The function of the CDET is to act as a professional advisory body on programmes of training.

### 2.1.3 Stagecraft

Another of the component disciplines which comprise the Performing Arts, 'Stagecraft' (or Performance Technology as it is currently called), is in itself a further grouping of a considerable number of specialist techniques. These range from the design and preparation of stage sets, the lighting plans and their operation, to the design, maintenance and organisation of costume. Traditionally, students from training programmes in other disciplines e.g. on Art and Design courses, have 'discovered' stagecraft by helping out with productions and have gone on to successful careers within the field. As for specialised training, in the past this was

'on the job'. Youngsters asking if help was needed at a theatre or for a performance group would be invited to help with a 'get in', 'get out', or a 'set up weekend'. All of this was done with only a limited knowledge base and they learned from others in a kind of informal apprenticeship. If a young person was recognised as reliable and trainable, and someone whose skills could be developed, the procedure was for them to do the round of all the skills e.g. starting as a lighting assistant, then into lighting design, then into production, stage management and production management. Many backstage crew had day-jobs and worked under the direction of experienced operatives at the theatre - e.g. the crew dealing with properties would be under the direction of the property master. Occasionally there would be appointments of specialists such as a chief electrician and there were a few relevant formal qualifications (e.g. for electricians from City & Guilds), but only the large performance houses would take on trainees in a formal way. Indeed, well into the 1980s if you commenced as a stage hand, you were expected to work in every department.

However, during the 1990s there was much greater demarcation and specialisation encouraging the development of specific training. This had a disadvantage in that specialists in one area might not be permitted to operate in another - for example, electricians would not be permitted to work in the fly gallery. A notorious example at this time (1990s) was the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden where job specialisation led to payments for not coming into work at all. Interestingly, multi-skilling in the media industries has helped to encourage multi-skilling now to return to the technical areas of the theatre. There will always be some specialists but the

major requirement is for a crew of people who are able to move with ease through the different departments in order the keep the 'show on the road'. It was this multi-skilling approach which was translated into the appropriate group of units in the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts.

### 2.1.4 Music

The traditional route into the music profession has been similar to drama - 'A' Level Music supplemented by instrumental studies usually done at the necessary level outside of school by private tuition - to University or to Conservatoire. Traditionally preparation was for the world of 'Classical' music. By contrast, much of the lucrative world of popular music was provided by musicians who had not done this training. At the time of this research A levels were the usual 'vocational' route into a Conservatoire for students preparing for a career in 'classical' music but this pathway is not addressed in this thesis. In spite of the dominance of the A level route, a number of enterprising Colleges, notably the City of Leeds College of Music, established courses in 'light music' in order to prepare students for the world of entertainment music.

In the mid 1980s the Music Advisors National Association prepared a report on Careers in Music in which a great many aspects of the Music profession were examined (MANA 1986). The training requirements for each area were specifically described, but in the case of popular music the training section was missing from an otherwise comprehensive description. One piece of research was then carried out as a Local Collaborative Project by Newcastle College of Arts and Technology (as it was then called) with support from the MSC and the Musicians' Union. This project was

managed by the Researcher. In it a number of clear-cut issues were identified relating to the training requirements of musicians. (LCP 1987). From this report, support was given for the introduction of courses in the new electronic technology for musicians and this resulted in the launch of the BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology. The success of this qualification in turn contributed to BTEC's decision to provide Performing Arts with its own National Diploma and Certificate.

Alongside these first steps in popular music it is illuminating to examine the surveys on 'Orchestral Provision' undertaken by the BBC and the Arts Council during 1994 - 96. At each stage, reports express the need for training to take account of the changing nature of the musician's career pattern.

> "It makes good sense for the BBC and the Arts Councils to plan training initiatives together from time to time, and to discuss them with the Association of British Orchestras, the Musicians' Union and other appropriate bodies. Discussions should not ignore the development of performers, whether orchestral musicians, conductors or soloists. In addition a closer dialogue between schools, conservatoires and orchestras would be of benefit to the profession as a whole." (B.B.C./Arts Council 1994 page 69)

In a report on the consultation of this review we find that the Conservatoires are being urged to take a more flexible approach and provide realistically for the needs of working musicians.

> " Several argue that conservatoires need to move beyond a narrow view of technical excellence and embrace a broader, more flexible and creative approach. It is considered essential that young musicians about to enter the profession are helped to develop the skills and attitudes necessary to function in a wide range of working opportunities." (Ritterman, J. 1995 page 155)

In 1995 the Arts Council broadened out its review to include music employment outside the BBC and once again concerns are voiced about further training to broaden the traditional approach.

> ".....many respondents pointed to the need for further training and professional development opportunities for musicians in types of work which lie beyond the formal concert platform.
>
> There are other areas of professional development of musicians and administrators which the Arts Council would like to explore .....this includes the pre-professional sector....." (Arts Council 1995 pp 14,15)

The popular and entertainment music industry was already at that time a major contributor to the nation's economy and yet most of the enquiries into training for a career in music dealt solely with the 'high-art' end of the market. The reports highlight the assumption that there was but one way into the music profession, and if one went into the popular or commercial music business it was in spite of training rather than because of it. Moreover, despite the recurring recommendations for various forms of training to take place in order to support the commercial music sector, the Arts Council gave no indication of an awareness of the scale of training which was actually being provided within the BTEC structures. In fact by 1995/6 there were a number of degree programmes in Popular Music (e.g. at Bretton Hall) and at least eight BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in the Further Education sector for Jazz, Popular Music, Commercial Music and Music Technology (e.g. Newcastle College, Barnsley College).

Although one can be critical of these reports, it should be pointed out that the training problems in the performed arts are not caused just by shortcomings in the education system but are to some extent inherent in the subject areas themselves and are possibly exacerbated by the vested interests of professional groups seeking to perpetuate their own current practices. For example, one of the major problems in music is the fact that competence on a musical instrument is normally achieved

through carefully monitored progressive study - usually on a one-to-one basis. This is an expensive pedagogic model, and has become a recurring problem for the conservatoires who have to argue a 'special case' with the funding bodies. There was at least in these reports acknowledgement that traditionally structured training was not addressing the requirements of the complete range of careers of performing musicians and that change was needed. That change was already underway in the new BTEC qualifications in the Performing Arts and would also find expression in the relevant GNVQs

## 3 Conclusion

A search of the literature dealing with policy making in the field of education proved to be disappointing in that there was very little of direct relevance for vocational training in the Performing Arts. The main thrust of the literature in this subject area is concerned with the educational issues applying in the schools sector without anything concerning vocational training with Performing Arts as a situation-specific field of research. However there are two writers who have been selected precisely because of their theoretical constructs which, although generic, provide opportunities for analytical frameworks in the circumstances of this research. The writers in question are Sir Geoffrey Vickers and Peter Checkland, both of whom derive their theoretical concepts from a systemic paradigm.

### Sir Geoffrey Vickers

Vickers wrote from a wide experience in the private and public sectors and as a high-ranking civil servant. His approach is derived originally from systems engineering and most of the concepts which he presents highlight the process of 'regulation'. In

systems thinking a major concern is with structures which have a 'built in' means of rectifying inefficiencies. This process is known in earlier literature (e.g. Beer 1959; Bertalanffy 1952) as 'homeostasis' deriving from a biological need for maintenance of a 'steady state'. From the rather more specialised 'systems engineering' the term 'cybernetics' was coined and developed into a series of mathematical models (Weiner 1950 and 1961) which are applied in Operations Research (OR). The model may be used in what will be described later as a 'hard system' which is appropriate for physical systems. Vickers' models of systems are normative – i.e. they present a picture of what policy making should be like if it is to be successful. His models and underlying concepts can therefore be used to measure and judge the way that the National Diploma and the GNVQ were developed and may identify reasons for the greater comparative success of the former.

**Peter Checkland**

The work of Peter Checkland also stems from a systems tradition and indeed he draws on the earlier work of Vickers. Checkland (1993) introduced a concept of 'Soft Systems Methodology' which is a means of understanding 'human activity systems' and difficult-to-solve problems within them. He gives some thought to the definition of 'problems' in human activity systems and draws attention to two kinds:

1 Structured problems - which can be stated clearly with an implication that a solution is available. They can be solved and are the concern of 'hard systems thinking' and Operations Research.

2 Unstructured problems - which cannot be explicitly stated without appearing to oversimplify the situation. This is where a soft systems approach comes into its own.

The utility of the 'soft-systems' approach is that it can conceptually integrate several different 'hard' systems, show their interdependence and facilitate co-operation between them to tackle a problem. From this perspective, actions which might have looked like transgressions from the point of view of the independent systems become useful 'boundary crossings' that make the whole system more effective and help to recast if not solve the problems in it. It can be argued that in this research study the span of processes and systems which were involved in the development of the Performing Arts programmes constituted just such a 'human activity system'.

Checkland points out that Vickers' ideas and his own Soft Systems Methodology are closely related to each other. He offers a means of modelling reality with 'conceptual systems' and provides a template for setting about it.

This approach together with Vickers' will be explored further and operationalised to some extent in the concluding discussion in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 2

# Methodology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## 1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 1 this research seeks to open up a field of enquiry which has not yet been addressed and which lacks accurate and detailed description. The key research questions which were presented in the introduction to the previous chapter are stated again to consider their implications for the methodology to be applied. They are articulated as follows:

1 "What has been the legacy for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the BTEC qualifications in that field from 1987 to 2002?"

2 "What has been the nature and the cause of changes which have occurred in the BTEC National Diploma qualifications over this timeframe?"

3 "What were the consequences for vocational training in the Performing Arts of the introduction of a GNVQ generated by national policy initiatives?"

In selecting an appropriate methodology to answer these questions, choices must be made at a philosophical level from within the main perspectives in social science research. Checkland (1995) observes that the essence of a methodology, as opposed to a method or technique, is that it offers a set of guidelines or principles which in any specific instance can be tailored "both to the characteristics of the situation in which it is to be applied and to the people using the approach".

Some understanding of these perspectives is therefore necessary. 'Positivism', 'Empiricism', 'Realism', 'Behaviourism' and 'Socially Constructed Reality' represent a range of methodological concepts which in some ways are alternative perspectives

and in other ways overlap (Durkheim 1964), (Bulmer 1982), (Bhaskar 1975). For the present study the choice lies between two contrasting conceptions of research methodology. These are the 'Positivist/Empiricist' and the 'Socially Constructed Reality' perspectives.

The significant feature of a positivist stance is a perception of an objective reality 'out there'. By means of empirical work it is possible to propose and test hypotheses, to build theories, and ultimately to propose generalizations which would be valid for given populations. This perspective opens the possibility of predictions based upon the tested hypothesis and theories (Bhaskar 1993). At the opposite polarity lies the view that there is no 'objective' reality as such. Meanings are derived from the interplay of many variables (Bulmer 1982). The meaning that particular events have for individuals is shaped by their perceptions, beliefs and group interactions, all of which contribute to the phenomenological social construction of reality.

The positivist paradigm could be appropriate for this piece of research since the Researcher wishes to open up a new field of study. From the positivist position a Researcher should study social phenomena: "in the same state of mind as the physicist, chemist or physiologist when he probes into a still unexplored region of the scientific domain" (Durkheim 1964). The aim of positivism is to collect and assemble data in order to generalize, predict and explain human behaviour. Empiricism, however, may also claim to be a possible perspective since it shares with positivism the belief that there are 'facts' that we can gather from the social world, independently of how people interpret them. The key difference between the two is

that data within positivism are 'theory driven' and are designed to test the accuracy of a particular theory, whereas empiricism "is a method of research which lacks or has not referred explicitly to the theory guiding its data collection procedures" (May 1996). Both positivism and empiricism assert that there are facts about the social world that can be gathered and they both tend to rely upon the same methods of data collection.

This research is a first attempt to investigate a field and there are no theoretical propositions generated from prior research or from other sources waiting to be tested. It therefore has a stronger claim for a relationship to empiricism than positivism. The empiricist stance adopted will hopefully enable generalizations to be made from the data which are valid at the national level excluding Scotland. Such generalisations could then enable some theory building to occur.

## 2 Design of the Study

Given the research questions and the empiricist approach the potential data gathering methods which suggest themselves are:

- Ex Post Facto/quasi experimental design
- Case Study
- Documentary/Historical Research
- Survey Studies

Each will be considered in turn for its suitability.

## 2.1 Ex Post Facto and Quasi Experimental design

Ex Post Facto research is concerned with discovering relationships among variables and on the face of it is a design possibility for this project. This research is retrospective, and therefore it could, in principle, use an Ex Post Facto design. For example, it would theoretically be possible to study the influence of the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts upon student participation in performance activity and compare the participation of students undertaking a GNVQ in the same field. However, the opportunistic circumstances which had enabled this project, also supplied the constraints which made this kind of design impossible. It was not feasible for the Researcher to gain access to 'control' the situation in the way that would be needed in a large number of colleges, manipulating key variables and establishing a control group (Kerlinger 1973). The Researcher concluded therefore that this was an inappropriate approach to data collection.

## 2.2 Case Studies

This was traditionally the method recommended for classroom research by, for example, Stenhouse (1982) as it can include documentary data as well as observation and taped interviews. In this project, it would have been possible to take one college teaching the BTEC Performing Arts programmes and carry out a case study in depth, perhaps comparing the results through a second case study in a different college which had opted for the GNVQ qualification. However, a case study typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit rather than "asking standardized questions of large representative samples of individuals" (Cohen & Manion1994). As

such it would not yield generalizations that are nationally valid and would not be appropriate for the present 'ground breaking' project that is seeking to open up a new subject for research.

## 2.3 Documentary/ Historical Research

Burgess (1984) identifies three pairs of documentary evidence in which to classify data. The first of these is the basic classification in historical data normally made. That is between primary sources "which are the life-blood of historical research, and secondary sources which may be used in the absence of, or to supplement, primary data" (Cohen and Manion 1994).

- Primary sources have a direct relationship with the people, situations or events that are studied. These sources include minutes, contracts, letters, memoranda, notes, memoirs, diaries and reports. They also include oral accounts from people who have been participants in the events being studied.
- Secondary sources may include transcripts or summaries of primary resource materials which have been published and materials prepared about them. They need to be viewed contextually with a view to the perspective of those who wrote or prepared them. (Burgess 1984)

There is a further distinction to be made between solicited and unsolicited documents. Unsolicited documents have been produced without research in mind while solicited documents have been produced for the research itself (Willmot 1969). Again, solicited documents may introduce an undesirable bias to the study. Lastly, one can distinguish between public documents and private documents (Denzin 1970, 1978).

Within this dichotomy four types of public documents have been identified (Webb et al 1966):

- Actuarial records, births, deaths, marriage certificates and statistical data on the population.
- Political records, decisions by legal bodies, Government and its agencies.
- Other Government records, welfare Programmes, hospital records.
- Mass Media, letters, news content etc.

Given the historical implications of the main Research Question it was decided that primary sources in the form of minutes and letters e.g. to the Researcher as a participant, in the BTEC Library and to interviewees (in Appendices 4,5,&6), would be used wherever possible supplemented by the oral testimony of those involved at national level in the developments of the qualification and in the discussions surrounding the introduction of the GNVQs. However, the written transcriptions of these oral accounts would be described formally as secondary sources. Many of the primary sources such as the public documents were mainly generated by government departments or agencies especially BTEC/EDEXCEL itself, NCVQ and QCA. They often take the form of official directives, course schemes and unit specifications (see BTEC/GNVQ 1996 a,b&c) and are unsolicited. However, the oral data and its transciptions could be described as solicited. The Researcher has encountered significant problems in obtaining some primary data due to the limited nature of the BTEC archive. It has not, for example, been possible to find or construct completely accurate statistics relating to the student population in the Performing Arts field and the reader should treat such figures in Chapter 3 with some caution. This problem has

been noted by others. For example an FEFC report stated: "there are no coordinated statistics for students progressing to higher education in Music and the Performing Arts" (FEFC 1996)

## 2.4 Surveys

Survey research takes two common forms, which are questionnaires and interviews. The method is very well adapted to obtaining personal and social facts, beliefs, and attitudes. Frequently, we do need to know what people's attitudes are towards a topic and "it has the advantage of wide scope" (Kerlinger 1973). Surveys originated within the positivist/empiricist tradition and have "logical similarities to that method used by physical scientists" (May 1997).

They may be characterized under four types (Ackroyd & Hughes 1983).

1. Factual: aim to gain information from individuals concerning a situation rather than attitudes or opinions.
2. Attitudinal: aim to gain data on attitudes: 'what do they think about it?'
3. Social psychological: concerned with characteristics of subjects, and their 'personality'.
4. Explanatory: specifically designed to test hypotheses, which are derived from theories.

Surveys are an excellent means of gathering data from large, disparate groups of people:

> Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (Cohen & Manion 1994 page 83)

Given the nature of the two research sub- questions, which seek to establish the views and attitudes of students and staff, surveys by means of questionnaires would seem to be very appropriate methods of data collection in this study and are elaborated further below. These could be supplemented by interviews if appropriate to establish some of the facts in the historical analysis required by the main and subsequent questions.

## 2.5 Operationalization of the Research Questions

The main Research Question requires data from each of the selected sources. There is a need for historical data from which to determine what has been the 'legacy' of the original National Diploma. This will be derived mainly from documentary sources and from interview data - in particular, from interviewees associated with the original development of the qualification and teachers with experience of its delivery. Determination of the realisation of career ambitions will draw upon a questionnaire survey of students. Finally, assessment of the 'appropriateness' of the qualification, and its subsequent derivatives, will be inferred from the questionnaire and interview data.

In Question 2 the causes of developments over time will be ascertained from the historical documentary data as well as from the questionnaire for staff, and from interviews with officials working on revisions of the relevant programmes up to the present time.

Question 3 will draw on these same sources with an emphasis upon the documentary evidence as the questionnaires were circulated at the time of the very first GNVQ qualification applied to this field of study.

## 3. The Data Collection Instruments

### 3.1 Questionnaire Surveys

Questionnaire surveys are a popular tool and have much to commend their use:

- information can be obtained from a large population (Cohen & Manion 1994), (May 1997)
- they are relatively cheap for the amount of data they yield and existing facilities can be used to reduce the costs of the research e.g. the present study has been facilitated by the Researcher's activities within the Edexcel organization
- research is 'surprisingly accurate' (ie.within sampling error)
- depending upon the size of a total population a large sample of (e.g. 600 - 700) individuals can give an accurate portrait of a community - values, attitudes, and beliefs
- a survey is best adapted to extensive rather than intensive research (Kerlinger 1973).

Countervailing disadvantages may include:

- survey information rarely penetrates very deeply into what people know, believe or think
- the scope of data is usually emphasized rather than its depth.

While the advantages outweighed the disadvantages for this study, the Researcher had to pay attention to the validity of responses and find an appropriate approach to sampling to ensure that the findings could be generalised to the national level (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Each of these issues will now be considered.

### 3.1.1 Validity

Drawing on Cohen and Manion (1994) validity in the questionnaires will depend upon:

- whether respondents who complete questionnaires do so accurately
- whether those who fail to return their questionnaires would have given the same distribution of answers as did the returnees.
- the standardisation of the conditions in which the survey is conducted - how the questionnaire is administered will substantially affect the quality of data obtained (May 1997).

One problematic issue of validity is the relationship between attitudes and actions. What people say and what they do are often very different things. This has been described as 'apartness' (Kerlinger 1973) whereby respondents may give answers describing a situation as they would like it to be, rather than as it actually is. In a large scale enquiry this can be counteracted by the size of the sample, or by the support of interviews as a check. Nevertheless there is the possibility in this study that the way that students were instructed to complete the questionnaire may have influenced them to give a positive 'spin' to their answers. Belson (1986) developed a sophisticated 'intensive review method' consisting of 12 principal tactics which

included 'familiarization, temporal reconstruction, probing and challenging'. However, this admirable procedure is only available if the respondents are identifiable and can be subsequently interviewed, thus destroying the benefits of anonymity.

### 3.1.2 Sampling

The Researcher's concern to open up a field means that an appropriately large sample will be necessary in order to enable national generalization of the findings (excluding Scotland). The questionnaires present opportunities to draw data from a national population. The original staff questionnaires were sent out as part of a project which the Researcher was undertaking for BTEC. These questionnaires were sent out to each of the 302 centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which were registered to deliver the National Diploma in Performing Arts. Five copies were sent to each centre together with an instruction to photocopy any additional sheets that might be required by other appropriate staff as there was no way of knowing how many teachers were on the delivery team for each programme. There were 209 questionnaire responses returned and they were entirely unattributable. The Researcher tried to ensure that there was total anonymity in the replies and that the FE college or School could not be detected. This was because he had personal knowledge of many centres and did not want there to be any 'contamination' in the analysis and subsequent discussion due to this familiarity.

Following this, in 1998-1999 the student questionnaires were sent to the course leaders in 40 centres across the country known to the Researcher for their substantial

experience in, and commitment to, the performing arts programmes. The nature of the sample could be described as a national 'Judgement Sampling' which Burgess (1984) describes as one in which informants are selected because they have a specific, shared qualification for selection (in this case studying on a BTEC Performing Arts course). Alternatively, May (1993) postulates the concept of 'Purposive Sampling' where informants are selected because they share a 'common characteristic'. The sampling was also 'opportunistic' in that the choice of centres with known commitment to Performing Arts was more likely to produce thoughtful responses from students who were themselves more likely to have had some performance experience. Also these centres would be more likely to be running the programme whereas a randomly selected sample of centres would have included many who were not actually running a programme in that year despite having approval to do so. Actual registered numbers of students on the programmes in separate colleges could not be obtained from sources available to the Researcher, but the national total enrolments were available. The number of responses represented 9.4% of the national total of enrolments.

The teachers were asked to take ten minutes at the start of a session and ask the class to fill them in. Each centre was sent 25 copies and they could photocopy extras if necessary. 420 responses were returned where all but one group were unattributable. One large City Technology College sent a substantial group of questionnaires back late with a covering letter; the Researcher could not then avoid knowing the identity of the college. This meant that out of the 420 responses, 152 were from this 'Specialist' college and 268 were from general Further Education Colleges. Rather

than discarding the specialist college return, the Researcher decided to use it as an additional opportunity for analysis as there were no other specialist Performing Arts CTCs in the general FE sample.

### 3.1.3 Staff Questionnaires

This questionnaire was designed and distributed first. It was put out for comment with the relevant EDXCEL officers as a form of pilot as its original purpose was to gain information for a BTEC commissioned report which was being written at the time. The Researcher in his Edexcel contract obligations was required to construct a questionnaire incorporating suggestions by the commissioning BTEC officers. However he was permitted to include a number of items which were specifically designed for this research and only these questions have been included in the analysis for this thesis. Even so, it is likely that the responses to these questions were influenced by the other items, especially since the purpose for which the data was being gathered was to persuade the Government to allow BTEC National Diplomas to continue. The instructional letter accompanying the questionnaire had the 'imprimatur' of Edexcel on it and respondents' views of that organisation generally could well have coloured the way they answered the items pertaining to this study.

The staff questionnaire was structured to fit two sides of A4 paper. (Appendix 1) It was distributed by Edexcel to all of the colleges approved to run BTEC programmes in Performing Arts during the academic year 1997/1998. Questions were of two types - open and closed. The open-ended questions were not appropriate for analysis in this current research but many of the closed questions were designed specifically

for this project. All of the closed questions which were measuring levels of agreement with a particular statement used a Lickert four point scale (rather than one with a mid position ) in order to force respondents to come to a firm decision.

There were two groups of such questions and they were central to answering the main Research Question of the study. The first group concerned attitudes towards the structure of courses for the Performing Arts. The following four questions were structured in the same way but were concerned with attitudes and expectations of the career prospects of students on the course. Both of these sets of questions were mirrored in the student questionnaires which will be described below.

Other questions on the staff questionnaire dealt with biographic details and with the nature of teaching commitments. Further questions also probed whether staff had relevant, performance experience and what their specialist performing discipline actually was.

### 3.1.4 Student Questionnaires

The Student questionnaires were sent out six months later. As with the staff questionnaires each was made to fit on two sides of A4 (Appendix 1). Despite the student questionnaires being aimed at centres known to the Researcher there was no way of knowing which of the centres actually returned them or how many of their students did so. This was deliberate since the Researcher was well known to some of the centres. The intention was that they would be gathered together by the course tutor who would relay them to the Researcher via Edexcel in a plain envelope. Before the general distribution of the questionnaires and prior to their final form, a pilot version was trialled at three centres (which were not included in the final

sample) in which the students were asked to comment on the questions and the course leaders informed the Researcher of their suggestions. A number of small changes were made following these suggestions and the final version was sent out to the chosen sample.

The content of the student questionnaires was considerably simpler than the staff questionnaire with the whole of the first page being taken up with a number of questions with closed, binary responses (Appendix 1). These enquired about a student's age, gender and performance experience. On the second page questions 14 to 17 reflected the first four questions on the staff questionnaires and items 19-22 the second set. There is a slight difference in the wording between the staff and student questionnaires, but as the following example shows, this did not alter the basic meaning.

Example:

Staff Questionnaire 9 "To achieve success in the entertainment business training is **essential**".

Student Questionnaire 25 "To achieve lasting success in the entertainment business training is **essential**".

This enabled comparisons to be drawn between the perception of different groups of students and the perceptions of staff. A further three questions were available on the student questionnaires only as 12, 13 and 25 as were two questions concerning dance (23 and 24) These two latter questions were withdrawn from the staff questionnaire as the piloting BTEC officers were keen to ensure that it would fit on two sides of A4

paper in view of the large number to be sent out. They considered that these questions were the most expendable due to the perception of low enrolments of dance specialists.

### 3.1.5 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

In addition to simple statistical descriptions of the findings for each item, the questionnaires identified a range of attributes of the respondents (students and staff). These are described as 'Internal Variables' and for the students, they were:

- gender
- age
- whether or not they had had paid experience as performers

For the staff, the 'Internal Variables' were:

- gender
- performance discipline
- experience as a professional performer

These Internal Variables enabled the Researcher to undertake further quantitative analysis of the survey findings. The approach adopted was to conflate the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' into one positive response and the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' into a negative response. This provided a dichotomy on the item and by selecting two internal variables from either or both sets of respondents it was possible to compute a Chi Square analysis of the pairings. This enabled the identification of findings which were statistically 'significant' (i.e. not attributable to chance alone).

## 3.2 The Interview Data Collection

Data from interviews with significant participants can be a very important element in an historical study of this kind. The means of obtaining data can include what Burgess (1984) describes as 'judgement sampling' where "informants may be selected for study according to a number of criteria selected by the Researcher such as their status (age, sex and occupation) or previous experience that endows them with special knowledge". The Researcher therefore requires a detailed knowledge of the universe from which to draw individuals who have "distinct qualifications as informants" (Burgess 1984). His parallel concept of 'opportunistic sampling' can also be applied to this study because of the possibility of making a selection of individuals who are willing to cooperate.

The Interview Survey included 7 retired lecturers who had had a part to play in the development of the programmes in 1986/7, 9 teachers currently acting as course tutors (from all parts of the country) and finally 6 specialists engaged in current developments - including officials from QCA, the Northern Ireland Education Service and an Industry Lead Body. These samples were therefore not 'random' but 'judgement samples' being chosen by the Researcher from his knowledge of the field or recommended to the Researcher as particularly well informed by others whom he had already approached.

Of the twenty four interviews, two sets were carried out over the telephone, tape recorded, and later transcribed for analysis. These were the groups labelled the 'Original Starters' (OS) and the 'Front Line Troops' (FLT). A further set of interviews was carried out face-to-face, tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. This was

the group labelled as the 'New Developers' (ND). Each group is described in more detail below.

For all interviewees, the Researcher guaranteed anonymity and offered to send a copy of the full tape and transcript for them to check. The eventual transcription prepared for scrutinisation was edited by the Researcher to remove any comment of a personal nature which could have identified the interviewees or their contacts.

**Figure 2.1**

**Original Starters:**

| | |
|---|---|
| OS 1 | Former BTEC Officer |
| OS 2 | Independent Consultant |
| OS 3 | Head of Drama Conservatoire |
| OS 4 | Head of Performing Arts (College) |
| OS 5 | Retired Lecturer of Performing Arts |
| OS 6 | Retired Lecturer of Performing Arts |
| OS 7 | Retired Lecturer of Performing Arts |

**Front Line Troops:**

| | |
|---|---|
| FTL 1 | Head of Performing Arts Department |
| FTL 2 | Senior Lecturer - Performing Arts |
| FTL 3 | Lecturer Performing Arts (Drama) |
| FTL 4 | Lecturer Performing Arts (Dance) |
| FTL 5 | Performing Arts Leader (School-Based) |
| FTL 6 | Lecturer Performing Arts (Drama) |
| FTL 7 | Performing Arts Leader (School-Based) |
| FTL 8 | Lecturer Performing Arts (Music) |
| FTL 9 | Senior Lecturer - Performing Arts |

**New Developers:**

| | |
|---|---|
| ND 1 | BTEC Development Advisor |
| ND 2 | Northern Ireland DfES Official |
| ND 3 | BTEC Advisor |
| ND 4 | QCA Official |
| ND 5 | BTEC Advisor/Consultant |
| ND 6 | BTEC Advisor |

### 3.2.1 Original Starters

This group consisted of people who were involved in the setting up and the early development of the BTEC Performing Arts Qualifications. Information from the

'Original Starters' was obtained in order to provide a starting point from which to assess he legacy of the National Diploma structure for subsequent developments to answer the main Research Question more fully. It was not intended to be converted into a form for quantitative analysis. A fair amount of detective work was necessary in order to track down people known to be prime movers in the development of the qualifications during the 1980s. Unfortunately one of the main original participants had died in France six months previously. Despite the majority of the subjects being retired all were pleased to take part.

The main purpose of interviewing the 'Original Starters' was to obtain their version of the events which led to the start of the National Diploma in Performing Arts and its early development and to ascertain the notional philosophy which lay behind their curriculum choices. Having discovered that BTEC had at that time (1985-1990) been rather remiss in its record keeping for what were then ongoing 'new developments' the Researcher found it necessary to go to the participants themselves for first hand viewpoints while being aware that such memories can be selective, partial and inaccurate. The use of the telephone and tape recorder proved to be an admirable interview medium for these respondents who were located all over the country; all nine respondents contributed considerable information to the study.

The headings which were used to frame questions are set out below as they were sent to the participants in advance.

**The 'Original Starters' Interview Schedule**

## ORIGINAL DECISIONS

1. Describe how the development of the ND in Performing Arts got started?
2. Who was/were the innovator(s)?
3. How did you become involved in the process?
4. How was the development team brought together?
5. Did you have any previous experience in teaching or managing TEC, BEC or BTEC programmes?
6. What consultation was there before putting the qualification out to pilot?
7. Why was the revised draft of the original guidelines never published?
8. Comment upon changes in the style of the unit specifications (if any) which were included in subsequent associated courses such as The First Awards or the Popular Music Diploma.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

1. How was the decision to combine this particular group of separate disciplines arrived at?
2. Was there any preference for separate diplomas for each discipline?
3. Were you personally satisfied with the eventual outcome or would you have preferred a different structure?
4. Were there any alternative titles for the course?
5. The final form had a unit-based structure - had there been any consideration of a 'grouped' structure as in some Art & Design programmes?
6. How was the overall structure of Core Units plus 'options' to address each of the separate disciplines decided?
7. How was the format of the unit specifications arrived at?
8. Comment upon the requirement for Common Skills
9. Comment upon the requirement for Work Experience
10. How were decisions made regarding unit value (some are 1.00 and some are 2.00 or even 3.00)

## ASSESSMENT

1. How was the assessment regime decided?
2. Was there any steering of policy based upon the newly developing NVQs or from government policy directed from the newly established NCVQ?
3. Was the team prepared to accept a standard BTEC assessment model or were modifications suggested?
4. Did you have any previous experience with the assessment processes of TEC and BEC?

5. If so did the experience influence you in this project?
6. Did the team envisage any assessment problems inherent in the Performing Arts?
7. If so how what advice was offered to resolve them?
8. Did the guidance for assessment in the Guidance Booklet and in Circular 17 alter over time and if so how was information disseminated?

**PROGRESSION**

1. Was the diploma primarily intended as a preparation for work or for further study?
2. Was there any clear idea of the likely nature of the potential students (eg matures)?
3. Why was the Higher National Award left as a 'Centre Devised' qualification with no guidelines other than a 'letter of guidance'?

**POLICIES**

1. Was there any policy steer from authorities, external, or internal to BTEC?
2. What was the nature of this?
3. Was there a conscious reason for leaving the original guidelines in draft form until 2000?
4. What professional organisations were consulted during the the development process?
5. Were any of these organisations particularly helpful?
6. Were any of these organisations particularly antagonistic?

**END NOTES**

Please mention any issues or interesting facts relevant to the development process that I have omitted to raise.
Have I missed something important?

### 3.2.2 Front Line Troops

This category consisted of 9 Performing Arts specialists with an average of 9 years of experience in managing and/or teaching the BTEC National Diplomas and associated qualifications. Again, all made a significant contribution to the research data. These interviews were also held over the telephone and the participants had the question schedule sent in advance.

The questions were designed to be 'semi-structured' so that there would be opportunities to elaborate upon answers as the interview developed. The questions were focused on topics where the Researcher was keen to have some elaboration on questionnaire replies and on developments which had taken place since the questionnaires had been issued.

**The 'Front Line Troops' Interview Schedule**

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

1. How long have you been teaching the (original 1987)BTEC National or First Diploma?
2. What were the most attractive features of the (1987) programme?
3. What were the problem areas?
4. Do you (or did you) arrange work experience?
5. If so was this in the performing arts or not necessarily?
6. Was the activity real or simulated?
7. How successful was the common skills programme?
8. Would you have preferred to teach single disciplines rather than a broad range?

**STUDENTS**

1. How did the students react to Common Skills?
2. What do you think of student expectations - do they really expect to 'make it'?
3. Could it be that many students enrol on the course to legitimize their desire for a performers' lifestyle?
4. Would your students prefer the course to concentrate upon their own subject discipline rather that a broad range?

**GNVQ**

1. Have you had any experience of the GNVQ?
2. Do you prefer to teach the ND or the GNVQ ?
3. Why?
4. Does your college management have a preference?

5. What are their reasons?
6. Have you changed from ND to GNVQ?
7. Why did you do this?
8. If you did not, would you re-consider this using the new GNVQ specifications?

## REVISED NATIONAL DIPLOMAS

1. What do you think is the essential difference between the original ND and the new ND?
2. When the National Diploma was to be re-written would you have preferred to update the previous structure or were you attracted by the new single subject structure?
3. Are you aware that the new version is even now being re-written?
4. This new version is being revised into 18 unit, 12 unit and 6 unit versions to fit the National Qualifications Framework- comment upon this?

## ASSESSMENT

1. How did you and/or your team learn the assessment procedures required for the (1987) qualification?
2. Which of the Performing Arts disciplines have you worked in as a performer?
3. For how long?
4. Which of the Performing Arts disciplines have you worked in as a teacher?
5. For how long?
6. Do you think your own particular Performing Arts specialism presents any specific difficulties for assessment?
7. Are the 'outcome related' assessment procedures which are currently encouraged satisfactory?
8. How could they be improved?
9. Are they a useful as formative assessment?
10. Are they useful as summative assessment?
11. Comment upon the new requirement for grading as A,B,C,D,E and allocating points as in A Levels?
12. Do you agree with the requirement for external testing within the new regulations?
13. How would you suggest the external tests could be applied to actual performance?
14. If the tests cover only written work what effects will this have upon the qualification?

## INFORMATION

1. How do you get necessary support and advice on delivery and assessment?
2. What staff development have you had and who has delivered it?
3. Is it easy or difficult to get information?

4. If you encountered a problem where would you seek advice?
5. Why do you select this source?

**OPEN ENDED**

Are there any issues which you would like to bring to my attention which have not been covered?

### 3.2.3 New Developers

The six interviews in this group were face-to-face and open-ended, based upon a number of pre-identified themes embracing developments and changes to the Performing Arts qualifications in the current period. Interviewees were selected from officers and others at the heart of current policy initiatives and all contributed positively to the study. The data from these interviews were used mainly in the analysis for Research Questions 2 & 3. They formed:

- A source of policy information
- An indication of official perceptions of changes
- A guide to the official rationales for changes implemented and planned

### 3.2.4 Analysis of the Interview data

The tapes were transcribed verbatim and then edited to make them grammatically acceptable for the reader. Following this they were edited again to ensure that they were not showing any means of identification of either the interviewee or any one of the people mentioned which would break the ethical code of social science research.

For analysis the researcher took each of the most significant questions on the original schedule and prepared a list of bullet points showing the category of answers given by the interviewee. This happened with the Original Starters and the Front line troops

but in the absence of any prestructured schedule of questions the New developers were subject to impression analysis. This was facilitated by the fact that they were fewer in number.

A table showing the sequencing of the data collection is shown below in Figure 2.2:

Figure 2.2

| Date | Data Collection Method | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| 1997 - 1998 | Staff Questionnaires | Originally prepared for EDEXCEL contracted project |
| 1998 - 1999 | Student Questionnaires | Prepared for this research |
| 2000 | Analysis of Questionnaires | Separation of FE and Specialists. Identification of Internal Variables |
| 2001 Jan - Feb | Original Starters Interviews | Taped Telephone interviews |
| 2001Feb - Apr | Front Line Troops Interviews | Taped Telephone interviews |
| 2001 Mar - Apr | New Developers Interviews | Face to Face interviews |

## 4 Role of the Researcher in The Process

The Researcher's own role is problematic because it brings both obvious contamination as well as clear advantages in unique access to data (such as internal memoranda and minutes) and to individuals needed for the 'judgement' sample of interviewees. To what extent does this tension jeopardise the 'objectivity' of this

empirical study? The personal involvement of the Researcher in many of the situations investigated in this research has been quite considerable as is made explicit in the bulleted summary below:

- participated in the preparation of the original National Diploma in Performing Arts
- managed a department which piloted the BTEC qualifications
- worked on the development of the associated qualifications such as the National Diploma in Popular Music, First Diploma in Performing Arts, National Diploma in Music Technology and the HNDs in these areas
- wrote most of the Optional Units for the GNVQ (Mark 2 - 1996) in Performing Arts
- member of the NCVQ Subject Advisory Committee for re- development of the GNVQ
- contracted to produce report advocating the retention of the National Diploma in Performing Arts
- managed the editing and writing teams of the revised 'Nationals'
- wrote and edited new-style units for the GNVQ (Mark 3)
- converted required 'National' units toappropriate GNVQ language.

It is clear that the Researcher would himself qualify as an informed respondent whose own account of what happened could be seen as a legitimate primary source. He is therefore both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' in undertaking this study.

There are some commentators who would claim that 'objectivity' in the pure sense of the natural sciences is neither possible nor desirable. Burrell and Morgan (1979) for example maintain that one can only 'understand' by occupying the frame of reference of the participant in action. Phillips (1993) using arguments from Eisner (1991) describes the traditional notion of objectivity as naïve. He also points out that the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' tend to be regarded as positive and negative respectively when applied to educational research. Meanwhile Hockey (1993) dealing with problems of researching 'familiar settings' highlights the risk of strangers 'going native' as well as the obverse, and equally dangerous, possibility of a native 'going stranger'.

In this study it is certainly the case that the Researcher's personal experience of, and enthusiasm for, the Performing Arts, and his familiarity with the events with which this research is concerned, led him to undertake the study in the first place and influenced the framing of the Research Questions. However beyond this he also feels that the danger of pursuing and 'proving' a personal agenda is real and would diminish the value of any analysis presented. In particular, a research design which relied solely upon an investigation of patchy documentary sources might be overly influenced by the Researcher's own background and would fail to take account of relevant experience which has accrued to other practitioners. It is for this reason that the research design was triangulated to include data sources of three different types: documentary, questionnaire and interview. Within these types there are further subdivisions which together should counteract any self-serving tendencies on the Researcher's part. For example, the interview data from the Original Starters provided a means to check his own memories of events, fill gaps in the documentary record, and to gain insights from their perceptions. In conclusion a consideration of the position of practising professionals by Hammersley (1993) suggests that such Researchers:

- have a deeper understanding of the situation than an observer does
- will know the history of the situation first hand
- already have relationships which will enable data collection
- are in a better position to test out theoretical ideas than observers.

The countervailing disadvantages which he presents are largely premised on the Researcher being a practising teacher where certain information will of necessity be

denied to him/her. This Researcher takes comfort in the fact that he personally is now officially retired and owes allegiance to no particular school or college except as External Verifier to check bi-annually on assessments in a number of centres which may change from year to year.

> There are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or an outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages, though these will take on slightly different weights depending on the particular circumstances and purposes of the research. (Hammersley 1993 p219)

## 5. Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses in the Research

The weaknesses of the research are bulleted below and where mitigating circumstances are available these will be shown.

- Information on attitudes to the Common Skills were not included in either the staff nor the student surveys. This was due to the nature of the original staff questionnaire design which was to deal with the National Diploma in Performing Arts at the time when Common Skills had been dropped from the unit totals for the qualification. With hindsight it would have been very informative to have staff and student perceptions on this issue.
- Potential confusion and contamination due to the Researcher's role which had been very close to the subject area. This is dealt with above in the previous section. It has been pointed out that every endeavour has been made to counteract any bias. All data and events in which he was a participant have been acknowledged in the text.

- The National Diploma in Popular Music could also have been surveyed, in view of the excellent recruitment on that programme and the fact that it grew out of developments of the original Performing Arts programme
- One of the key Original Starters, a prime mover and leader of the NATFHE group on the original team, had died six months before the interviews were held.
- Owing to the small size of each interview population the data from them will not be generalisable.
- The time-lag between the surveys and the interviews was two years
- The lack of a body of research literature directly relevant to the Performing Arts as a vocational area.
- Due to the relative newness of the GNVQ for the staff (surveys) and the Front Line Troops, there were very few who had actually taught on the course. Therefore it can be argued that staff views were not entirely reliable as a guide to these new qualifications because they were being affected by a reluctance to change and disruption in the Colleges caused by the arrival of GNVQs and other factors. Consequently this qualification and its effects on the National Diploma are dealt with mainly on the basis of documentary evidence.

Some of the points above have a positive side and can indeed serve as a strength in certain circumstances. Examples of these are:

- The closeness of the Researcher to the events ensured that he had a unique access to necessary data sources and knew which people were most appropriate to provide information.

- Similarly the length of time between the various component data sources served to enable the Researcher to access information 'retrospectively' and with the benefit of this hindsight to identify pathways in the policy process and thus evaluate them with greater objectivity.

Other advantages were:

- The surveys provided an unusually good sample base for a lone researcher. Therefore one can be reasonably confident of the generalisation of the findings in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- What was a small number of interviewees in each category provided opportunities to obtain data from three separate categories each providing a unique frame of reference.

Ethical Considerations have been dealt with in section 3.2 as part of the review of methodology employed and they amount to two main issues:

- The issue of interviewee confidentiality has been dealt with above. The Researcher guaranteed to protect this with an offer to send copies of the original interview tapes and transcriptions of them as external verification if requested.
- The source of the surveys was totally unattributable except for the Specialist C.T.C as described earlier in this thesis.

# Chapter 3:

## Historical Development of the BTEC Programmes in the Performing Arts


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# Historical Development of the BTEC Programmes in the Performing Arts

This Chapter seeks to address both of the sub-questions providing the context for the main Research Question. It is based on the historical data already described and justified as part of the design of the research in Chapter 2.

## 1. Origins and First Structure of the BTEC National Awards in Performing Arts

As explained in Chapter 1 there is little research literature dealing with the BTEC qualifications under review, nor did the Researcher find much official documentation relating to these qualifications at Edexcel offices. The BTEC archives contain statistics, official reports and directives mainly on the large-scale subjects such as business studies. For information on smaller scale developments, especially in their early stages, BTEC has not retained an appropriate archive of documents. What is relevant to this research is one series of policy documents and the findings from the Original Starters' interviews. It should be noted, therefore, that some parts of the following historical sections are derived from these interviews. What is being presented in this chapter is, in a sense, a reconstruction of a missing record of events.

The BTEC programmes in Performing Arts originated from the efforts of a number of independent groups and individuals seeking a similar outcome i.e. accreditation for their existing programmes. Two of these groups, which were concerned with what they had described originally as 'Expressive Arts' (later to become Performing Arts), were involved with Drama and Dance and were located in Further Education Colleges

in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Another was concerned with Music and this was located in the South from a college in Hampshire. These were later to be joined by another college in the North which already had a centre-devised BTEC qualification in Music Technology approved at National level. All of the groups shared one major concern in that they were running courses offering awards from different bodies which one Original Starter described as "a recipe for disorder" and particularly for "lack of standards". All of the groups and individuals approached BTEC independently but an attempt to interest members of the BTEC subject board for Art and Design proved fruitless. They did not consider the Performing Arts to be their responsibility at all. Eventually, all of the groups and interested individuals (including the Researcher) were recruited by a BTEC officer, who was one of the interviewees for this research, to form a development team. Besides these Original Starters the development team also included a group sponsored by the lecturers' union NATFHE.

BTEC Vocational Qualifications have been awarded, during the period under review, at three levels. The main qualifications have been:

- the First Diploma and Certificate which is at what would now be described as level two or GCSE equivalent
- the National Diploma and Certificate at level three or A level equivalent and
- the Higher National Diploma and Certificate or non-degree Higher Education level four.

In these qualifications the Diploma represented a full-time course usually of two years duration while the Certificate was based upon a part-time course which covered

fewer course units. The justification for this was originally that the Certificate students would be in full-time employment and following their studies on 'day release'. They were believed to be gaining valuable on-the-job experience which was denied to the full-time Diploma students.

The original 1987 structure for the National Diploma and certificate in Performing Arts which emerged from the development team consisted of **Core Units** plus a series of **Option Units,** the latter sorted into groupings for the particular disciplines - see Figure 3.1 (BTECa 1987). The core units totalled ten units value including two of Common Skills (Baker 1989). To these it was necessary to add eight further/additional options to make the required 18 units for a diploma and two options to make the required 12 units for a certificate. Later the requirement that Common Skills should be counted in the unit total was abandoned and the course requirements became 16 for the Diploma and ten for the Certificate.

In planning the BTEC awards the development team for Performing Arts had to face a key question which could be stated as follows:

'Are the qualifications to be based upon a broad comprehensive approach which ensures that students have an acquaintance with, and some experience in, ALL of the Performing Arts?'

Or -

'Are the qualifications to be "subject specific" dealing with each particular performance discipline separately - to be selected by the student?'

The model adopted was a mixture of both approaches. A central core consisting of broad-based generic studies was taken by all students regardless of their performance specialism, but the remainder of the programme was selected from options which represented the various Performing Arts disciplines. In this way students could specialise in their preferred area or, by selecting across the range of options they could maintain the broad, multidisciplined, approach of the central core. Centres could add to the published option modules by submitting "centre devised modules" to BTEC for approval and inclusion into their programme. These modules enabled centres to make use of any special resources which were available at or near the centre, to provide for cultural diversity, or to provide for any identified need not covered in the published material. The structure is set out in Figure 3.1 below:

## Figure 3.1

**BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts**
**Original Structure**

| Core Units | Unit Value |
|---|---|
| Arts in Society | 1.0 |
| Arts Administration | 1.0 |
| Production Techniques | 1.0 |
| Performance Workshop | 3.0 |
| Production Project | 2.0 |
| Common Skills | 2.0 |
| **Option Units** | |
| **Music** | |
| Language of Music | 2.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques | 2.0 |
| Composition and Arrangement | 1.0 |
| Introduction to Music Technology | 1.0 |
| Recording Techniques | 1.0 |
| Singing | 1.0 |
| **Dance** | |
| Language of Dance | 2.0 |
| Movement Studies | 1.0 |
| *Dance Improvisation* | 1.0 |
| Dance Techniques | 2.0 |
| Composition & Choreography | 1.0 |
| **Drama** | |
| Language of Theatre | 2.0 |
| Acting Techniques 1 | 1.0 |
| Acting Techniques 2 | 1.0 |
| Directing | 1.0 |
| Writing & Devising | 1.0 |
| Voice & Speech | 1.0 |
| **Stagecraft** | |
| Setting for Performance 1 | 1.0 |
| Setting for Performance 2 | 1.0 |
| Stagecraft 1 | 1.0 |
| Stagecraft 2 | 2.0 |
| Costume Construction & Wardrobe Management | 1.0 |
| Costume for Performance | 1.0 |
| Make-up | 1.0 |

The original course structure and guidelines which were published as a draft in 1986 for introduction in September 1987 have been in use in their original form until a final two-year intake in September 1999. Figure 3.2 below shows the rapid growth in registrations from the introduction of the course until 1997/98 - the year in which the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries was introduced.

**Figure 3.2**

Enrolments in the Performing Arts
National Level

| Date | National Diploma | National Cert. | Diploma + Cert |
|---|---|---|---|
| 88 - 89 | 522 | 15 | 537 |
| 89 - 90 | 1150 | 30 | 1180 |
| 90 - 91 | 1778 | 45 | 1823 |
| 91 - 92 | 2179 | 10 | 2189 |
| 92 - 93 | 2723 | 50 | 2773 |
| 93 - 94 | 3486 | 67 | 3553 |
| 94 - 95 | 3742 | 32 | 3774 |
| 95 - 96 | 4462 | 22 | 4484 |
| 96 - 97 | 4467 | 65 | 4532 |

Despite the fourteen years of its lifetime, this qualification has not had a published revision and the original draft format has been used without change other than a general instruction for all National Diplomas/Certificates to drop Common Skills from the units to be counted for the achievement of the qualification.

During 1987, when the first student cohorts were on the programme, a consultation was held with participating colleges and professional organisations to seek opinions on the structure and content. The usual BTEC practice was to have a revision after five years but the officers who managed the development of the National Diploma in Performing Arts initiated an earlier review because of the unusual way in which the programme was approved. The original writing team was brought together again on April 24 in 1989 to consider the suggestions and provide an updated course document (BTECb 1989). This was done and the resulting structure is shown in Figure 3.3. The Researcher possesses one of only two copies of this in existence. The revision, which

was intended to be implemented in September 1989 was not followed through and the original guidelines remained in service. The fact that the revision was abandoned suggests that the prevailing national policy context was beginning to affect the planning of BTEC 'own-brand' qualifications. Uncertainty about the nature and requirements of the GNVQ model which, in 1989 seemed destined to become mandatory under statute, created a reluctance to consolidate any qualifications until the position was clearer.

## Figure 3.3

**BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts**
**First Proposed Revised Structure**

| Core Units | Unit Value |
|---|---|
| Arts in Society | 1.0 |
| Arts Administration | 1.0 |
| Production Techniques | 1.0 |
| Performance Workshop | 3.0 |
| Production Project | 2.0 |
| Common Skills | 2.0 |
| **Option Units** | |
| **Music** | |
| Language of Music | 2.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques 1 | 1.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques 2 | 1.0 |
| Composition and Arrangement | 1.0 |
| Introduction to Music Technology | 1.0 |
| Recording Techniques | 1.0 |
| Singing | 1.0 |
| **Dance** | |
| Language of Dance | 2.0 |
| Movement Studies | 1.0 |
| Dance Improvisation | 1.0 |
| Dance Techniques 1 | 1.0 |
| Dance Techniques 2 | 1.0 |
| Composition & Choreography | 1.0 |
| **Drama** | |
| Language of Theatre | 2.0 |
| Acting Techniques 1 | 1.0 |
| Acting Techniques 2 | 1.0 |
| Directing | 1.0 |
| Writing & Devising | 1.0 |
| Voice & Speech | 1.0 |
| **Performance Design & Technology** | |
| Setting for Performance 1 | 1.0 |
| Setting for Performance 2 | 1.0 |
| Performance Technology 1 | 1.0 |
| Performance Technology 2 | 1.0 |
| Costume Construction & Wardrobe Management | 1.0 |
| Costume for Performance | 1.0 |
| Make-up | 1.0 |

Although these projected changes were not applied to the Performing Arts qualification, they nevertheless proved to be a strong influence upon other programmes which were derived from the Performing Arts National Diploma such as

the National Diploma and Certificate in Popular Music which is described later in this Chapter. Detailed comparison of Figures 3.1 and 3.3 reveal changes in the structure of option units whereby double units in Music Performance Techniques and Dance Techniques were to have been converted into two single units. This proved to be a difficult design process (the Researcher had the task) since 'Music and Performance Techniques' was concerned with progressive skills development. To separate out what happens as a first unit, and then as a second unit, in such a situation required musical expertise if it were not to become just an exercise in semantics. These changes were made at the request of Drama (which already had Acting Techniques as two single units) as it had been found that some Drama students had wished to make up their programme with only one unit from Music or one unit from Dance as the case may be. In other words there was pressure to move further along the comprehensive as opposed to the specialist dimension. This was generated by identified needs of the teachers and students and had the tacit approval of the relevant BTEC officers. Another significant change was a move away from the name 'Stagecraft'. The discipline was renamed Performance Design and Technology and the units Stagecraft One and Stagecraft Two were changed to Performance Technology One and Two. There was no change to the substance of the units but the title change is important because it became the accepted terminology in later years. It was also applied to the GNVQ when it appeared.

Although it is not reflected in the listing in Figure 3.3 a great deal of attention was given by the writing team to the core units especially to the Performance Workshop.

This had a three unit value which was against BTEC's normal policy but reflected the particular characteristics of the performing arts. The major contentious issue within this unit had been the objective: "To enable students to 'experience the processes' in Music, Dance and Drama". The implication here was that, irrespective of their preferred performance discipline, students would be required to gain participatory experience of the other disciplines within the Performing Arts field. The Drama teachers and most of the writing team were adamant that they wished this to remain as it was, whereas the Music specialists were very keen to have it altered so that it would not be necessary to have actual experience of disciplines other than one's preferred performance area. However, the music teachers were outnumbered and the original unit specification was retained. Once again the tension between breadth of experience and the opportunity to specialise had been settled in favour of the former, but this was to lead in due course to a 'breakaway' request for a National Diploma focused solely on music (See Figure 3.7 below).

### 1.1 The BTEC First Awards in the Performing Arts

Following the early success of the National Diploma and Certificate in Performing Arts, centres began to request a First Award similar to the other subjects offered by BTEC. Accordingly, on the 6th June and 25th September 1990 (BTECc 1990) meetings were held to prepare a scheme for implementation in the same year. On 13th December 1990 the Minister of State for Education, Tim Eggar, announced that BTEC Firsts could be made available in maintained schools from September 1991 (DES 1990). This was seen at the time as a replacement for the Certificate in Pre-

Vocational Education (CPVE). The rapid developments of enrolments on First Awards is shown below in Figure 3.4

**Figure 3.4 Enrolments in Performing Arts First Level**

| Date | First Diploma | First Cert. | Diploma + Cert |
|---|---|---|---|
| 90 - 91 | 27 | | 27 |
| 91 - 92 | 305 | 20 | 325 |
| 92 - 93 | 663 | 7 | 670 |
| 93 - 94 | 911 | 8 | 919 |
| 94 - 95 | 1194 | 11 | 1205 |
| 95 - 96 | 1645 | 14 | 1659 |
| 96 - 97 | 1402 | 60 | 1462 |

The original structure of the First Awards is shown in Figure 3.5 below.

## Figure 3.5

**BTEC First Diploma in Performing Arts - Original Structure**

| | Core Units | Unit Value |
|---|---|---|
| Performance Processes | | 2.0 |
| Performance Project | | 1.0 |
| Common Skills | | 1.0 |
| | **Option Units** | |
| Understanding Drama | | 1.0 |
| Drama Performance | | 2.0 |
| Understanding Dance | | 1.0 |
| Dance Performance | | 2.0 |
| Understanding Music | | 1.0 |
| Music Performance | | 2.0 |
| Understanding Performance Technology | | 1.0 |
| Stage Management for Performance | | 2.0 |

Two important changes made an appearance with the introduction of the 'Firsts' in schools. The first was the need for schools to submit a case for approval to run the First Award. This had the effect of accustoming schools to application processes normal in the FE sector and thus opened the way for Secondary Schools to apply to run the BTEC National Diploma. The second change concerned the Certificate which had previously been designed for students in employment, and was clearly not appropriate for full time school pupils. The validation panels therefore gave permission for school students to undertake a Certificate and top up their programme with some GCSE subjects. This then led to a much looser interpretation of the Certificates in Colleges of Further Education where they were subsequently used to enrol students who were drawing unemployment benefit.

The original requirement for a First Diploma was to pass four Core Units (including Common Skills) and five Option Units while the First Certificate required four Core Units and three Options. The whole programme was expected to take up one year of study. Work experience totalling 90 hours was an essential requirement of the Diploma course but there is no indication that it is required for the Certificate.

While the structure of the programme followed the usual BTEC practice of Core and Option Units the actual unit specification broke with tradition (BTECd 1990). It paid tribute to the emerging GNVQ model with Principal Objectives replaced by 'Competence Objectives (CO)' each of which was broken up into 'Performance Objectives (PO)'. Furthermore there was an overall 'Range Statement' which served the same purpose as had the Indicative Content previously (See BTECb & BTECc).

The writing team were given a training session to explain the 'new' approach to unit structure which suggested that BTEC was mindful of the Government's intentions with regard to GNVQ units structures and was positioning itself accordingly.

## 1.2 The National Diploma and Certificate in Popular Music

The tension between a broad based curriculum and a specialised focus was highlighted in 1991 and 1993. Many of the colleges with a strong musical tradition who were running BTEC Performing Arts had similar feedback from their music students. Most of these students were involved in popular music and they had gravitated to the National Diploma because the music components were flexible enough to deviate from the normal 'classical' bias. However, considering that they had bought expensive instruments such as drum kits, amplifiers, guitars and electronic keyboards, and then paid for music lessons, they were reluctant to participate in what they regarded as a 'taster' course. As one music student said to the Researcher at the time "There's no way you'll get me into a leotard". This referred to the unit Production Workshop where practical experience of the other performance skills disciplines was required. Consequently BTEC allowed some colleges to run a pilot programme specialising in popular music from September 1991 which was revised and published in draft form to be implemented from September 1993. The rapid rise in enrolments is shown in Figure 3.6 below.

**Figure 3.6 Enrolments in Popular Music**

| Date | National Diploma | National Cert. | Diploma + Cert |
|---|---|---|---|
| 93 - 94 | 16 | 0 | 16 |
| 94 - 95 | 143 | 0 | 143 |
| 95 - 96 | 790 | 18 | 808 |
| 96 - 97 | 1097 | 4 | 1101 |

The structure of the qualification is shown in Figure 3.7 below.

**Figure 3.7**

**BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music**

| Core Units | Unit Value |
|---|---|
| Language of Popular Music | 2.0 |
| Performance Project | 2.0 |
| The Music Business | 1.5 |
| Aural Perception | 1.5 |
| **Option Units** | |
| Music in the Media | 1.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques 1 | 1.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques 2 | 1.0 |
| Music Keyboard Skills | 1.0 |
| Improvisation | 1.0 |
| Music Comp and Arranging Techniques | 2.0 |
| Introduction to Music Technology | 1.0 |
| Recording Techniques | 1.0 |

The minimum requirement for the award of a diploma was a pass in each of the core units (seven Units value) and nine option units which made a total of 16 Units. For a certificate it was necessary to pass the Core (seven Units value) plus three Option

Units which made a total of ten Units value. Whilst it was necessary to pass the equivalent two units of Common Skills in addition to those listed they were not included in the total units required to be passed for the award. This ambiguous situation will be explored in later chapters. It should be noted that the option units in the Popular Music course consisted mainly of 'importations' from other associated National Diplomas such as the un-issued, revised version (BTECb 1989) of the Performing Arts outlined above, and from the Music Technology programme (which is described in 1.4 below).

## 1.3 The Higher National Diploma and Certificate

From 1989 many centres that had been running successful National Diploma Performing Arts courses now wanted a Higher National to follow on and approached BTEC for such a course. However, the interviews reveal that BTEC did not respond with the usual development groups and formal consultations. Officers at BTEC were concerned about the establishment of NCVQ as a Government sponsored body not within the DES but within the Department of Employment (DE ) – a decision which had prompted questions about the future role of BTEC (and indeed City & Guilds) under this newly created body.

These concerns had the effect of delaying normal BTEC developments and in particular the establishment of a Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts. Within BTEC there was a great deal of discussion as to how such Higher Nationals were going to integrate with Degrees, and also with the soon-to-be-introduced GNVQ where the possibility of 'Level Four' versions were already being debated. In

September 1995 NCVQ held a consultation on these issues in response to a request from the DES and the DE.

> "Higher level GNVQs, if introduced, will complement higher level NVQs and professional qualifications, and will form a bridge between higher education and employment. GNVQs offer the potential to link and align higher level qualifications and facilitate credit transfer within a coherent and progressive framework of learning." (NCVQa 1995 page 5)

Due to the difficulty in getting accurate figures on progression into Higher Education in this curriculum area, a fact which concerned the FEFC Inspectors (FEFC 1996), the effects of this concern upon developments in the Performing Arts sector are not addressed in this thesis. Despite the date of the circulation of the consultation document quoted above for exploring the possibility of higher level GNVQs, there had been a number of representations to BTEC from larger FE Colleges, to enable HNDs in the Performing Arts as they had in the other subject areas. Discussions for extending the Performing Arts into HND Level started with a first meeting on 22 November in 1990 and the papers circulated for the meeting emphasised the need to use competence statements together with range statements and performance criteria as were being developed for the draft GNVQs. These included a complete schedule of Common Skills for Level Four (Higher Nationals) written in competence statements. There was a reluctance for BTEC to commit to a set of published specifications for such an HND but in September 1991 BTEC published 'Notes for Guidance on the Preparation of a Submission for a Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Performing Arts'. These notes provided a structure for submissions to be made as centre-devised programmes. They invited specifications for core modules comprising 40% of the available programme and option modules to the value of 60%. Work experience had

to be included to the approximate value of 80 hours in each year of the programme and centres were instructed to provide clear evidence that they possessed the necessary staff with industrial experience, relevant research and performance experience, and physical resources of a specialised nature for their particular course. The core modules had to be based on three main areas which were:

- Business
- The development of Performance
- Performance Skills

and Common Skills

Despite the absence of official guidelines these 'Notes for Guidance' were taken up by numerous Colleges and a great many varied, customised programmes were approved (the Researcher was one of the people responsible for giving approval for HND programmes in this field). These programmes frequently used the particular local specialisms of the college, centre or geographical location e.g. Music Technology (Newcastle), Circus Studies (Belfast) and Contemporary Dance (Leeds).

## 1.4 The National Diploma and Certificate in Music Technology

This National Diploma did not arise out of the Performing Arts as it predated it by two years. It was entirely 'centre devised' (the first one was at Newcastle College) and since then all other Music Technology Diplomas remained without official guidelines until one became available for September 2000. The use of 'technology' in the course title caused BTEC to place this programme originally within the course area 900 (Science and Caring) as number 908. This produced many problems for

quality control when Moderators were appointed. They were frequently Chemists or Biologists rather than musicians. It was only at the re-write of the Performing Arts 'Nationals' in 1998/1999 that this anomaly was rectified.

Prior to this, colleges had been anxious to have some form of unified structure for music technology agreed by BTEC so a consortium of ten colleges met together at The City of Westminster College on April 30 in 1996 to agree a common programme (Music Tech. 1996). The participants were from Further Education Colleges in Manchester, Nottingham, Barnsley, Doncaster, Westminster, Farnborough, Northampton, Bournemouth and Newcastle in England and from Bangor in Co. Down, Northern Ireland. The course structure in Figure 3.8 below was agreed and all of the Colleges decided to base their programmes upon it while lobbying BTEC to adopt it. This did not happen at that time although when other colleges enquired of BTEC seeking advice on starting a Music Technology course they were sent this structure by regional offices as a recommendation. (See Music Technology 1996)

**Figure 3.8 BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology Proposed Course Structure**

| Core Units | Unit Value |
|---|---|
| Recording Techniques | 1.0 |
| Intro. To Music Technology | 1.0 |
| Computer Based Systems | 2.0 |
| The Music Business | 1.5 |
| Music Awareness | 1.5 |
| **Option Units** | |
| Music in the Media | 1.0 |
| Music Comp and Arranging Techniques | 1.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques A | 1.0 |
| Music Performance Techniques B | 1.0 |
| Music Production A | 1.0 |
| Music Production B (Project) | 1.0 |
| Music Keyboard Skills | 1.0 |
| Studio Organisation and Management | 1.0 |
| MIDI Applications | 1.0 |
| Sound for Live Performance | 1.0 |

## 1.5 Summary

Thus, by 1997 BTEC had a spread of programmes in the Performing Arts spanning both more general and more specialist approaches to training. The impact of GNVQ had already been felt in the way that revisions to existing programmes and guidelines for new programmes were being written, and there was considerable uncertainty about the future of BTEC itself and how the policy context would evolve. Nevertheless the 'market appeal' of this form of pre-vocational training in the performing arts had been demonstrated by the rapid take up and rise in enrolments at all levels and by the demand for a full suite of programmes from First Awards to HND to be put in place. However, concurrently with these developments in its

'own brand' qualifications, BTEC as one of the three awarding bodies introduced a GNVQ in this subject area.

## 2 Origins & Characteristics of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries

Originally NCVQ was solely required to introduce a system of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) which were to be assessed within the workplace and this was probably the main reason why it was located in the Department of Employment (DE) rather than the DES. However, following consultations between the government and NCVQ and a consultative document from the latter in it was decided that NVQs should be complemented by the introduction of a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). This was generally very well received (NCVQ 1992). It was piloted in five subject areas in the academic year 1992/1993 and then made available on general release from 1993. The original areas were:

1. Business
2. Art & Design
3. Health & Social Care
4. Leisure & Tourism
5. Information Technology

NCVQ pronounced the pilot to have been a success and it was decided to make GNVQs available in a range of other subjects. Between 1993 and 1996 a further eight subject areas were piloted and introduced:

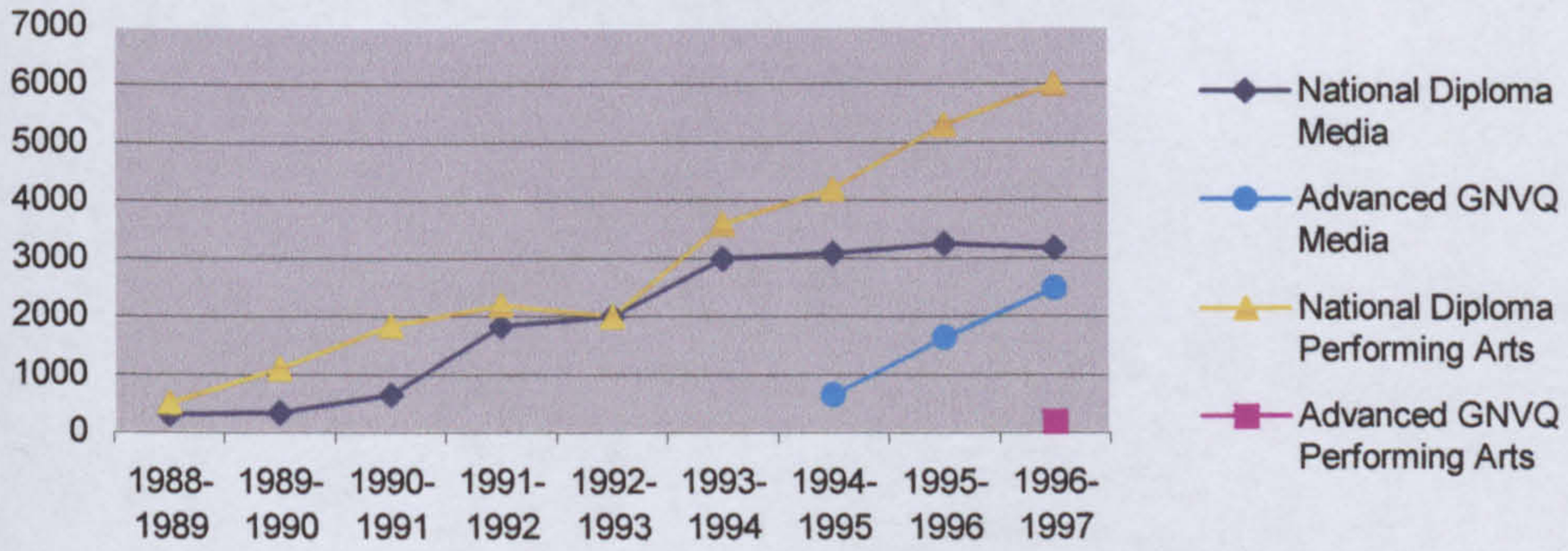
1. Contruction
2. Engineering
3. Hospitality and Catering
4. Science
5. Retail and Distribution
6. Media Communication and Production
7. Management
8. Manufacturing

Finally during the academic years 1996/1997 two further subjects were to be piloted and then introduced:

1. Land and Environment
2. Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries.

There was considerable speculation as to the effect that the GNVQs would have on pre-existing vocational qualifications. It was hypothesised that from 1993 centres had assumed that they would be forced into GNVQ "sooner rather than later" (Wolf 1997) and that students would have been moved across. This view was to remain prevalent for some time but was no longer the case in 1997 and the chart in Figure 3.9 (which is from the same source as Figure 1.2) shows the enrolment position at the start of GNVQ Advanced in the Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries.

Figure 3.9




## 2.1 The Structure of GNVQ Qualifications

Qualifications were to be available at three levels, Foundation (level one), Intermediate (level two) and Advanced (level three). The qualifications were developed by NCVQ in conjunction with the three 'awarding bodies' these were

BTEC, City & Guilds and RSA. (This partnership at least allayed fears that the three awarding bodies would simply disappear.) Documentation in the form of the 'Common Accord' (NCVQ 1997) outlined the nature of the partnerships. In Foundation courses all of the units would be provided from NCVQ and the administration of the programmes would be by each of the awarding bodies. In the Intermediate level the mandatory units would be provided by NCVQ and each awarding body would have its own suite of optional units and additional units. In the Advanced GNVQ the same would pertain, i.e. NCVQ would provide the mandatory units and each awarding body would provide its own optional units and additional units. The requirements for completing the qualification at each of these levels is set out below.

### 2.1.1 Foundation Level

The student must complete nine units (See Figure 3.10): three Mandatory units, three Optional units, and three Core skills units at level one. There is considerable flexibility at the Foundation level which is designed to be 'of a standard broadly equivalent to Levels four/five of the National Curriculum (GCSE grades D to G)' (BTEC/GNVQa 1996). This meant that students could have the opportunity of taking units from other vocational areas in order to have 'the opportunity to taste several areas should they wish to do so' (BTEC/GNVQa 1996).

## Figure 3.10

**Foundation GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries**

Mandatory Units

- Performing Work
- Investigating Venues and Performances
- Investigating work in Performing Art and Entertainment Industries
- Contributing to a team activity

Optional Units

- Health and Safety in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries
- Providing quality service to customers
- Promoting an event
- Reviewing performances and entertainments
- Information and financial systems

### 2.1.2 Intermediate Level

For the award of an intermediate GNVQ a student must complete nine units (See Figure 3.11):four Mandatory units, two Optional units and three Core skills units at level two. Also at Intermediate level there were additional units which provided the opportunity for a vocational focus. The additional units, however, would not be counted as part of the nine units despite their successful completion being recorded upon the certificate. As noted above the mandatory units would be provided by NCVQ and the optional and additional units would be provided by each of the awarding bodies. The qualification at Intermediate level (BTEC/GNVQb 1996) was roughly at the same level as the BTEC First award which has previously been described.

## Figure 3.11

**Intermediate GNVQ in Performing Arts**
**And the Entertainment Industries**

Mandatory units

- Opportunities for Performance and Employment
- Work for performance
- Performing work
- Operating and evaluating an event

Optional Units

- Explore the environment of performance
- Provide the technical components for a performance
- Devise a performance
- Performance techniques

Additional Units

- Performance skills
- Applied performance skills
- Creative skills and processes
- Develop and apply performance technology

### 2.1.3 Advanced GNVQ

To gain an Advanced GNVQ (BTEC/GNVQc 1996) a student must complete fifteen units at level three (See Figure 3.12): eight Mandatory units, four Optional units and three Core skills units. As in the Intermediate, additional units to give vocational focus could be undertaken as 'additionality'. The Advanced GNVQ was meant to be of a roughly similar standard and level to the BTEC National Diploma and is the GNVQ award most relevant to this present study. The units were detailed as follows in Figure 1.14.

## Figure 3.12

**GNVQ Advanced Mandatory Units**

- Organisational and financial structures
- Employment in the performing arts & entertainment industries
- Historical and contemporary contexts
- Work for performance
- Performing work
- Performance technology
- *Planning and managing an event*
- Promoting and presenting an event

**GNVQ Advanced Optional Units**

- Performance in historical context
- Performance arts business skills
- Create a performance
- Investigate the technology of performance
- Performing in a group
- Individual repertoire
- Plan and manage a performance
- Lighting and sound for theatre

**GNVQ Advanced Additional Units**

- Performance skills
- Applied performance skills
- Interpretative and creative skills
- Performance analysis
- Design for performance
- Performance for media
- Performing arts in a community/social context
- Performance cultures

One unique feature of these awards compared to the original BTEC National awards is that the units treat the Performing Arts as if they were a particular discrete subject instead of a range of different disciplines. The wording of the units was made to appear 'generic' so that a statement of 'outcome' and statements in the 'elements' could fit any of the Performed Arts. Due to a very poor take up of this model it was soon subject to a revision which will be described below.

Each GNVQ unit consists of a number of elements, usually three or four (BTEC/GNVQa). Each element lays out the skills, knowledge and understanding in detail, and indicates how the student should present evidence of these (BTEC/GNVQb 1996) and (BTEC/GNVQc 1996). The components of an element are:

- Performance criteria
- Range
- Evidence indicators

with

- Amplification
- Guidance

The BTEC suites of GNVQ units are accompanied by comprehensive guides which give much explanation of the system in use. It differs considerably from the National Diploma system in as much as all of the units are of one unit value and all of the units have the same format of unit title, element titles and performance criteria. In each case all of the performance criteria must be achieved before a unit can be passed. Perhaps the most significant difference between the original National Diploma and GNVQ qualifications is that the GNVQ at Advanced level requires external testing of the mandatory units. The pass mark is set at 70%, and the tests are machine marked in a fixed response format using multiple choice questions.

A detailed example using two units with similar subject matter will make the distinction between the National Diploma and the Advanced GNVQ clearer. They are:

- The 'Arts Administration' core unit from the 1987 draft guidelines for the National Diploma in Performing Arts .
- Unit 2 of the 1996 Advanced GNVQ "Employment in the Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries".

Figure 3.13

ARTS ADMINISTRATION Unit Value 1.0. Core Unit Year 2
Unit Number: 720D

RATIONALE

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

AIMS

1. To give the students an understanding of the funding arrangements between companies and venues.
2. To enable students to work within the legal and industrial relations constraints.
3. To introduce aspects of marketing relevant to arts promotion.
4. To develop the students' competence in financial management and administration.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES

On completion of this unit the student should be able to:

a. Identify the ways of financing performances.
b. Assist with the preparation of a standard Grant Aid application.
c. Apply for a copyright licence.
d. Comply with employment and Health and Safety At Work Act legislation relevant to performance.
e. Appreciate when specialist legal advice is needed.
f. Complete the form for a standard contract between a company and a venue.
g. Identify an audience profile.
h. Assist with the selection and promotion of an arts programme.
i. Prepare a press release.
j. Prepare and control a simple budget for a performance.
k. Set up a basic administrative system for ticket sales, wage payments and the handling of cash.

In fig. 3.13 , there are three sections at the start of the unit specification: rationale, aims and principal objectives. This covers the whole of the unit and the number of assignments in order to achieve this is decided by the delivery team in accordance with the situation at their particular centre. They may wish to associate with other performance areas (if the school/college has other appropriate courses). They may even be able to combine the needs of the assignment or some part of the activities with 'work experience' especially if it is in a Performing Arts environment.

**Figure 3.14**

Advanced GNVQ Mandatory Unit Specification (1997)

Unit 2: Employment in the performing arts and entertainment industries (Advanced)

1. This unit introduces students to employment in the performing arts and entertainment industries. Students analyse the contexts for employment in terms of contracts, employment trends, working conditions and statutory requirements. They research working roles and responsibilities within performing arts and entertainment organisations, and assess opportunities and requirements for their own future employment within the sector.

2. This unit aims to offer insight into the mixed employment profiles that most performers are likely to experience. It is important that centres remind students of the possibilities across the range of disciplines, as in Unit 1.

3. This unit complements Unit 1 and provides an important context for all the units that follow.

Element 2.1: Analyse contexts for employment

**PERFORMANCE CRITERIA (PCs)**
**A student must:**

- describe **contractual arrangements** in **vocational areas** of the performing arts and entertainment industries
- **analyse employment trends** in vocational areas of performing arts and entertainment industries
- describe **working conditions** in vocational areas of performing arts and entertainment industries
- explain implications of changes in **working conditions**
- describe **statutory requirements** for different types of employment

In Fig.3.14 the GNVQ unit identifies three aims and then presents element 2.1 'Analyse contexts for employment' which is followed by a series of five Performance Criteria. It will be seen therefore that the early statement of aims in the unit is further broken down into a series of elements the first of which is shown in Fig 3.14. The complete structure of a GNVQ Core Unit 7 (Planning and Managing and Event) showing all of the elements and their associated Performance Criteria is shown in BTEC/GNVQa

These Performance Criteria are in fact somewhere between the aims and objectives of the National Diploma specification but they are much more specific. Furthermore the GNVQ in Performing Arts & Entertainment Industry is intended to be 'totally generic'.

In the National Diploma specification the objectives and indicative content are followed by two notes on implementation. In the GNVQ, the Performance Criteria and Range Statements are followed by the Evidence Indicators which are clear statements of the nature of the evidence to be produced in order the achieve competence. Only after this is there a section on the amplification of the highlighted words which appeared in the 'range' and also a statement of guidance for teachers which also has the merit of linking into other elements and also into other units.

## 2.2 Core Skills

All three levels of the GNVQ framework, it should be noted, required the inclusion of mandatory core skills units which were originally to be taught within the vocational elements alongside the learning assignments. These became part of a separate programme which were developed by NCVQ for the awarding bodies and which eventually evolved into 'key skills'. The core skill units are in three areas: the application of number, communication, and information technology. Guidance on the assessment of core skills as well as the assessment and grading system is published by NCVQ. The grading system has been much criticised (Capey 1995). It is quite complex consisting of two broad grading themes: process and quality of outcomes. The process theme is itself divided into three: planning; information seeking and information handling; and evaluation. Following grading on each of these sub-themes it is then necessary to take the whole portfolio and decide which third will be submitted to gain a grade for the whole qualification.

# 3 Further Developments of the BTEC National Diploma

Following the election in May 1997 the new government made it known that for the present time it would allow the continuance of certain qualifications which GNVQ was meant to replace. This signalled a major change in the national policy context and it was generally understood that the National Diploma in Performing Arts would be one of those allowed to continue. The registrations for this qualification and its associated qualifications [First Award & Popular Music] were continuing at a high level (see Figures 3.2, 3.3 &3.4 above). Accordingly officers at Edexcel/BTEC

decided that they would update the 1987 'National' programme which had not until that time had other than a draft publication.

Following consultation and a small research programme they decided to replace the Performing Arts single qualification with six vocationally focused qualifications one for each of the component disciplines of the Performing Arts (Appendix 4). The titles chosen were:

- National Diploma in Drama
- National Diploma in Dance
- National Diploma in Performance Technology
- National Diploma in Music
- National Diploma in Popular Music
- National Diploma in Music Technology

Expert unit writers were hired for each of the six qualifications, and the Researcher had to edit the whole programme which eventually involved eighty-one separate units. The new programmes followed a pattern of eight core units (in some cases these would be common to a number of the programmes) and eight option units to be selected from a lengthy list with the opportunity of importing up to four units from other programmes. The total number of units was 16 with no provision for Common Skills. Drama, Dance and Technical Theatre which shared an almost identical core provided a good continuance of the 1987 Performing Arts structure as students could work together within a common core and do separate activities from their particular chosen performance field. There were some interesting developments in the Music field. First of all a National Diploma in Music and a National Diploma in Popular Music formalised a situation which had previously existed in an ad hoc way. Second the appearance of a National Diploma in Music Technology provided a published

structure which was accredited - something which had been desired for a long time. Furthermore it meant that the Music Technology programmes would now be completely within the Performing Arts subject area and this would remove the problem of quality control under science previously described.

A consultation exercise with numerous colleges was held and, following amendment, the programmes were published in August 1999 for implementation from September 2000. During the intervening period a great deal of activity was being generated around National Diplomas and GNVQs nationally, and within Edexcel there was a restructuring of personnel and many staff changes. This resulted in a change to the core units for Music Technology (which was not put out to consultation) and consequently the whole print run of guidelines had to be republished to embody this change.

Colleges who wished to continue offering a National Diploma in Performing Arts after the original regulations were terminated applied to offer the new specifications. Their External Verifiers were enabled to 'fast-track' approval subject to their fulfilling the necessary resource requirements. While preparations were going on in colleges and schools to implement this change, it became apparent that simultaneously the GNVQ had been undergoing its own major revisions and that it was to consist in future of twelve units and be equivalent to two A levels (An A level being equal to six units). This meant that centres which wished to run the National Diploma (16 units) would be funded at the same rate as a GNVQ but would be delivering four additional units of teaching. This had serious implications for resourcing and timetabling.

As a consequence, a further modification of the National Diplomas was undertaken so that the 16 units would be increased to18 to equal three A levels, while a National "Certificate" would be 12 units (equal to two A levels), and an "Award" of six units would be introduced (equal to one A Level). At the time of writing this has only recently been approved by QCA in order to bring it into line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It is intended that it will become available from September 2002 but External Verifiers for the Performing Arts (including the Researcher) has not been appraised of the nature of the content nor sent any materials to study making it difficult to answer queries from centres for which they are responsible. What is known from the Edexcel/BTEC website is that it will consist of no less than 37 separate titles to accommodate all of the diverse specialisms and the three types of qualification (Diploma, Certificate and Award).

## 4 Further Developments in the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment industries

Within the lifetime of the first intake of students onto the original GNVQ in Performing Arts and the Entertainment Industries and before any students had actually completed the award, the GNVQ was subject to revision in 1997/98 At meetings of the Subject Advisory Committee (SAC) with NCVQ, a restructuring of the GNVQ was agreed. The original version had not proved to be quite so successful in the Performing Arts as it had been in other subject areas such as Business Studies, Leisure and Tourism. The mandatory units of the rewritten GNVQ were once again produced by officers of NCVQ and the optional units were once again to be provided

by each of the three awarding bodies (Edexcel/BTEC, City & Guilds and RSA). As meetings progressed during 1997 various units were presented to the committee and approved including the full suite of option units from BTEC (for which the Researcher was responsible).

Shortly after this the Subject Advisory Committee ceased to meet and the whole structure of the units was altered ***yet again*** in line with a new directive. Consequently the revision exercise which had reached the stage of a final draft for consultation was aborted. The awarding bodies were required to start again using a different format for unit specification. This new format was based upon the need to have a twelve unit GNVQ (equal to two A-levels) and a six unit GNVQ (equal to one A- level). The new unit structure had the merit of being clearly written in terms of the unit objectives which no longer employed elements or performance criteria, but identified the criteria for assessment and the evidence to be produced for each criterion. It also meant that each single unit would have its own overall grading (as had always been the case with the BTEC National Diploma and had been recommended by the Capey report). Then at a conference in the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre London, on March 8th 2000 Baroness Blackstone in her ministerial capacity announced from the platform, **"As of now"** (original emphasis) the Advanced GNVQ would be known as Advanced Certificate in Vocational Education (AVCE). This was to implement a promise which had been made by the new Government in 1997 following Dearing's recommendation for Advanced GNVQs to be called "Applied A-Levels".

The new GNVQ and the new National Diploma were therefore beginning to move closer together in the way that they were structured and both were being brought into

line with a single credit framework that also embraced A and AS levels. But whereas the National Diploma had been developed with reference to the experience and views of practitioners one could argue that the GNVQ/AVCE was 'handed down from above' i.e. first from NCVQ and then from QCA. As one New Developer [ND1] interviewee put it:

"We developed something [the National Diploma] which the centres liked because it had all the motivational pull for the students. It did the things they wanted it to do. It gave them a strong educational framework but the GNVQ had come from a different mind-set. It was DTI inspired."

**5. Conclusions**

The time-line chart in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1) shows how closely together in terms of time were the updates and the implementation of revisions for the various forms of National Diplomas and the GNVQ. The result of this was a mix of types of programme being delivered simultaneously in centres with the potential for considerable confusion on the ground.

Several themes seem to emerge from the record of what happened. These are:

- Contrasting approaches to policy formulation and implementation.
- The generalist versus specialist tension.
- The Pressure to rationalise.

Each will be considered more fully below

## 5.1 Contrasting Approaches to Policy Formulation and Implementation

Williams (1999) quotes an NCVQ official as saying that the government "wanted something that they could talk about in the 1992 General Election - an initiative". He goes on to point out that "the haste with which the GNVQ policy was developed and implemented was necessary if the then Prime Minister – John Major – was to proclaim it as an important part of his vision of Britain as a meritocracy before the general election during the Spring of 1992".

Such a top-down, almost cavalier, approach to policy formation, and what is perceived as the lack of adequate consultation before implementation, recurs as a theme in the research literature on GNVQ ( e.g. Williams 1999), in the documentation consulted (e.g. FEFC 1996) and in the interview responses. For example, one of the New Developers (a BTEC official) argued that "the GNVQ experiment (in Performing Arts) was an unmitigated disaster, the reason being that it was largely a 'top down' exercise with no consultation with the teachers until they had finally proven that it couldn't work". He was keen to point out that in his opinion there is a "strong regulatory presence over us". He complained that the regulatory presence was "people who had not taught for years, had not been in a centre for years, and had not consulted with teachers and staff." He also complained that "when it doesn't work they say BTEC got it wrong after they have told us to make a mess of it".

Prior to the launch of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industry in 1997 there was great pressure coming upon BTEC from NCVQ who were very

committed to the Performing Arts GNVQ. BTEC had to modify its part of the GNVQ in Performing Arts in order to get it accepted by NCVQ. One interviewee explained that they "had to put in a big 'wodge' of business speak", i.e. business expectations which centres often could not come to terms with. Meanwhile they could include very little by way of performance skills opportunities which is what the centres wanted. Two quotations from the interviewees make this point forcibly:

"The mission of the chairperson was to provide Performing Arts students with the business skills that they need to survive in the world after they had failed to become stars and this was the premise for all NCVQ intervention in the development of the Performing Arts GNVQ. Basically they wanted a quasi business qualification dressed up as a Performing Arts qualification and they called it "Vocationalising Performing Arts".

References to the 'chairperson' come from experiences at the Subject Advisory Committee meetings where the line encouraged by NCVQ was to concentrate upon the need to prepare students for work in some form of administration on the assumption that students would not reach the stardom they hoped for. The structure of the original GNVQ (BTEC/GNVQa)) reflected this. Many of the committee members argued against this line claiming that it would have a devastating effect upon recruitment. The Researcher (who was at these meetings) can attest that on one occasion the Principal of one of the country's largest Conservatoires left the meeting stating that his organisation would have nothing to do with such a qualification. The dilemma was caught in the next quotation:

"You either prepare the people to become dancers, musicians or actors, or you prepare them to run Arts Centres and become business people. It is this latter route which they were being pushed down in the GNVQ." The effects of this would be most apparent in centres with a limited resource base possibly leading to low expectations of students' performance skills. In a GNVQ where the students were expected to have a realistic opportunity to develop, "they would get the Business Studies expertise needed to organise a performance on a school stage and that was about it yet they went off potentially with the new Performing Arts qualification".

With events giving rise to attitudes such as these it is not surprising to find at least one interviewee complaining that the GNVQ "was a code word for lower expectations and lower standards of work".

The contrast with the evolutionary development of the National Diploma and associated awards in the Performing Arts field could not be greater - as the historical record earlier in the chapter has shown. Most of the initiatives came 'bottom up' from centres themselves, quite different approaches to specialisation were accommodated, and revisions were consulted on before being formalised.

However, the impact of the GNVQ and the National Qualification Framework have been sufficiently powerful in the last four years for a more dirigiste approach to be taken to the BTEC National Diploma programme as well.

## 5.2 The generalist versus specialist tension

Throughout the period of this study a tension has been manifest in the Performing Arts field between those who wanted the prevocational training to be specialist by discipline, and those who strongly favoured a more comprehensive, general approach to the industry. It also manifested itself in the difference between a quest for stardom and a desire to acquire craft skills. One interviewee [ND 1] expressed this point succinctly:

"In the Performing Arts qualification [National Diploma] there had been developed a kind of compromise between stardom and a wish for stardom which some young people have, and associated skills and crafts". "We exploited the former to really develop the latter."

This tension was apparent within the National Diploma stable from the start but it became more acute with the arrival of the GNVQ in Performing Arts in 1997. As it was unlikely that NCVQ/QCA would accept qualifications that were very much in the same area as GNVQs but structured differently, this presented a problem for those rewriting the National Diplomas in Performing Arts in 1997. The new Nationals had to be differentiated from the GNVQ. With the tacit approval of the QCA, this was achieved by thinking of the GNVQ as something 'predominantly generalist' while the National Diplomas were to be more 'specialist'. The result was a set of six discipline specific National Diplomas in place of the previous general National Diploma in Performing Arts.

## 5.3 The Pressure to Rationalise

A primary requirement for the development of a clear National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a reduction in the very large number of 'qualifications' available in the vocational area. The exact number is hard to locate and the Researcher has found that in interviews with QCA and Edexcel officials, estimates of between 14,000 and 17,000 during this period have been suggested. Attempts to rationalise vocational qualifications have been tried on a number of occasions in the past by City & Guilds, by TEC, by BEC and by BTEC. GNVQs were meant to achieve a measure of rationalisation by eliminating the need for BTEC Nationals and associated qualifications. This was in the view of several interviewees a dispiriting period for those committed to the Performing Arts as they believed they had in the National Diploma an accredited course which was finding increasing favour with both schools and colleges; its loss would be problematic. Some respondents have pointed to the very real fear at the time that the future of BTEC itself might be at stake, although interestingly two of the New Developer group of interviewees believed that there had never been an intention to replace all qualifications with the GNVQ. Nevertheless, under this perceived pressure, BTEC steered revisions of existing programmes and the development of new ones into a compliant form.

Further, both the DfEE and QCA used the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to rationalise provision. Programmes with too few participants were denied inclusion in the NQF and therefore the means to educational funding. Small courses within the Performing Arts were threatened under this regime. However, as events showed, it

was not all plain sailing for the Government. The BTEC Nationals were in the end allowed to remain, albeit differentiated from their GNVQ 'competitor'. One of the respondents who had been employed by Edexcel pointed out that NCVQ had been unable to scrap every unwanted qualification because the awarding bodies such as BTEC still had the power to run them. Nevertheless all new courses had to conform to the NQF and an accreditation board in the form of NCVQ existed. Past courses were allowed to continue provided they were funded by FEFC and went onto what was then called the Schedule 2 A list. All specialist advisors associated with BTEC courses (including the Researcher) were sent a document from which they were to select courses which were deemed to be 'worthy' of this new accreditation. A breakdown of the Performing Arts area was prepared and this is presented below in Figure 3.15. It will be seen that it was a precursor to the revised BTEC Nationals with a group of six qualifications – each in a specific performance discipline. (S2a stands for Schedule 2a – i.e. the programmes which would be eligible to receive FEFC funding at that time.)

**Figure 3.15**

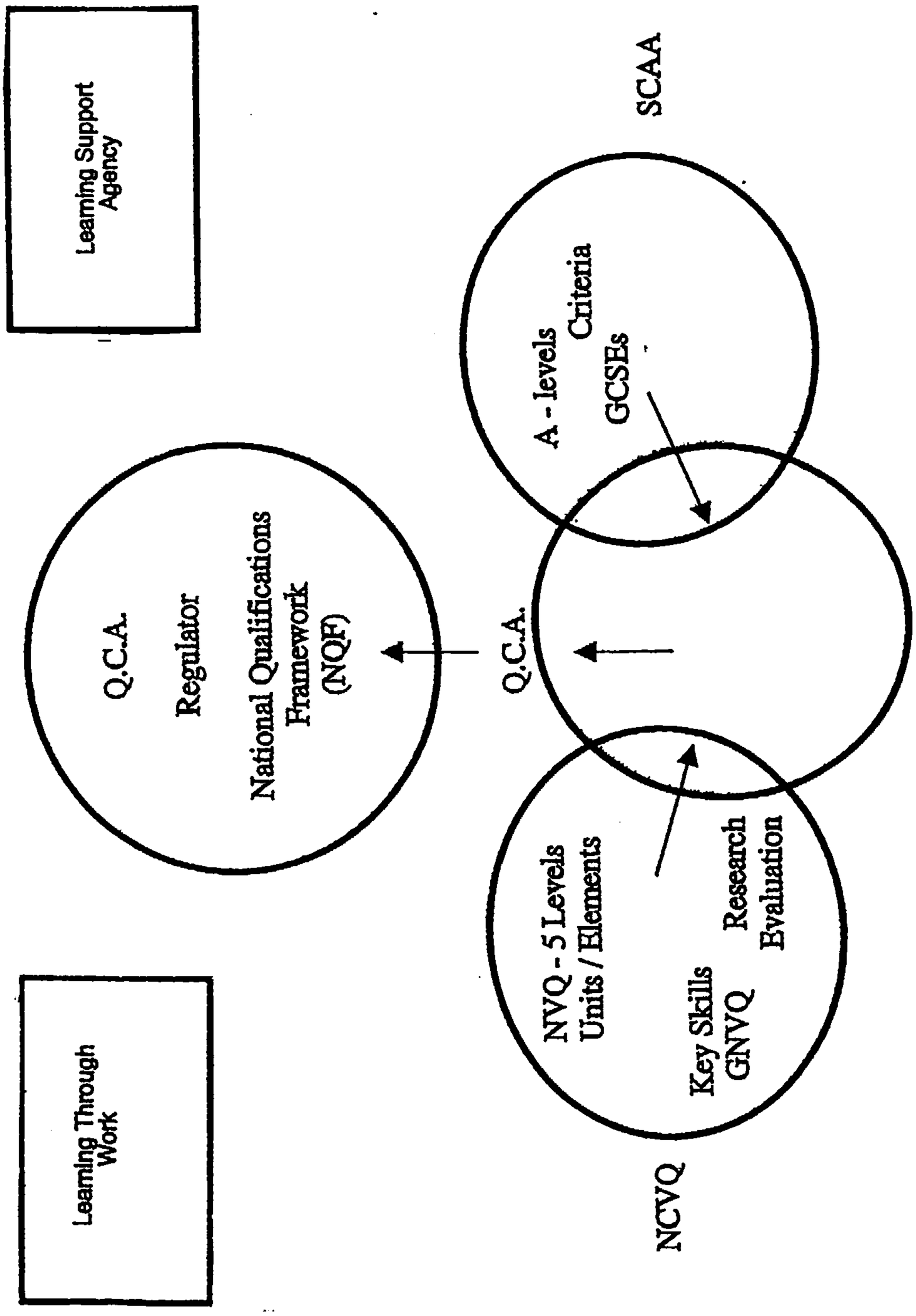
| Current titles will be removed from S2a from September 2000/2001 **(i.e. no new registrations from that time-students already registered will be funded to complete their programmes)** | **New title approved for S2a by QCA/DfEE from Sept 1999/2000** |
|---|---|
| **National Diplomas in:** | **National Diplomas in:** |
| Performing Arts | Dance |
| Performing Arts | Drama |
| Applied Theatre Design<br>Costume and Styling<br>Costume Design<br>Technical Theatre Studies | Technical Theatre |
| Performing Arts<br>Performing Arts (Music Production And Performance)<br>Performing Arts (Music)<br>Music Techniques And Performance<br>Performing Arts (Popular Music)<br>Performing Arts (Rock And Pop)<br>Popular Music | Popular Music |
| Performing Arts<br>Performing Arts (Music Production And Performance)<br>Performing Arts (Music)<br>Music Techniques And Performance | Music |
| Performing Arts<br>Performing Arts (Music Production And Performance)<br>Performing Arts (Music)<br>Music Techniques And Performance<br>Music Technology | Music Technology |

By 2000 all of the themes explored in this section had played a part in shaping the policy environment. In this connection during the interview ND 5 drew a helpful diagram of that environment as she experienced it. The Researcher presents a refined version in Figure 3.16 as an aid to understanding the shifting pressures referred to previously.

At the lower level the three circles represent the NCVQ with its concerns and expertise, and those of SCAA, both of which come together in the centre to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Moving up to the top level new agencies/initiatives appear at the left and right. These are Learning Through Work which includes the concept of modern apprenticeship and the Learning Support Agency which is a developmental organisation. In the centre there is QCA with the role of 'regulator' to establish a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) .Figure 3.16 summarizes the 'policy environment' during 2001 as seen by one participant but there can be no guarantee that it will remain unaltered given the experience of the last five years.

Figure 3.16




**The Changing Policy Environment (Intervieweee ND5)**

## 5.4 Summary

This review of the historical background shows that, in relation to Research Question 2, the cause of the changes taking place in the BTEC National Diploma qualifications was a national policy decision to ensure a uniform standard of excellence. This is articulated in the structure of the newly introduced GNVQ (latterly the AVCE) and in the requirement for all other approved courses to be validated within the National Qualifications Framework. The 'nature' of the changes intended to facilitate this, however, show a lack of forethought in the pattern of their introduction. This is evidenced by the rapidity with which one change is overlaid upon the previous one before that has had the opportunity to be fully tested. Similarly, the requirement to rationalise the number of approved courses does not match the third version of the National Diploma (introduced before the second version has had its first graduates) with no less than thirty-seven course titles!

The findings from the Questionnaires will be explored in the next chapter to see how far the course contents and structures met the needs of students' vocational training requirements.

# Chapter 4

# Findings of the Survey Research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# Findings of the Survey Research

## Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the two questionnaire surveys will be presented together with evidence from the interviews, particularly those with the Front Line Troops. From the questionnaires, a collation of biographic data will be presented first, followed by the results pertaining to issues in the Research Questions. These will all be extended by the data from the interview surveys. In handling both the student and staff questionnaire responses 'internal variables' derived from characteristics and career choice patterns were used in Chi-square analysis to broaden the results available. (See Chapter 2 and the Tables of Internal Variables set out below). Where this analysis is applied, the critical value of Chi square is 3.84 at *p* equals '.05' or 6.64 at *p* equals '.01' with *df* equal to '1'. These results, or better, are treated in the text as indicating a 'significant' result which is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. Nevertheless, the reader needs to remember that a significant result at the 5% level is not that strong, and may arise as a consequence of the statistical measure used (i.e. Type I Error). In the sections which follow the 'significant' responses in the Chi-square calculations are presented as percentages in the charts and whole numbers are given in the text boxes.

Responses to the questionnaires are shown in Appendix 2 and the appropriate items are tabulated in Appendix 3

# 1 Biographic Data

## 1.1 Student Questionnaire

Items 1, 2, 4 and 5 deal with gender, age on enrolment, full or part-time status and ask if additional subjects are being studied.

There is a clear gender difference in the recruitment on the National Diploma in Performing Arts. One third of the students is male and two thirds are female. This is exactly the same in each sub-group.

Eighty-seven percent of the overall population on the programmes was in the 16 - 19 age band when they started the course. However the Specialist centre showed 99% (151 students) had enrolled under the age of 19 compared to 81% in FE centres. Despite the name City Technology College this is a school and students progress to the sixth-form as a normal procedure, the fairly rigorous audition requirements having been satisfied at an even earlier age.

Full-time students are in a clear majority. Most of the part-time enrolments would be generated by students on the National Certificate which is not a likely event within a school. This is borne out by the fact that only one student in the school (Specialists) claimed to be part time.

Students taking an additional subject were evenly split between the Yes and Nos in the overall population but this may have been skewed once again by the unique position of the Specialists who had 70% of the respondents taking other examinations in addition to the Performing Arts Programmes.

In summary one can say that the majority of students were female (outnumbering the males by two to one). The majority of students (87%) overall had commenced the course under the age of 19 and 97% were full-time students. In addition to their studies on the Performing Arts Diploma course 49% of the students overall were studying a GCSE or A-level subject and the proportion in the Specialist school was as high as 70%

Two further items can be included as 'biographical'. Numbers 6 and 11 explore if students have done any paid work in the business and also what their preferred specialist chosen area is. From the overall population less that half (41%) of students have had some experience of paid work in the business, but in the Specialist College it was higher (Appendix 2). The high degree of early specialisation required to gain entry to this school and its proximity to London could be contributory factors for this difference.

Responses for preferred specialism show a preference for a mix of disciplines as a career choice in the FE Colleges. This may be because students are taking advantage of the broad curriculum and keeping their options open. The quite high endorsement (over a quarter) of selections for a career in 'acting' is significant and the Researcher is aware that many centres concentrate upon this discipline to the exclusion of some of the others. This can be a matter of resources deficiencies (e.g. for Dance and Music) as well as recruitment patterns. Music is weakest in the FE sector with only 3% choosing the subject. It may be that the musicians were enrolled for the National Diploma in Popular Music which, at the time of the questionnaire, was recruiting very

well. The Specialist College has a balance between the choices which is enabled by its admissions procedure.

### 1.2 Staff Questionnaire

Items 22 and 23 are concerned with gender and professional experience. In this case there is an even split in the staff between the sexes with only six more males than females. The BTEC course recommendation (BTECa 1987) to include the use of professional performing artists and former professionals is well served in the staffing profile which shows three quarters of the staff to have had experience in performance. Items 25,26,28 and 29 deal with their current occupational characteristics in the role of teachers and lecturers.

The actual teaching profile of the staff sample shows that 91% teach on the National Diploma in Performing Arts, 42% teach on the First Diploma and 19% on GNVQ programmes. The questionnaires were used in 1997/98 which was the first year of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and the Entertainment Industries. Therefore it is likely that any GNVQ commitments were in some other, possibly related, subject area (e.g. Media & Communications).

Nevertheless, more than half of the responding staff claim to being familiar with the structure and content of the GNVQ in Performing Arts.

The subject specialism of staff was probed further in items 30 and 31 by asking staff in which discipline they taught the most and which they regarded as their major subject.

In general, as one would expect, the major areas of expertise reflect the teaching commitments (item 30). In the tables the spread of subject expertise gives some

indication of the options offered by the responding centres. Drama is clearly the most popular of the component disciplines and this is matched by the findings in student numbers and in student career intentions previously analysed. In the case of Dance and Music we have an anomaly as there are more staff claiming them as areas where they have worked professionally and yet have not claimed them as their main teaching subjects.

Having established a picture of the relevant biographic characteristics of the students and staff in the samples one can now address a group of items which are common to both student and staff questionnaires and which deal with the preferred structure of a vocational course for this subject area.

## 2 Training Preferences of the Questionnaire Samples

### 2.1 Students

A group of items deal with preferences of the students concerning the content and mode of delivery of the practical activities. Some of the items are linked to similar questions on the staff questionnaire which enables a range of comparisons to be made especially when the students responses are broken down into FE and Specialist students.

The first of these linked questions was addressed by items 14 to 17 on the questionnaire.

Student questionnaire item 14

A BTEC programme in the Performing Arts should provide training across the **whole range** of Performing Arts.

The replies from all of the students and also from the breakdown into Further Education and the Specialist College are almost identical - within one percentage point of each other. They demonstrate a clear preference for a broad-based curriculum covering all of the performed arts. While one might expect such a response from students who have opted to do this course it nevertheless provides some confirmation of the views of the original course developers who wished to maintain a broad approach. One would also expect from this result that students would find the generalist GNVQ appropriate to their needs.

Student questionnaire item 15

> A BTEC programme in the Performing Arts should concentrate on the students **own particular specialised career area.**

Interestingly, and to some extent in contrast with the response to item 14, this shows a strong level of support for the concept of a single discipline approach. Students are not content with just a broad and introductory acquaintance with the field. They also want to be able to specialise. The National Diploma was, as explained in Chapter 3, designed to achieve just this compromise and appears to have succeeded. The original structure of the GNVQ, by comparison, had more difficulty accommodating the individual disciplines through the concept of 'additional units'.

Student questionnaire item 16

> A BTEC programme in the Performing Arts should concentrate on the student's specialism but also offer some **practical experience** in each of the other Performing Arts.

The preference of all samples is clearly for agreement with the proposition and the result supports the 'compromise' position adopted by BTEC and in a weaker version by GNVQ. FE students show a 93% preference, Specialists show 91% and overall this provides a 92% level of agreement. Unsurprisingly, none of the internal variables is significant.

Student questionnaire item 17

> A BTEC programme in the Performing Arts should concentrate on the students own specialism but provide **some information about** each of the other Performing Arts.

Again, the preference of all groups is in agreement with the proposition. However the preference levels are lower than for the previous item indicating that the students want more than just information. The overall level of agreement is 73%, FE students are at 70% and the Specialists show 78%. Once again there are no significant results on the internal variables.

## 3 Application of the Internal Variables

The tables below show which of the variables have been analysed for both students and staff. Only the results which are significant at the 5% and 1% levels are presented in visual form as histograms. As before the tabulation of all of the items is shown in Appendix 3

**Tables of internal Variables**

**Students**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Male/Female | All Students | Specialists | FE Students |
| **Age** | Below 19<br>19 and above | All Students | Specialists | FE Students |
| **Professional Experience** | Have had<br>Have not had | All Students | Specialists | FE Students |

**Staff**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Status** | Staff | All Students | Specialists | FE Students |
| **Performance Discipline** | Drama | Dance | Music | Technical Theatre |

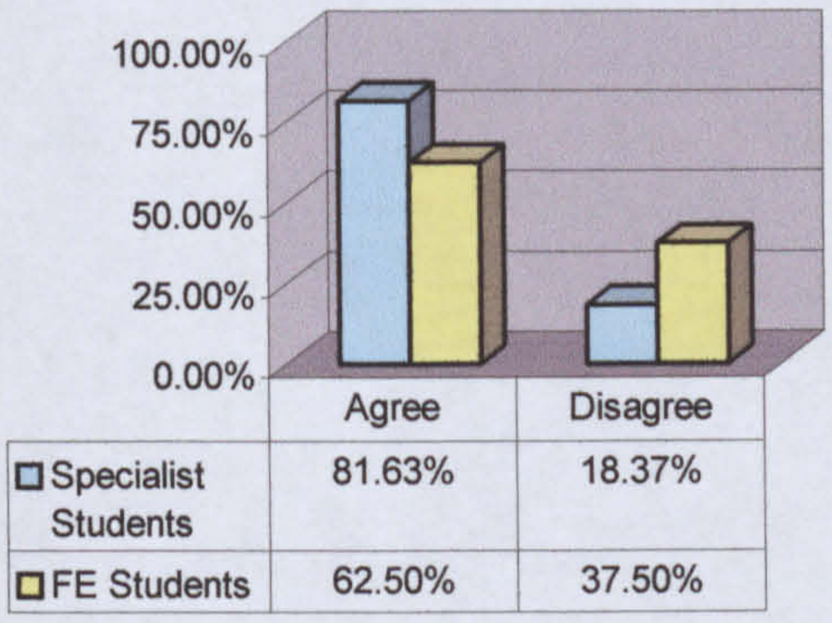
## 3.1 Student Questionnaires

Item 15

> A BTEC programme in the Performing Arts should concentrate on the students **own particular specialised career area.**

Analysis of the internal variables showed that two groups had significant results at the 5% level.

The first were male students and the comparison was between FE and Specialist students.




**Specialist Males** = **49**

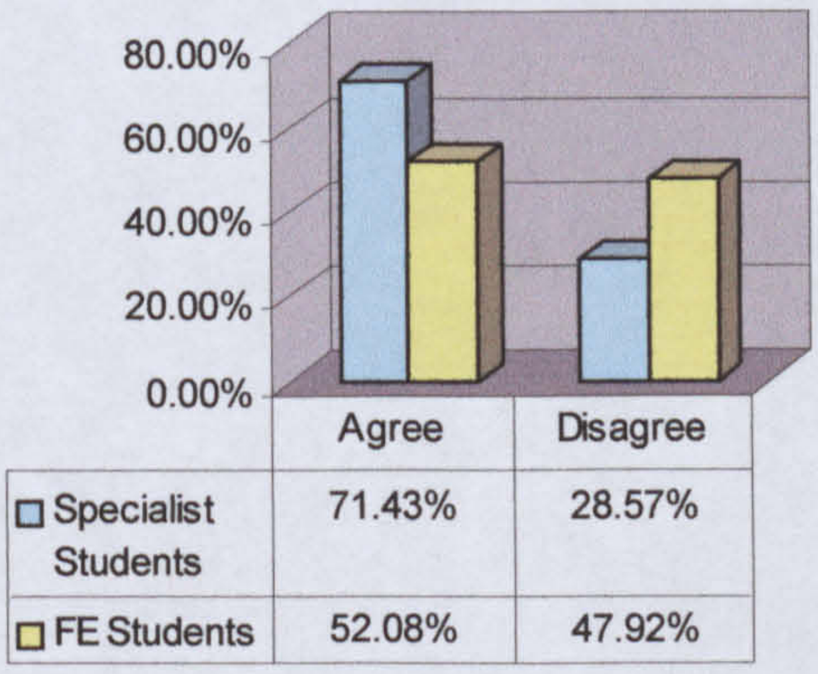
Specialist Females = 102

**FE Males** = **88**

FE Females = 180

The histogram shows that the male students have demonstrated greater preference for concentration upon their chosen performance discipline especially in the Specialist centre. It should be pointed out that they will probably already be doing more work in separate disciplines than students in the FE colleges. The number of males compared to females is in the same ratio for both types of centre (they constitute one third of each population).

The second variable to show a significant result is "students who have had paid professional work":




Students who **have had** paid professional work

**Specialist Centre** = **70**

**FE College** = **96**

Not perhaps surprisingly, the Specialist students with experience of paid work demonstrate a stronger preference (71%) for concentration upon their chosen

performance discipline. The number of Specialist students who have had the opportunity of professional work exceeds those in the Further Education sector although there are more under the age of 19yrs (of the Specialists, 48% have had the opportunity while in FE only 36% have done so). Possibly, the Specialist Institution was by its nature more likely to attract students who had had early contact with the profession during their younger school time. Alternatively, since the particular institution is close to London, the opportunities for young performers may be greater there, and agents may know that the institution exists and approach its students to recruit youngsters for performances.

### 3.2 Staff/Students

Comparisons of the 'training preference' items from both the student and the staff questionnaire responses were analysed. These items go some way to address the research question 1 requirement to evaluate the National Diploma as an 'appropriate' vehicle for vocational training in this field.

Staff questionnaire item 1 (comparison with student questionnaire item 14)

> A BTEC Programme in the Performing Arts should provide students with training across a broad range of disciplines

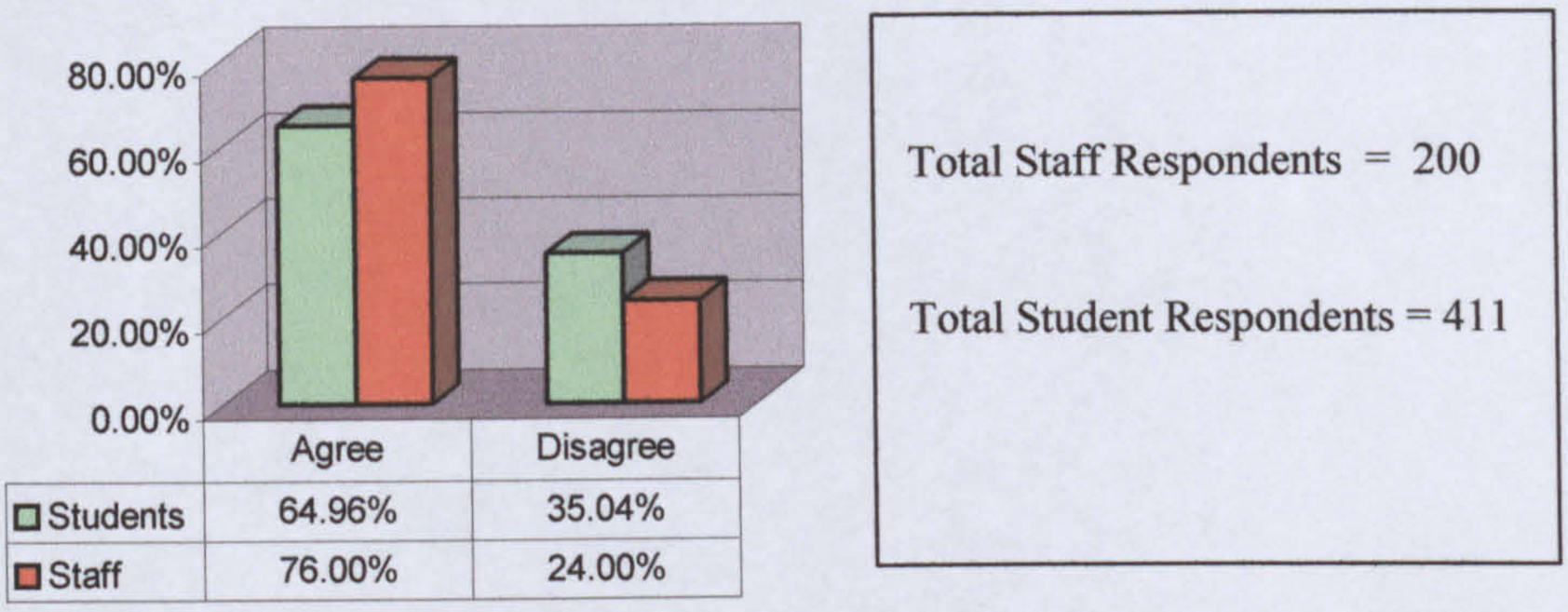
For this item the Staff showed a high proportion (86%) of preferences for the proposition. This matches the situation in the student questionnaire. In this case, tests carried out on each of the variables did not show any to be significant.

Staff questionnaire item 2 (comparison with student questionnaire 15)

> A BTEC Programme in the Performing Arts should enable students to concentrate on their own particular specialised area

Tests identified that students and staff differed in their view significantly at the 1% level with a far greater proportionate endorsement from staff than students.

a/ status (staff and students)

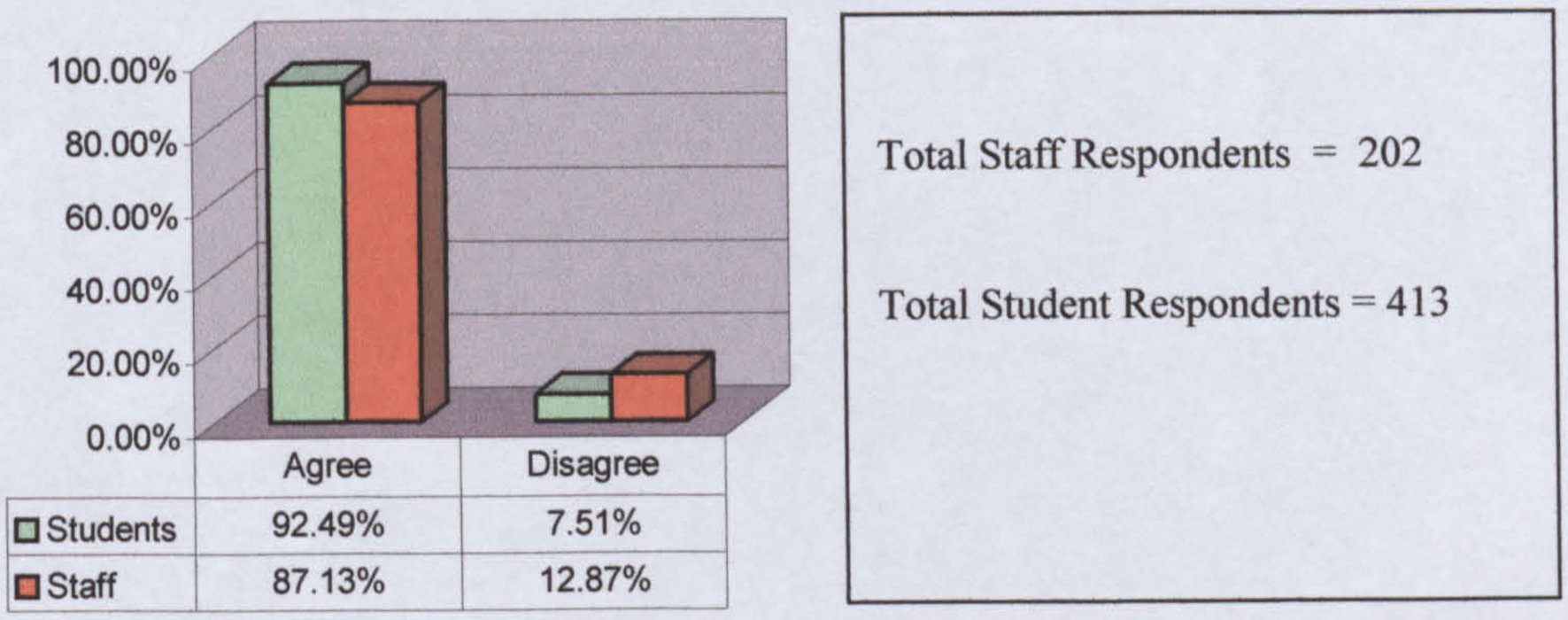



Staff questionnaire item 3 (comparison with student questionnaire item 16)

A BTEC Programme in the Performing Arts should enable students to concentrate on their own specialism but also offer some practical experience in each of the other performing arts

Once again the 'status' variable (staff/students) proved to be significant (but only at the 5% level), but this time with students giving the greater endorsement to the statement.

a/ status (staff/students)



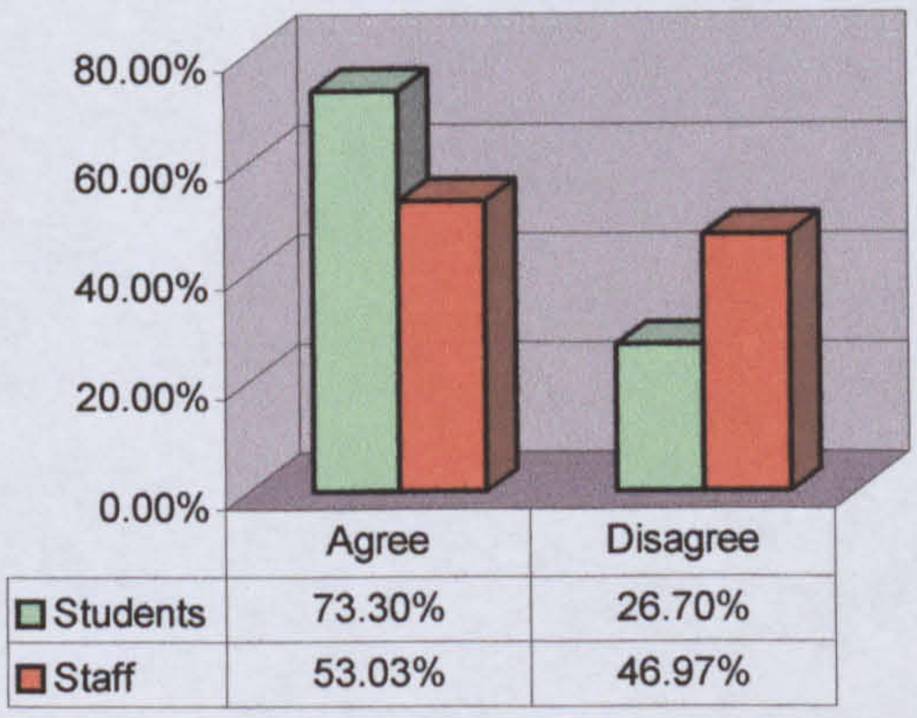
Staff questionnaire item 4 (comparison with student questionnaire 17)

A BTEC Programme in the Performing Arts should enable students to concentrate on their own specialism but also provide information about each of the other performing arts

This item provides an alternative to item three where trainees are to gain **practical experience** of a range of performance disciplines outside of their own chosen area. Here the situation is modified so that trainees would be required to **gain knowledge of** these other disciplines, without actually having to take part.

In the test of the variables one was identified as being significant at the 1% level.

a/ status (staff/students)




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Students | 73.30% | 26.70% |
| Staff | 53.03% | 46.97% |

Total Staff Respondents = 198

Total Student Respondents = 412

Once again the variable which is showing significance is 'status'. The students have nearly three quarters (73%) of their number in agreement with the proposition whereas only just over half the staff (53%) are in agreement.

In this and the previous two items, students appear to be giving more credence to the broader concept of the course design than do their teachers, but the staff are still supportive of it. It is also interesting to note that there is no statistical difference in the views of those staff who have had professional experience and those who have not.

The finding which have been presnted so far regarding the preferences of students and staff for the structure of training are largely supportive of the stance taken by the Original Starters (e.g. Appendix 5, OS 1) to offer a broad based programme with the opportunity to specialise if students choose or if the centre is able to deliver it. This is a positive contibution to elements of Research Question 1.

## 4 Career Perceptions

Research Question 1 also focuses upon students' career intentions and their perceptions as to the benefit of the original National Diploma course in helping them to achieve them. It will be recalled from Chapter 3 that there were major differences of view at the national level as to whether students should be encouraged in their ambitions to be 'star performers' or whether in fact they should, as the GNVQ proposed to do, be tracked into more of a business studies orientation. In the student questionnaires the questions from 19 to 24 were therefore designed to deal with frequently held beliefs about 'getting in' to the profession, i.e. they test the view that being in 'the right place at the right time' is the only route - irrespective of performing ability. The first six items in this group are structured into three pairs 19/20 (drama), 21/22 (music) and 23/24 (dance). The items ask simply if students regard 'ability' or 'good luck' is the major factor in achieving success in entering the profession. As before the questions are mirrored in similar questions on the staff questionnaires.

Following these items a further four were analysed (i.e. 25, 18, 12 and 13)

## 4.1 Students

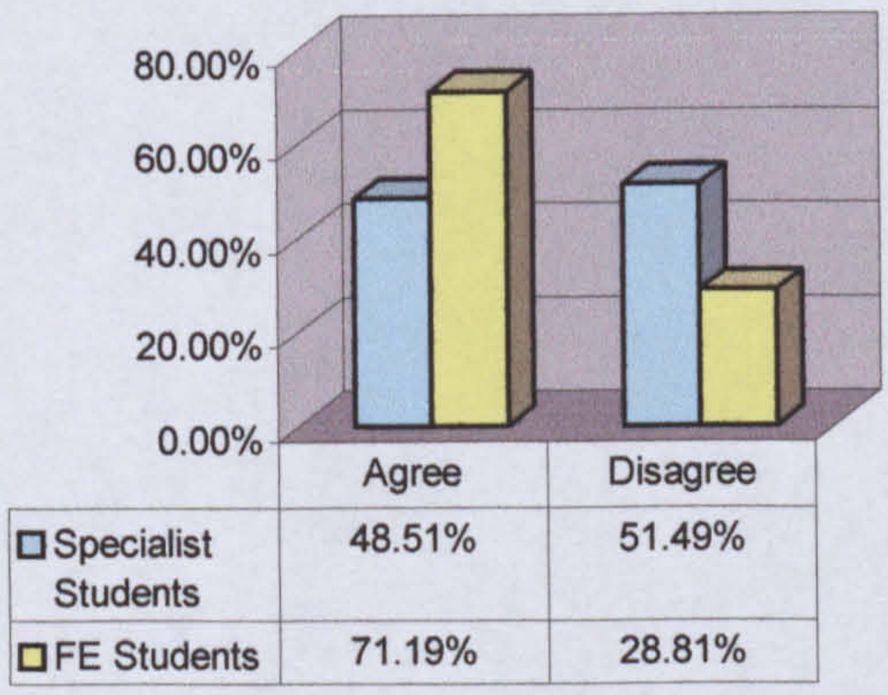
Student questionnaire item 19

> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Drama do so mainly by their acting **ability**.

The results overall show a small majority on the disagreement side of the scale, with just more than half (51%) disagreeing that 'ability' was the most important factor in success in that field. Analysis of the internal variables showed that three of these produced calculations which were significant at the 1% level.

These internal variables were:

a/ gender (females),

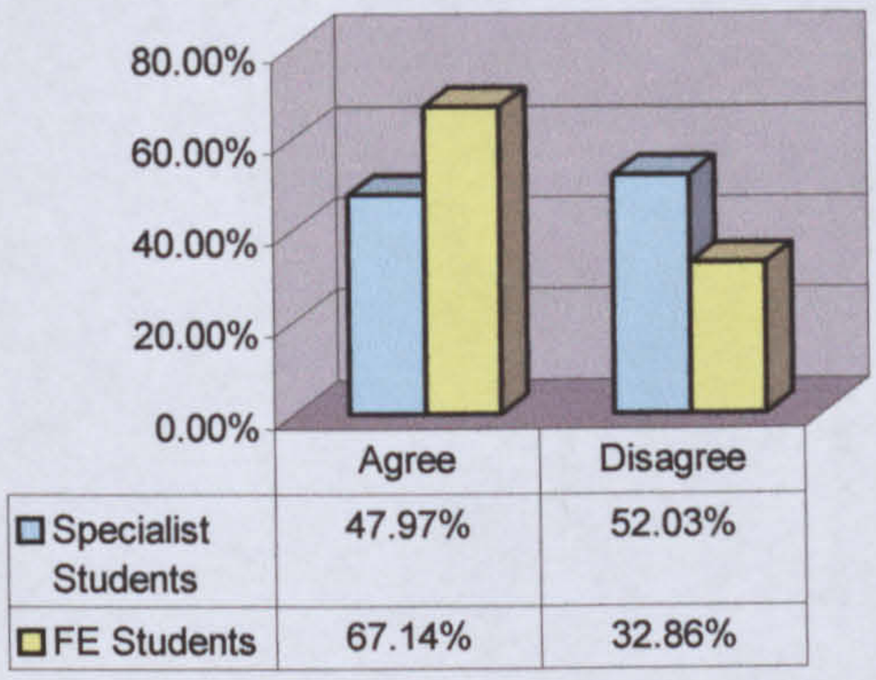



| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Students | 48.51% | 51.49% |
| FE Students | 71.19% | 28.81% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Males | = | 50 |
| **Specialist Females** | = | **101** |
| FE Males | = | 88 |
| **FE Females** | = | **177** |

The Chi-square calculation for female students within the two types of institution proved to be significant at the 1% level. The majority of female FE students (71%) agreed with the proposition, but less than half of the female Specialist students (48%) did so. It is therefore clear that female Specialist students appear to be less likely than female FE students to say that 'ability' is a main factor in achieving success as an actor.

b/ age (under 19)



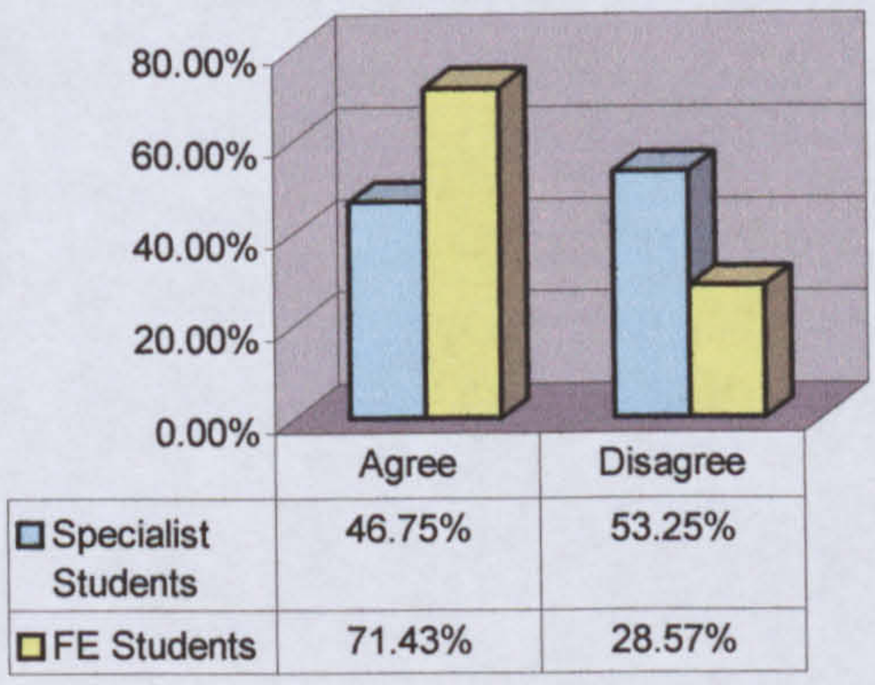

Students under the age of 19

**Specialist institution = 148**

**FE College = 213**

Students under the age of 19 on starting the course produced a significant result at the 1% level. Once again more than half of the young Specialist students disagreed with the proposition.

c/ students with no experience of paid professional work.




Students with **no paid professional experience**

**Specialist Institution = 77**

**FE College = 168**

In this calculation the internal variable was students who had not had any experience of paid professional work. The result was significant at the 1% level with the pattern established in the previous two calculations being repeated. Specialist students with

no experience of paid professional work were much more likely to disagree with the proposition that 'ability' was a main requirement for acting success.

In item 19 there has been a consistent pattern of disagreement from the Specialist students. Surprisingly, perhaps, despite being auditioned for entry and having to meet high standards of performance to gain admission, they had much less faith in 'ability' as the route to success in popular drama than their peers in general FE colleges. Negative responses on item 19 would lead one to expect a positive response to the parallel item 20 below (and vice versa).

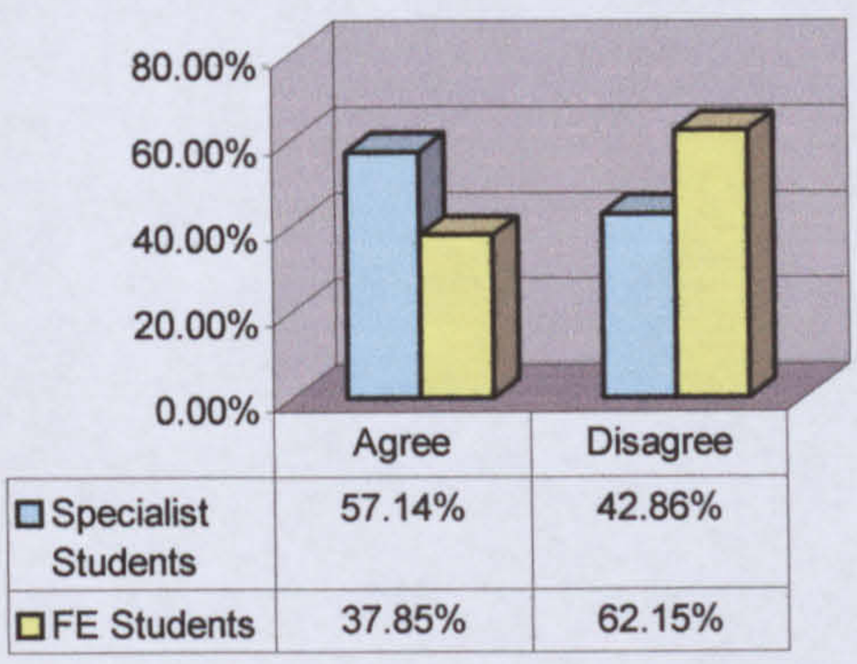
Student questionnaire item 20

> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Drama do so mainly by **good luck.**

It is obvious once again that there is a difference between the Further Education students and the Specialist students. The Specialist students are in agreement with the statement and this is consistent with their position in item 19. Here the percentage was 56% 'in favour' and 44% 'against' whereas the Further Education students disagreed with this statement. In the analysis of the internal variables two proved to be significant.

These were:

a/ gender (females)

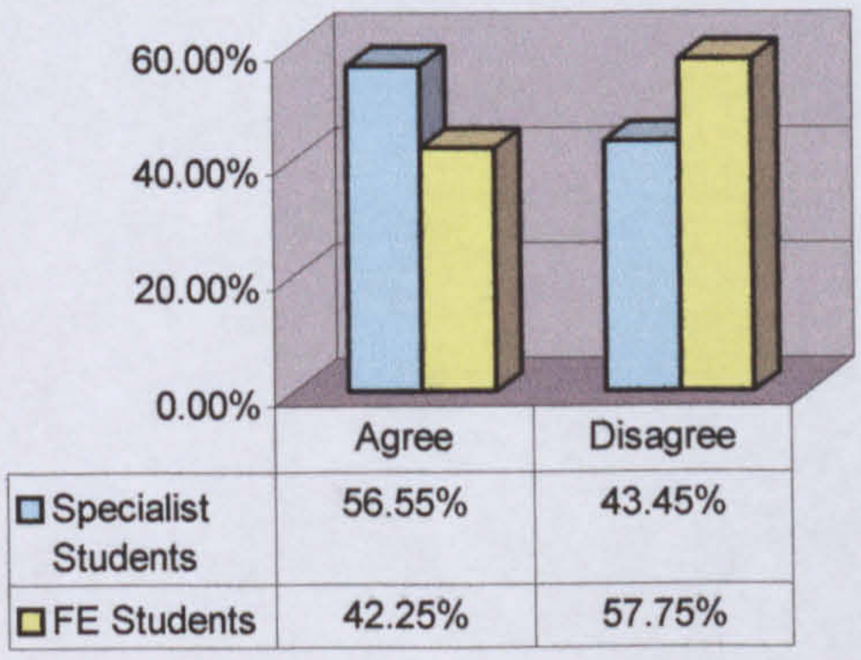



| | |
|---|---|
| Specialist Males | = 50 |
| **Specialist Females** | **= 98** |
| FE Males | = 88 |
| **FE Females** | **= 177** |

This calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level.

Female students in Further Education colleges show a strong disagreement which matches their position in the item 19. Similarly a high proportion (57%) of the Specialist female students agreed with the proposition that good-luck is the dominant requirement for success in acting.

b/ age (students under the age of nineteen)




Students under the age of 19

| | |
|---|---|
| **Specialist institution** | **= 145** |
| **FE College** | **= 213** |

This calculation also proved to be significant at the 1% level and shows that the Specialists and the FE students have opposite viewpoints with 58% of the young

Further Education students disagreeing while 57% of the young Specialists agreed. The pattern of results is consistent with the responses to the previous item (19) and it remains of interest that the Specialists, whom one would have expected by the nature of their training to place a high value on 'ability', are more in favour of 'good-luck' as the path to success.

The next two student questionnaire items (21 & 22) represent the same type of comparison as the previous two items (19 & 20) - ability or good-luck, but they are applied to Popular Music.

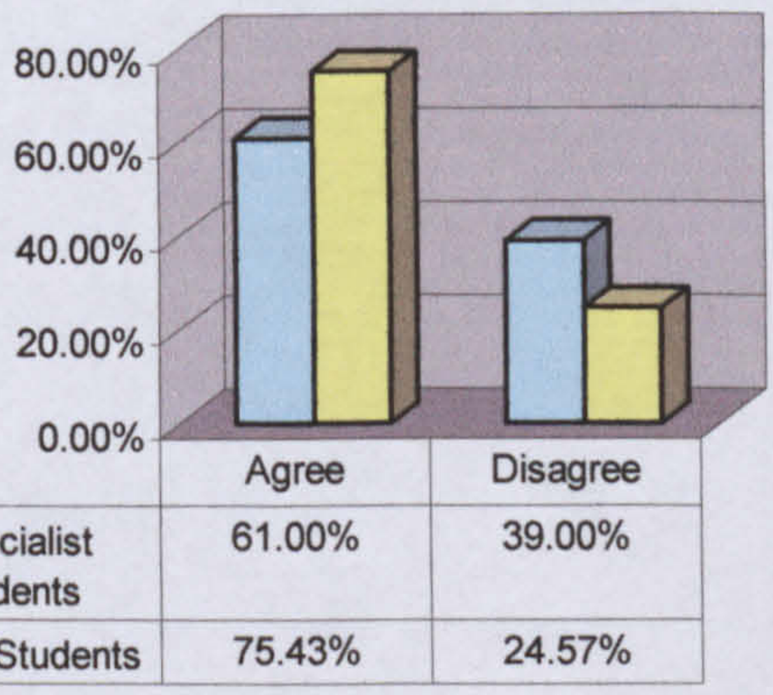
Student questionnaire item 21

> Most of the Artists who achieve success in Popular Music do so mainly by their **musical ability**

There was a high proportion of agreement in all groups of students that ability was the most important factor in achieving success in Popular Music. In testing the internal variables two proved to be significant at the 5% level and one proved to be significant at the 1% level.

These were:

a/ gender (females)




Specialist Males = 50

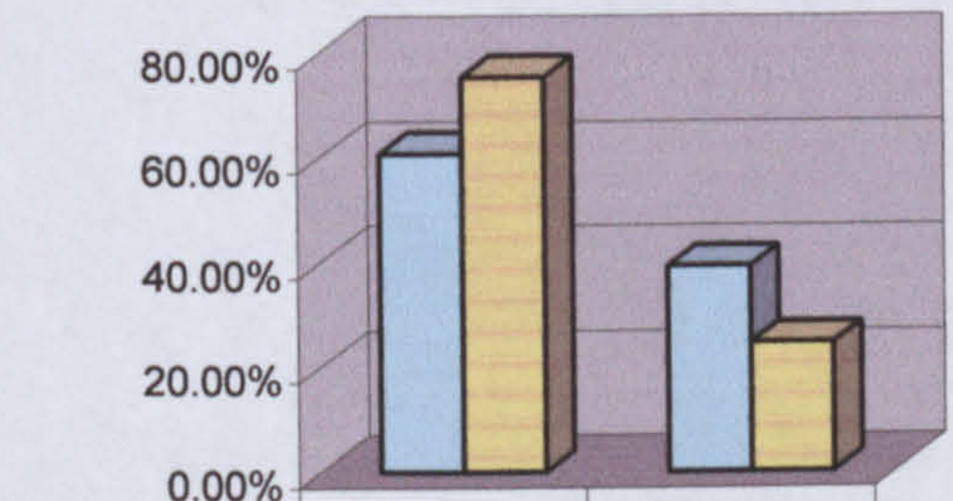
**Specialist Females = 100**

FE Males = 88

**FE Females = 175**

Female students demonstrated a stronger support than males for the statement, especially those in Further Education where three quarters agreed with the statement. The Specialist females showed a lower, (61%) but still high level of agreement with the statement in this item.

b/ age (under 19 on enrolment)




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Students | 60.81% | 39.19% |
| FE Students | 75.36% | 24.64% |

Students under the age of 19

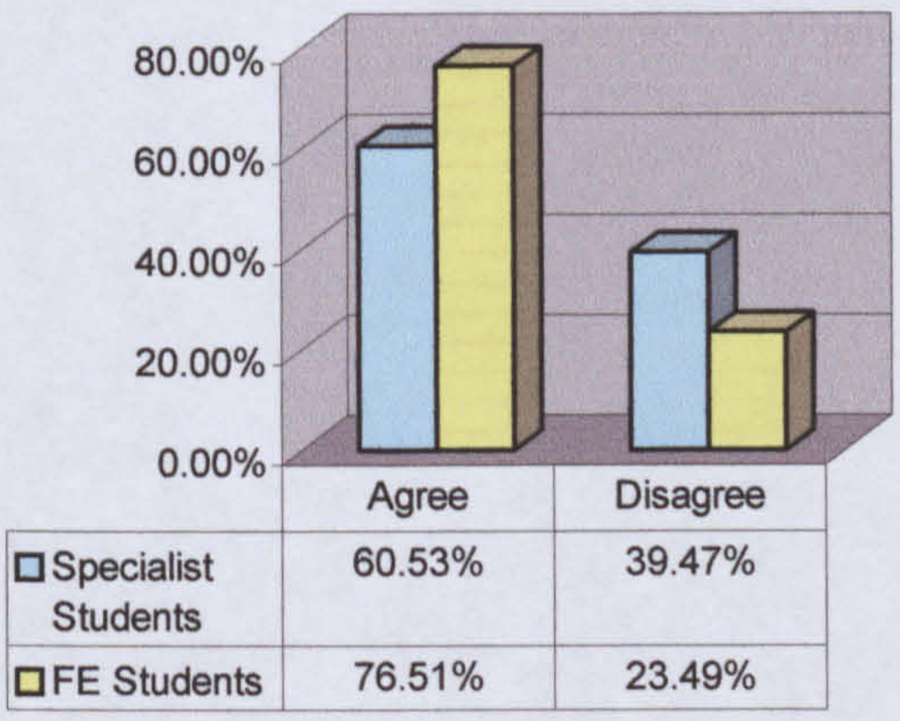
**Specialist institution = 148**

**FE College = 211**

Students under the age of 19 in both types of institution showed a significant result at the 1% level. Three quarters of the young Further Education students were strongly in favour as were three fifths of the young Specialists.

The path to success in Music is clearly different from that for popular drama in the minds of these students and may indicate support for the view that the separate disciplines in the Performing Arts field make very different demands on their professional performers.

c/ no experience of paid professional work




Students with **no paid professional experience**

**Specialist Institution = 76**

**FE College = 166**

This calculation was significant at the 5% level

Just over three quarters of the Further Education students with no experience of paid professional work indicated agreement with the proposition as did three fifths of the Specialists.

Student questionnaire item 22

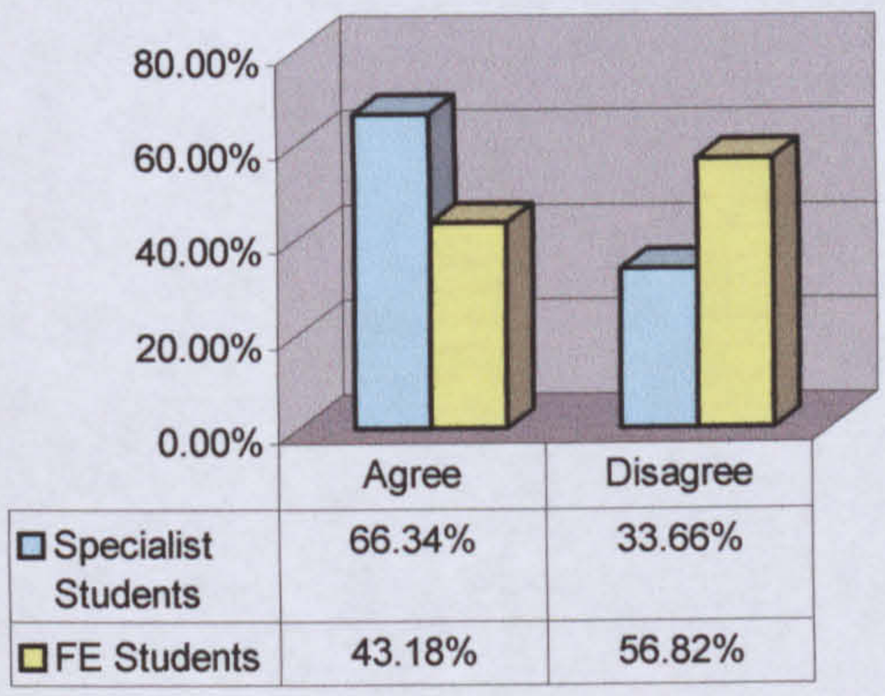
> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Music do so mainly by **good luck.**

Overall most students were in favour of the proposition and agreed that good luck was an important element for success in a career in Popular Music. However in separating out Further Education and Specialist students it was the Specialists who had a high proportion (two thirds) in favour of the proposition with Further education

students having just over half (53%) in disagreement. In the analysis of internal variables there were three which proved to be significant.

These were:

a/ gender (females)




Specialist Males = 50

**Specialist Females = 101**

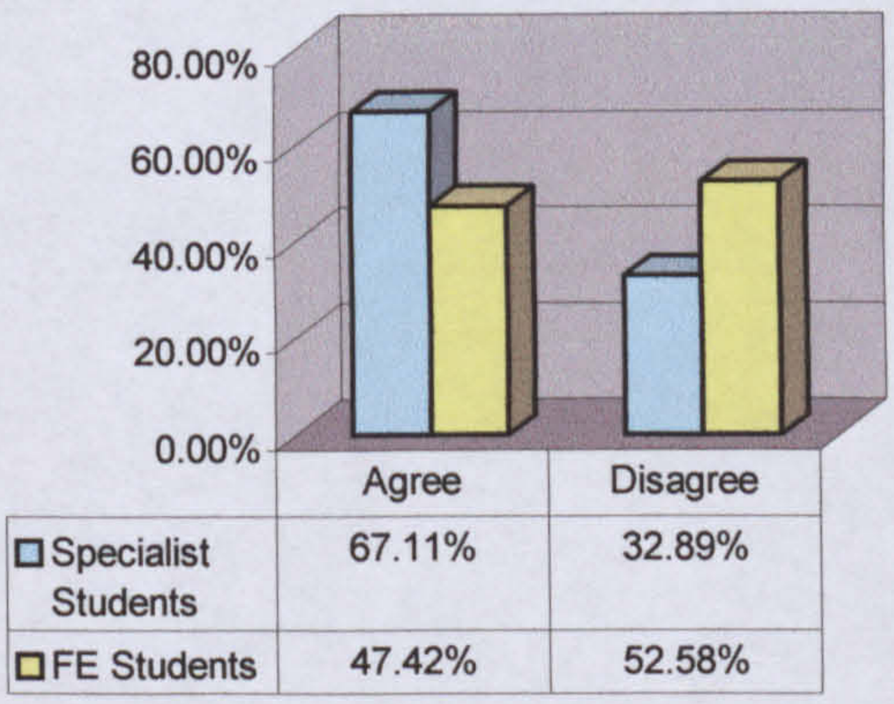
FE Males = 88

**FE Females = 176**

The calculation for this variable shows a significance at the 5% level.

A high proportion (66%) of the female Specialist students were in agreement with the proposition that good-luck was a dominant requirement for success in Popular Music.

b/ age - students under the age of 19




Students under the age of 19

**Specialist institution = 149**

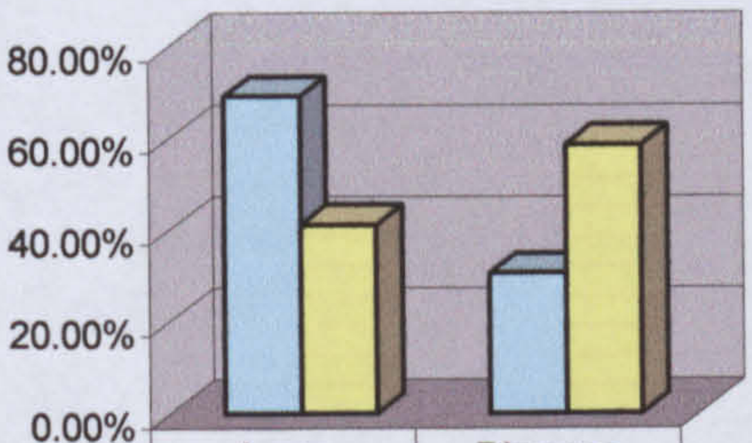
**FE College = 213**

The calculation for this variable shows significance at the 1% level.

Once again, the strongest element in agreement with the statement was a high

proportion of Specialist students under the age of 19 at enrolment (67%) with just over half of the Further Education students (53%) once again in disagreement.

c/ experience of paid work




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Students | 69.44% | 30.56% |
| FE Students | 41.24% | 58.76% |

Students who **have had paid professional work**

**Specific Institution = 72**

**FE College = 97**

The calculation for this variable proves significant at the 1% level.

Of the Students who had had paid work experience, those within the Specialist institution were strongly in favour (69%) of the proposition while 58% of the Further Education students disagreed.

Throughout these three significant chi-square results the common factor is the specialist college and the perception of its students that 'good luck' was an extremely important ingredient in success in this part of the performing arts industry. Again, this might appear counter-intuitive, or in fact realistic, depending on one's experience of the drama and popular music professions.

Items 23 and 24 follow the same routine as 19/20 and 21/22 in that they concern the perceived requirements for success in a performance discipline area as 'ability' or 'good-luck'. In this case the discipline is dance.

Student questionnaire item 23

> Most of the artists who achieve success in dance, do so mainly by their dancing **ability**.

There was strong agreement in all of the groups of students that ability was the most important factor in achieving success in dance. In testing the internal variables none of them proved to be significant at the 5% or 1% levels.

Student questionnaire item 24

> Most of the artists who achieve success in dance, do so mainly by **good luck**.

There was strong feeling demonstrated in all of the groups of students that good-luck was **not** an important factor in achieving success in dance. In testing the internal variables none of them proved to be significant at the 5% or the 1% levels.

It is interesting to note that the responses for dance are quite different to those for Popular Drama and Popular Music. The students have a differentiated 'map' of the different disciplines and they do regard ability as the major factor for achieving success as a dancer.

Student questionnaire item 25

> To achieve lasting success in the Entertainment Business **training is essential**. (Q 25)

In this question the support for the assertion that training is essential for lasting success in the entertainment business was sufficiently strong as to require little further analysis. The positive result could of course be due to the fact that all of the students were actually undertaking a course of training, and were therefore likely to select

what was expected of them. Nevertheless, curriculum designers and policy developers could take some comfort from the result: there is perceived to be more to success than good luck and innate ability. The students' views on training were tested further in the next item.

Student questionnaire item 18

> If someone offered me work in my specialised area I ought to accept it and leave the course.

The results in this question were particularly close with 49% of all students agreeing that they would leave the course in these circumstances and 51% disagreeing. The nearly equal division of opinion was reflected in each of the Further Education and Specialist groups taken separately and none of the internal variables produced a significant result. One can speculate in relation to this result whether the belief in 'good luck' was playing a part in this pattern of response – i.e. that one should seize a promising opening should it arise.

The next two items probed the issue of students' hopes of stardom which had exercised curriculum planners and policy makers in deciding the content of courses.

Student questionnaire item 12

> Achieving international fame as a Performing Artist in my own specialised field is a realistic aim for me

The result is unambiguous. From all groups there was strong positive support (75%) for the statement with a very small minority strongly disagreeing.

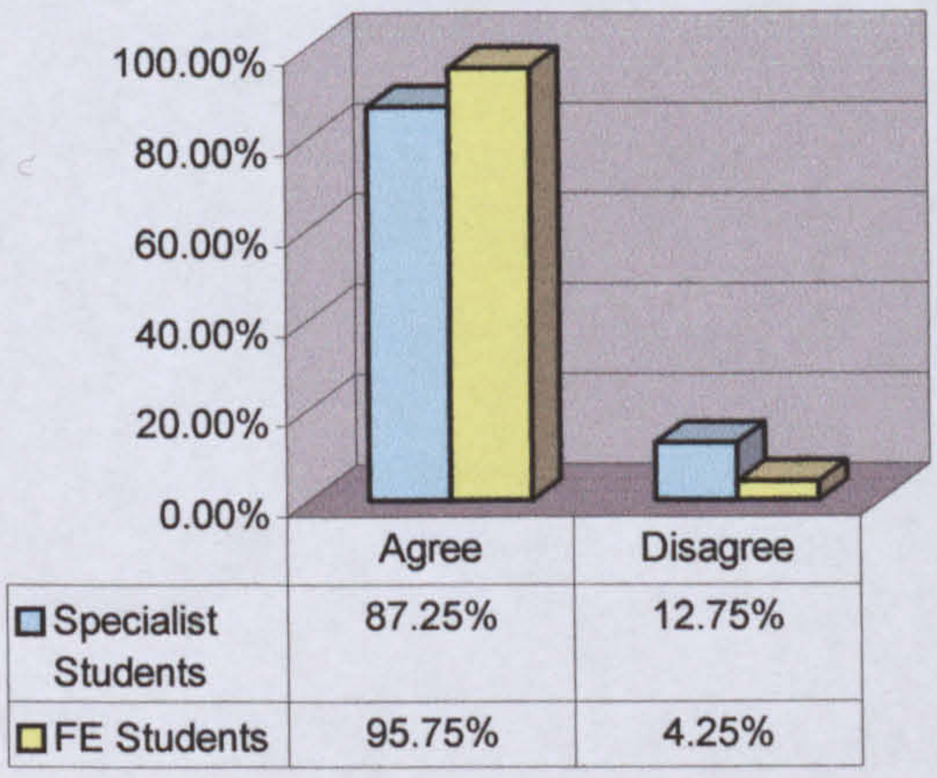
Student questionnaire item 13

Living the life of a performer in the entertainment business is attractive to me

Across the whole of the student population there was a 90% support level for the proposal. The Further Education students registered the greatest support at 92% while the Specialist students were slightly lower at 87%. With results such as this and those for item 12 above it is not surprising that the 'business orientation' of the GNVQ was met with hostility from those responsible for recruitment into colleges and school sixth forms.

Within the calculations on the internal variables only one variable was significant and this was once again 'age'.

a/ age - students under the age of 19




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Students | 87.25% | 12.75% |
| FE Students | 95.75% | 4.25% |

Students under the age of 19

**Specialist institution = 149**

**FE College = 212**

In this case the young Further Education students were more strongly in agreement (96%) than their older peers, as were the young Specialist students. Clearly the life of

In this case the young Further Education students were more strongly in agreement (96%) than their older peers, as were the young Specialist students. Clearly the life of a professional performer is immensely attractive to all of the students but especially to the students under the age of nineteen. It might have been thought that the younger students still had a 'rosy-tinted' view of life as a performer due to their lack of first hand experience of it. But it is interesting that there was no significant difference between students who had had experience of paid professional work and those who had not.

## 4.2 Staff/Students

The responses on the staff questionnaires were analysed in a variety of ways .

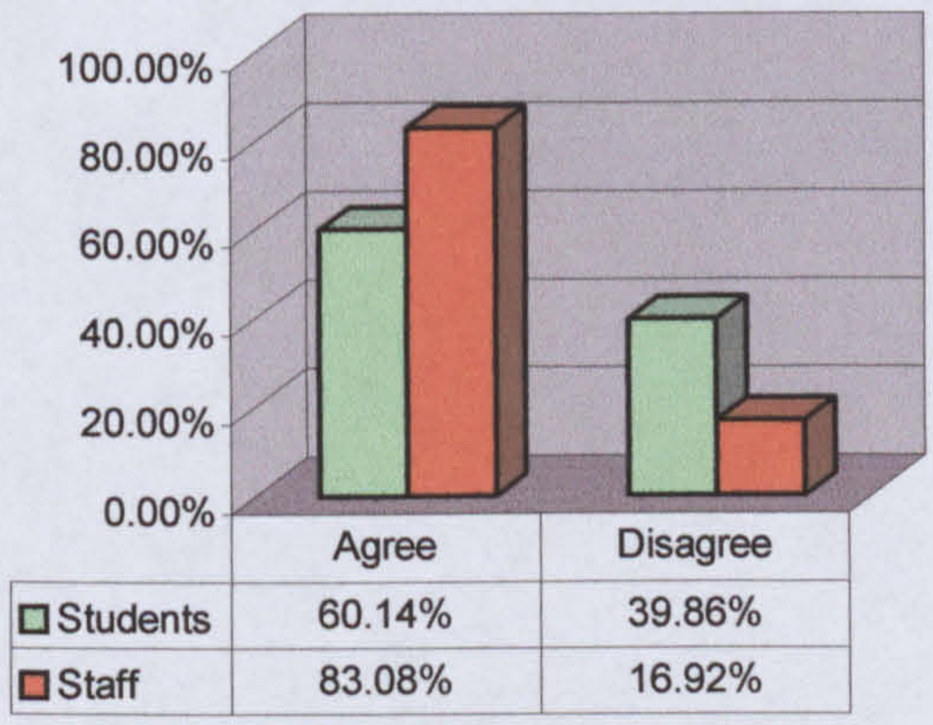
- All staff vs all students
- All staff vs each type of student group (Further Education and Specialist)
- Each of the professional specialisms in staff experience (Drama, Dance & Music)

Staff questionnaire item 5 (comparison with student questionnaire item 19)

> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Drama do so mainly by their acting **ability**.

The chi-square calculations showed that status was a highly significant variable at the 1% level between staff and all students with staff giving a much stronger endorsement to the statement than students did.

a/ status (staff/students)




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Students | 60.14% | 39.86% |
| Staff | 83.08% | 16.92% |

Total Staff Respondents = 195

Total Student Respondents = 414

The same variable 'status' was (as would be expected) significant at the 1% level with both of the component student groups i.e. FE and Specialist independently.

Staff questionnaire item 6 (comparison with student questionnaire item 20)

> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Drama do so mainly by **good luck.**

The staff were evenly divided with a 50% agreement and disagreement on this question. However, this did not translate into a significant difference when compared with the students who are not perhaps as unrealistic in their view of 'luck' as first impressions might suggest with a slightly larger percentage (53%) disagreeing.

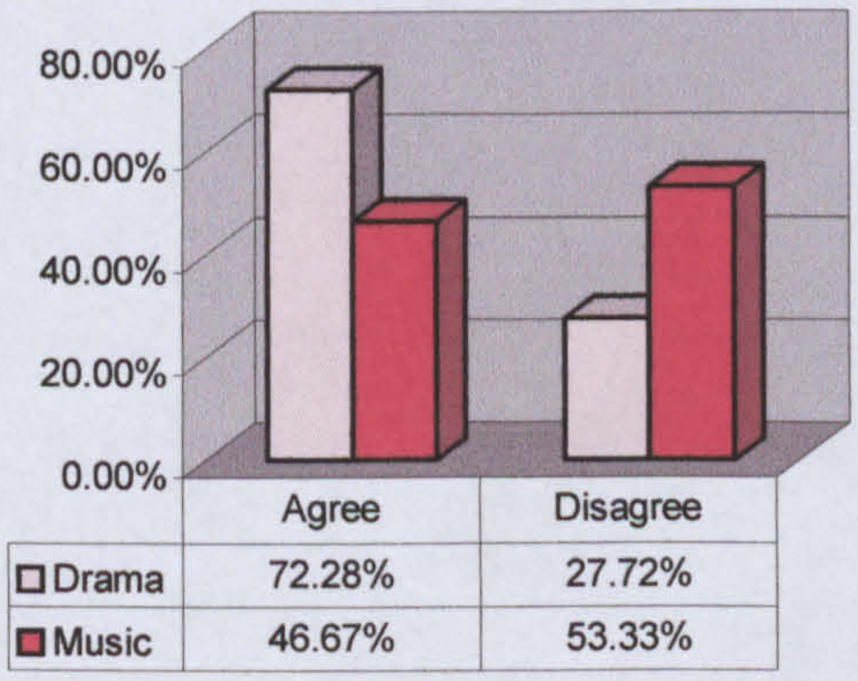
Staff questionnaire item 7 (comparison with student questionnaire item 21)

Most of the Artists who achieve success in Popular Music do so mainly by their **musical ability**.

Chi-square tests involving staff show two examples of significance at the 1% level.

The variable in question can be described as 'performance discipline' and it relates to the areas in which the staff have had professional experience.

a/ performance discipline (drama/music)



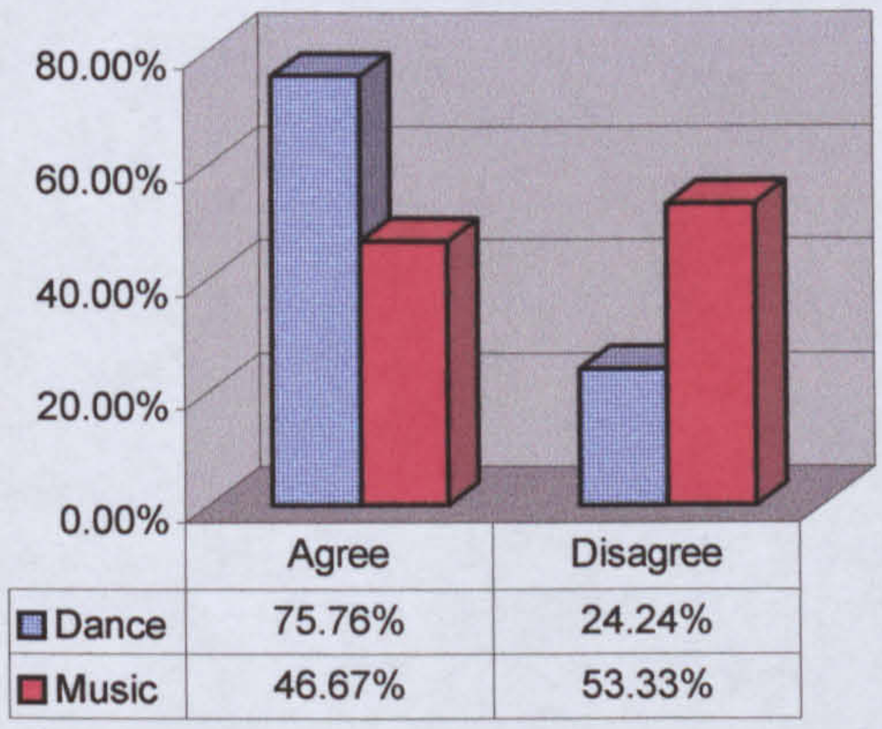

Total Drama Staff Respondents = 101

Total Music Staff Respondents = 30

This calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level. While the drama teachers had a high proportion (72%) of agreement that 'ability' was necessary for success in

Popular Music, it is surprising that the music teachers themselves showed a greater number (53%) disagreeing.

b/ performance discipline (dance/music)




Total Dance Staff Respondents = 33

Total Music Staff Respondents = 30

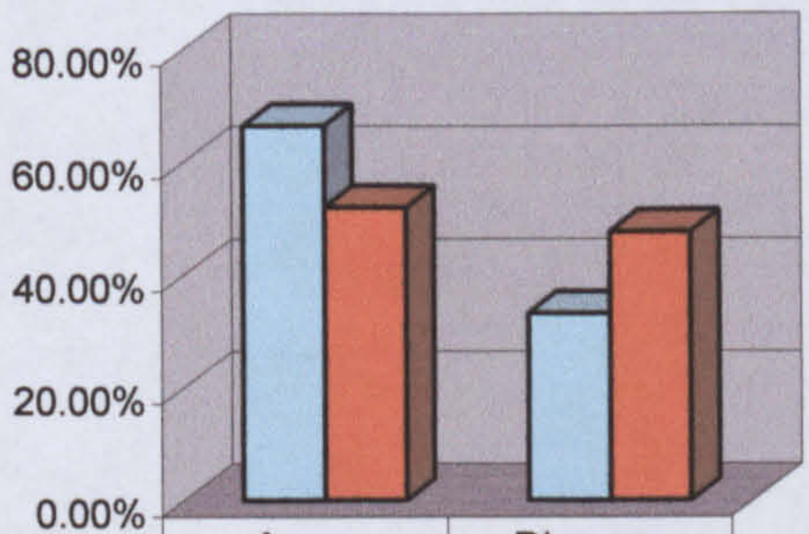
As with the previous table, the dance/music division proved to be significant at the 1% level. Three quarters of the dance teachers agreed with the proposition while only just over half (53%) of the music teachers did so. There may be an element of 'myth' around the music discipline which has been picked up in the student responses as well.

Staff questionnaire item 8 (comparison with student questionnaire item 22)

> Most of the artists who achieve success in Popular Music do so mainly by **good luck.**

The level of support for the proposition from the Staff was only 52%, and there was only one variable, status, which proved to be significant.

a/ status (Staff/Specialist students)




| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist Students | 66.67% | 33.33% |
| Staff | 52.15% | 47.85% |

Total Staff Respondents = 186

Total Specialist Student Respondents = 150

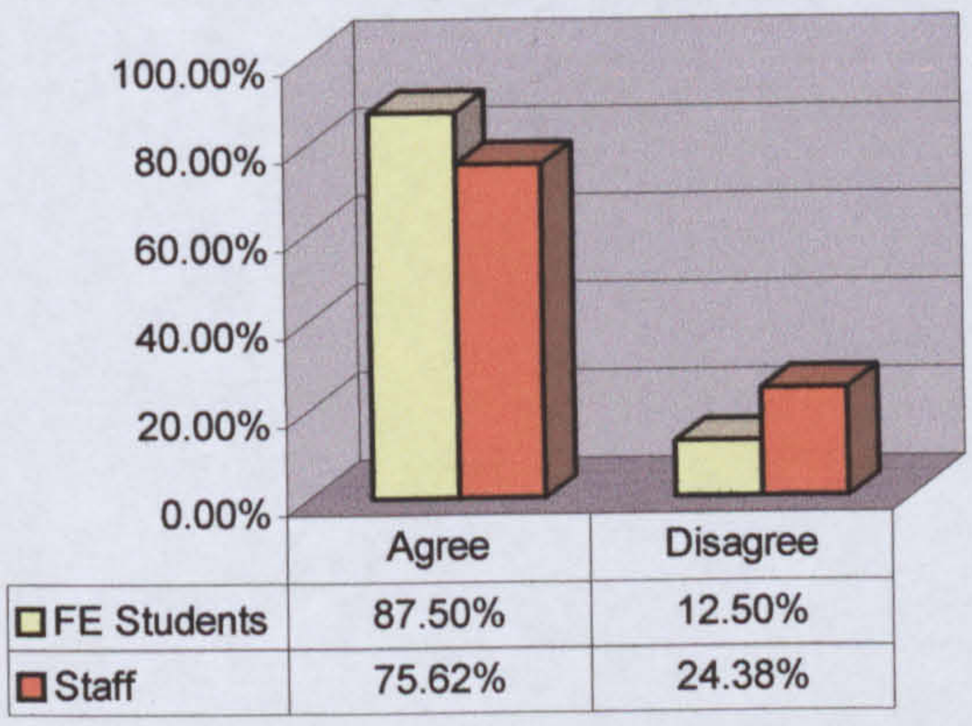
The above calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level and demonstrates that Specialist students believed even more than staff that good-luck is an important element for success in Popular Music.

Staff questionnaire item 9 (comparison with student questionnaire item 25)

To achieve lasting success in the Entertainment Business **training is essential**.

In this case there is a general agreement with the proposition in all groups. However there are three sets of variables which prove to be significant, following calculations of the Chi square tests.

a/ status (Staff/FE Students)

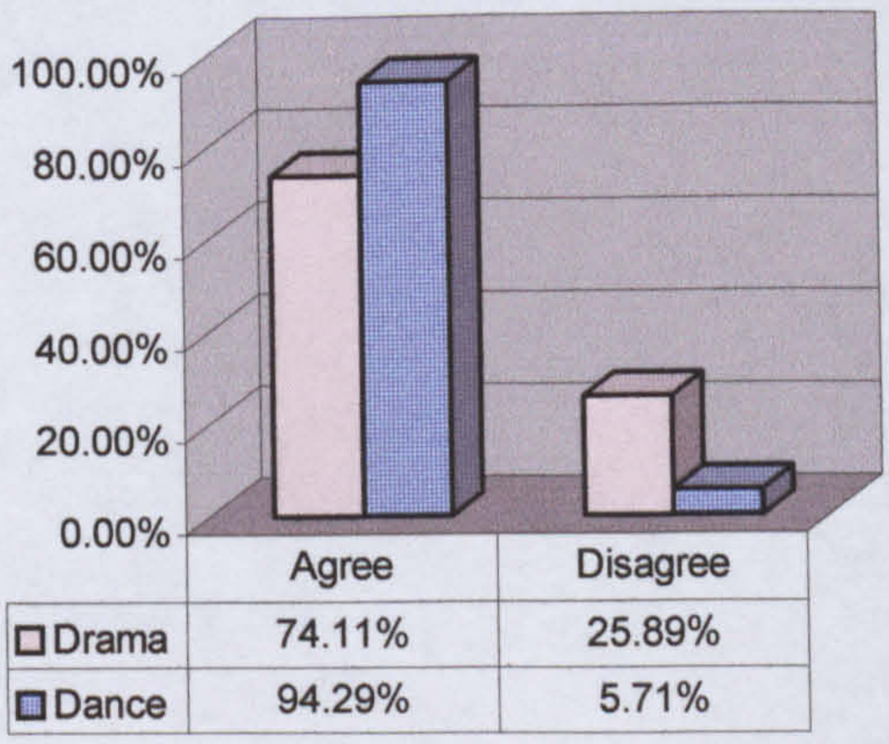



Total Staff Respondents = 201

Total FE Student Respondents = 264

The above calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level. Three quarters of the staff were in agreement but an even larger proportion (87%) of the FE students were.

b/ performance discipline (Drama/Dance)

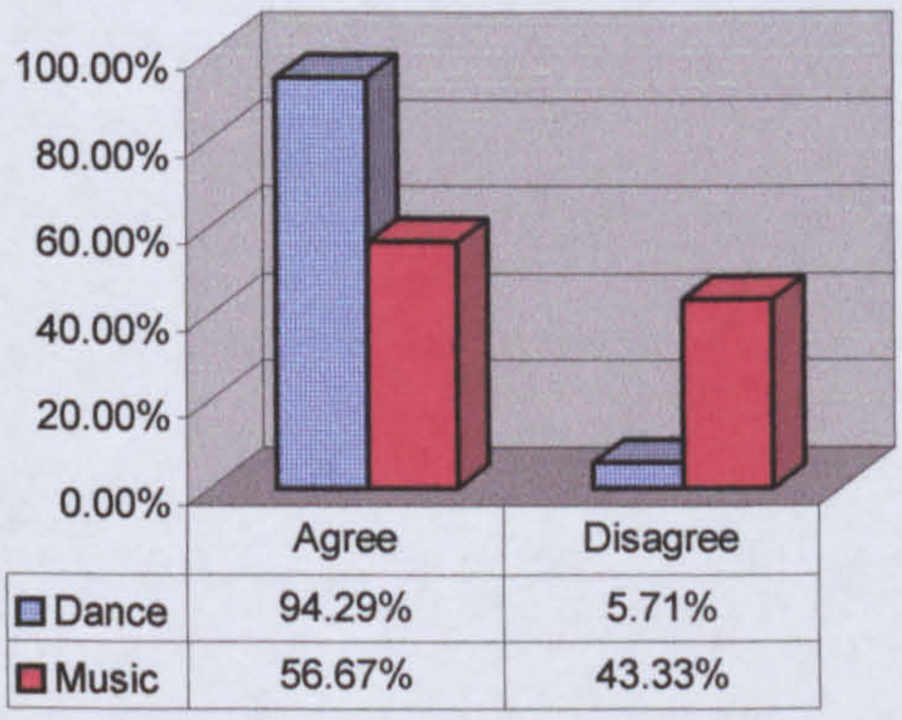



Total Drama Staff Respondents = 112

Total Dance Staff Respondents = 35

The above calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level. In this case while three quarters of the drama teachers were in agreement, an even larger proportion of the dance teachers were (94%).

c/ performance discipline (Dance/Music)




Total Dance Staff Respondents = 35

Total Music Staff Respondents = 30

The above calculation proved to be significant at the 1% level. Once again Dance teachers were significantly more likely to be in agreement than Music teachers.

It would appear that in terms of performance discipline, dance teachers overwhelmingly believe training to be essential, followed by drama teachers and then the music teachers making a poor third. Students also had overwhelmingly believed that training was important for success in dance.

The findings of the questionnaires have been presented and commented upon above with the Student Questionnaires preceding the Staff Questionnaires and, where appropriate, comparisons made. In particular the items on both sets of questionnaires

are intended to assess the vocational relevance and career development potential of the qualification as articulated in Research Question 1.

In summary the information from all of the questionnaires demonstrated an all-round satisfaction with the structure of the programme. The group of items designed to test opinions on the structure of the curriculum as 'Training Preferences' (Items 14 - 17 on the Student Questionnaires and items 1 - 4 on the Staff Questionnaires) showed a preference for a broad approach with students studying a core based on all of the performing arts supplemented by the opportunity to specialise in a chosen area. This 'half-and-half' method had proved satisfactory and is endorsed by both students and staff.

The questions on Career Perceptions also produce a consensus and any dissent, where it occurs, is only minor coming from sources such as the Specialist students within the internal variables e.g. gender, age and paid work experience. As there was only one school of this type in the sample it would be unsafe to generalise from it. Furthermore, the reader will see later that these issues are mediated by the comments from interviews (FLT) where the relevant maturity is cited as a factor.

## 5 Interview Data

The interviews provide material towards answering all three of the Research Questions. As teaching staff, what their experience of delivery of the BTEC National Diploma had been, how they viewed the potentially competing GNVQ in the Performing Arts and what were the lessons to be learnt from its introduction and its effect upon the work of the Original Starters.

These interviews were carried out two years after the questionnaire survey and consequently they incorporate much information that refers to events which took place after the questionnaire data were collected.

The 'Front Line Troops' were asked the following question to explore further the results from the student questionnaire

> Could it be that many students enrol on the course to legitimise their desire for a performers' lifestyle?

Of the nine respondents, five gave answers on the positive side, one on the negative side and three somewhere in between, qualifying their answers with such as the following:

"They have usually got that out of their system by the end of the two years." Or -

> " I think there may be some who feel that a performer's lifestyle is cushy. You tend to work in the evening and then go on party and socialise and then don't get out of your bed much before lunch time. Those are the kind of things we work to overcome when it's nine o'clock on a cold rainy Monday morning and they are on their rehearsal floor. That's what it's all about - having the self discipline to be there and be prepared." (Interviews - FLT 2))

Two completely opposing viewpoints were presented which demonstrate a mismatch between drama and music specialists in direct answer to the question:- "Yes, particularly musicians of course" and "I certainly think that some of the drama students do that. I can't say I have come across any music students that have that

attitude". The former statement was from a drama specialist and the latter from a music specialist! However the drama specialist goes on from his criticism of musicians to qualify it with "But reality soon kicks in".

Interviews with the 'Front Line Troops' also contained the following question which addresses the issues of breadth versus specialism:

> Would your students prefer the course to concentrate upon their own subject discipline rather than a broad range?

Essentially this is the tutors' opinions of their students' preferences, based upon their experience. Of the nine respondents interviewed, four claimed that students preferred to concentrate on their own disciplines. Only one claimed a student preference for a broad course. The remaining four took a more pragmatic view which acknowledged that attitudes change over time and especially when undertaking structured training. Drama was cited as the discipline most at home in a broad subject environment whereas music was at the opposite polarity, with the evidence of the development of the National Diploma in Popular Music suggested as proof. This tends to confirm the student questionnaire findings. A frequent case was described by some drama teachers (who were in a majority on the interviews) and can be paraphrased as follows - "Students who have been dragged kicking into the dance studio if they have been regarding themselves as a non-dancer often admit later that they have really benefited from the experience when they didn't think they would."

Interviewees thought it was easier to have Performing Arts as one discipline although for good teaching and for effective training it was important for there to be some

sessions when the different disciplines were dealt with specifically. As one respondent said: “within the original structure I think there is still an opportunity for students to form a pathway. For example it is very important from the point of view of Drama students that they have 'Movement' and that they have an element certainly of 'Singing'.”

Finally, the 'Front Line Troops' were asked about the realism of students' career expectations:

> What do you think of student expectations - do they really expect to 'make it'?

Of the nine respondents, five gave answers on the positive side, two on the negative side and two were ambivalent: "There is a degree of glamour attached I suppose inevitably". Nevertheless, all qualified their answers with some form of a disclaimer e.g. "I have seen a change in student expectations over the years." Usually they pointed out that a more realistic expectation flowed eventually from the experiences gained at audition, interview, the training schedule or simply maturation over time. As one interviewee put it: "I think that it is inevitable that people will have those expectations and I think part of the value of a programme like this is that it presents the reality of the industry quite early on".

## 5.1 Course Structure

“What were the most attractive features of the 1987 programme?”

Four of the replies used the same word to describe the most attractive feature: “flexibility”. The interviewees, in general, were very happy with the original

programme. It had flexibility for delivery and in the design of the assignments which could be integrated with external agencies (e.g. theatre/dance groups) to provide opportunities for realistic vocationally-biased projects. They also liked the fact that the qualification was "just there" replacing internal college certificates with national accreditation, and providing a vocational alternative to A levels such that practical activity would receive the academic credit which had evaded it for some considerable time. The flexibility also was manifest in the opportunity to customise programmes by importing units from other courses or even providing centre-devised units. As one respondent said, "it had a set of objectives within which you did your own thing". Overall, the strong emphasis on practical elements was one of the main reasons for the programme's popularity.

To balance the first question, the Researcher then asked:
"What were the problem areas?"

Three of the respondents replied "none". Clearly they had found no difficulty in delivering the programme. Two of the respondents were concerned that the draft guidelines never got beyond the draft stage and this meant that the syllabus could appear to be out of date. Some staff indicated that in the early stages they had difficulty integrating Music, Dance and Drama as required. There was some concern at the need to gain parity with A levels and a worry that there could be a lack of academic aspects to the course. As one respondent stated: "I needed to force academic elements into it for example, Language of Theatre was originally intended to be practically based". This is correct in as much as the original guidelines had

suggested that even the theoretical aspects would desirably be taught and delivered in a practical way. According to these respondents this was found to meet the students' desire for practical involvement rather than written academic material and it ensured popularity with the students. On the issue of quality control there was a worry about standardisation. As one respondent put it, "difficulty of knowing how you were doing nationally". It was suggested by one of the respondents that something like A level standardisation meetings, where samples of work are taken and discussed, would have been helpful.

## 5.2 Work Experience

One of the original intentions behind the National Diploma was that students would obtain relevant work experience. This fitted the concept of the qualification as pre-vocational training for a chosen field. The Researcher was therefore interested to discover Front Line Troop views on this aspect of delivery of the curriculum.

Do you (or did you) arrange work experience?

Six of the respondents answered positively, the other three with quite a definite 'no'. One of those who said 'no', added: "it proved to be very difficult". Another respondent who replied in the negative cited the curtailed delivery time of the programmes, and the lack of suitable opportunities in the geographical area in which the college was located. Others had found it easier: "we linked it in with a variety of external activities such as Arts Festivals." Nevertheless the fact that all colleges were not geographically well placed to do this highlights the potential difficulty of arranging work experience.

If so was the work experience in the performing arts?

The intention of the Original Starters was indeed that students would undertake work experience. However, only three of the Front Line Troops answered this question in the affirmative, and all were agreed that work placements were very hard to arrange in a Performing Arts environment. Whereas it is relatively easy to place a student in a factory or office to do jobs where he/she would not impact directly on customers, it was almost impossible to get a performance organisation to give some experience to a student in full view of the public. Further, as the course proved to be popular and was taken up by a great many colleges, such work experience became correspondingly harder to find.

Was the work experience/performance activity real or simulated?

Very few of the Front Line Troops had been able to organise 'real' activity and in fact the idea of simulated activity was frequently confused since the simulation consisted of the students turning themselves into a real performance organisation and taking the performance out to the public. It is arguable that this was really a simulated activity although in fact there were real performance organisations who were doing exactly the same thing. The difference appeared to be whether they had to report to someone other than their own lecturers which is one of the principal reasons for work experience i.e. to appear regularly, on time, within a work place and report to someone other than the teachers they have been dealing with in the first parts of the course.

One can conclude that if the experience of these Front Line Troops was typical, then the work experience component of the National Diploma was not being delivered as originally planned.

## 5.3 Common Skills

Given the inclusion of Common Skills in the National Diploma in its early days it was important to ask how well or badly staff felt they were designed and how easy or otherwise they were to deliver. Common Skills ceased to have a unit value in the National Diploma in the period 1990-95 (this is an approximation as the correct figure has been unavailable during the research). However they still had to be taught and given 'credit'. A list of the Common Skills is given in Figure 4.1

**Figure 4.1**

## COMMON SKILLS

### 1. MANAGING AND DEVELOPING SELF

- Manage own roles and responsibilities
- Manage own time in achieving objectives
- Undertakes personal and career development
- Transfer skills gained to new and changing situations and contexts

### 2. WORKING WITH AND RELATING TO OTHERS

- Treat others' values, beliefs and opinions with respect
- Relate to and interact effectively with individuals and groups
- Work effectively as a member of a team

### 3. COMMUNICATING

- Receive and respond to a variety of information
- Present information in a variety of visual forms
- Communicate in writing
- Participate in oral and non-verbal communications

### 4. MANAGING TASKS AND SOLVING PROBLEMS

- Use information sources
- Deal with a combination of routine and non-routine tasks
- Identify and solve routine and non-routine problems

### 5. APPLYING NUMERACY

- Apply numerical skills and techniques

### 6. APPLYING TECHNOLOGY

- Use a range of technological equipment and systems

### 7. APPLYING DESIGN AND CREATIVITY

- Apply a range of skills and techniques to develop a variety of ideas in the creation of new/modified products, services or situations

In time, very similar Key Skills were to appear as mandatory elements of GNVQ.

Accordingly, the following questions was asked of the Front Line Troops:

> How did the students react to Common Skills?
> How successful was the Common Skills programme?

Of the nine respondents only one reported a positive student approval with three negative and the remaining five giving qualified (if reluctant) support. The following bulleted quotations demonstrate the range of staff perceptions of student reactions. It is important to note that three of the nine respondents used the term 'add-on'.

- Students were happy when they could see them benefiting them and were relevant to a particular assignment,
- I felt again that the students didn't recognise their importance or existence.
- Because they didn't have a unit value attached they were really inconsequential and it was just something that they got through, it was just something that they did, they were far more concerned to get a unit
- They felt it was a 'drag' they felt that it was an add on (original emphasis)
- It was something that was done to them and they have never seen the point of it and not enjoyed the paper work that is involved with it.
- They didn't feel it was worth anything, they didn't give it an awful lot of weight.

Despite the fact that the second question was aimed at the delivery of Common Skills from the teachers' viewpoint, it was difficult to disentangle it from answers to the previous question where the teachers perceptions of the students' viewpoints were sought. The variety of answers from the interviews suggest that Common Skills were either quite successful or most unsuccessful depending upon the structures set up within the colleges themselves and the manner in which they were taught and assessed. On the positive side there was the statement that "they were easy to cover within Performing Arts assignments - colleagues in other areas complained when it was taught as a separate entity". While the negative element is encapsulated in "the students hated it, it was difficult for them because there was no credit in them as they

could perceive it". Some staff found that the lack of unit value was detrimental to student motivation and attitudes. "It is something that is forced upon you rather than successful. It was an add-on that wasn't really important".

Reviewing the interview responses it seems clear that the specific nature of Performing Arts meant that the Common Skills requirement could be handled in one of two ways: it could be brought seamlessly within the activities already required for the performance and disciplinary elements of the award or it could be treated as an additional, bolt-on element. Not surprisingly staff who adopted the former tactic were more positive about the Common Skills element than those who adopted the latter.

Some examples, drawing on Figure 3.1 will show how the first tactic could be conceptualised.

- Group one of the Common Skills is 'managing and developing self' and at the same time it is a fundamental principle of training in the performed arts. Performers are expected to continue to practise their skills in order to remain physically and mentally prepared for performance. The best examples are those of dance and music – indeed, 'practice' is a requirement in the National Diploma units in music performance techniques.
- The second group of Common Skills 'working with and relating to others' can also be seen in itself to be a fundamental part of the Performing Arts. Most of the disciplines operate with groups of participants who come together for performance.

- The third of the Common Skills groups, 'communicating', is once again inherent in the performing arts where the concept of audience is intrinsic to performance.

It can safely therefore be stated that of the seven areas of Common Skills a large percentage (possibly as much as 90%) could be subsumed within the subject matter of the vocational training itself. In such circumstances the understanding and sensitivity of the external verifier (moderator) is crucial in how Common Skills are processed within a particular centre.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 and several of the points made in chapter 3 point to assessment as a problematic issue for those delivering courses in the Performing Arts including the BTEC National Diploma. This seemed particularly to be the case when external forms of assessment were required as part of the Government's agenda to assure standards in the vocational area. Accordingly, as part of the exploration of the staff experience of delivering the National Diploma, the Researcher asked a series of questions about assessment.

## 5.4 Assessment

How did you and or your team learn the assessment procedures required for the 1987 qualification?

The Front Line Troops were teachers of many years of experience and were fully conversant with the traditional (usually 'norm referenced') methods of assessment (see Ecclestone 1998, Black 1998 & 1999). This research has provided an opportunity to investigate the particular problems which attend the Performing Arts. Of the nine respondents to the question two mentioned documents, two mentioned colleagues

who taught other subject areas on BTEC courses, and another two mentioned the fact that they had attended training courses - although there was some criticism of the effectiveness of these. All of the respondents said that most of the training had come from contact with their 'external verifiers' or as they were known at that time their 'moderators'. (The fact that the Researcher had been and continued to hold this role may have influenced these answers.) The criticism of training courses was that they were in many cases generic and were not delivered by people qualified to give specific guidance for the Performed Arts.

> Do you think your own particular Performing Arts specialism presents any specific difficulties for assessment?

There was a great variety of responses to this question. In the main there was a perception that the disciplines within the Performed Arts did have specific problems: "Being creative and expressive subjects I think there is a certain level of subjectivity". It was noted that different dancers teach slightly different dance styles and consequently an assessor could be presented with students from an unfamiliar style and find it hard to standardise grades or marks. One respondent, who taught technical theatre, pointed out that it was unrealistic to have "twenty performances" in order that students could be evaluated in terms of a particular stagecraft technique. Therefore the approach was to allow students to become stage crew for other performances "so that they would amass their experiences through crewing and running shows that the other students would be doing". This brings into focus one of the realities of the Performed Arts assessment situation - i.e. one is required to assess individuals within a group, doing different things but being assessed simultaneously. However one of

the respondents did have a viewpoint at variance with most of the others saying "anyone who understands the art would find it easy to assess".

> How would you suggest the external tests be applied to actual performance?

Respondents suggested that a way of surmounting the problem was to use the approach adopted in A level testing of Theatre Studies and Drama. In this approach, an external person watches a live performance and makes judgements on the basis of prior agreed criteria. However, the respondents were aware of the fact that this could be unrealistic since all participating colleges and schools would want to run their performances at the same point in the academic year and there were a limited number of external verifiers who would have to get round and see them all.

Respondents also felt that it would be helpful to have the various disciplines of a performance examined by a specialist in that discipline. It appeared that the only way of effectively doing this would be to bring in external examiners and let them see the performance. But it was pointed out that even this would be a partial solution as although the externals would see the performance they would not have been able to see the process by which the performance was arrived at - and in a vocational course this is of central importance. The idea of videoing a performance (currently this is now a requirement in AVCE) was also seen as unrealistic as only one viewpoint would be captured, and many schools and colleges would not be able to afford a properly edited version from a number of camera positions. As one respondent put it,

"no means of recording the performance can actually capture the event so I just think we are on a hiding to nothing here".

> If the tests cover only written work what effects will this have on the qualification?

There was general agreement that this would be a "retrograde step" and that it would "miss the point of the qualification". The feeling was that it would do a great deal of damage because traditionally this subject had not been one that focused on sitting down and writing. Such a change would have the effect of then attracting the 'wrong' students. As one interviewee [FLT 8] stated "You are going to attract the A level academic students not the vocational ones". It would cause tutors to focus more on the written elements and less on the practical performance or as one put it "on practice, practice, practice". Distortion of the content would follow throwing the emphasis onto the theoretical and the academic. However, despite these strong reservations several of the Front Line Troops felt that more written work as the basis for assessment would probably be thrust upon them as for financial reasons as college managements moved to Schedule 2a approved courses which had external assessment as a requirement for approval. This distortion of the course content was a central concern of many interviewees and of their perception of students reaction. As one interviewee said, "A lot of students don't want that nor should they have it thrust upon them just as a money saving device" (FLT 1)

## 5.5 The GNVQ

At the heart of this thesis lies the evolving relationship between the BTEC National Diploma and the GNVQ in the Performing Arts field. This led naturally to the third

Research Question relating to the consequences of the introduction of the GNVQ in the Performing Arts? The Researcher therefore put a series of questions on this topic to the Front line Troop interviewees.

Have you had any experience of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industry?

Out of the nine respondents four answered negatively, in one case despite having been on courses about it. Of the other five, four had had experience of it and the fifth was "just starting from September".

Do you prefer to teach the National Diploma or the GNVQ?

Eight of the nine respondents opted for the National Diploma as a preference. (One should note here that four had had no direct experience of teaching the GNVQ.) The ninth said "we are using the new GNVQ at the moment and I am nervous about it but I know I will grow into it. I have no knowledge of the previous GNVQ". Some of the worries about GNVQ are articulated by one of the respondents who had taught an Intermediate GNVQ and then switched back to the BTEC First Award after one year on the programme: "I felt the GNVQ was rather restrictive particularly at the Intermediate level. I felt the students were getting bogged down with writing records of what they were doing.....I replaced the Intermediate GNVQ with the BTEC First Award". One respondent, who was a departmental head, claimed to answer for all of his staff that they preferred to teach the National Diploma as they had a perception of the GNVQ as being "overly bureaucratic and inflexible". There was a perception that "with GNVQ the whole thing got up and running without all of the thought having

been put into it that was necessary". This view echoes that of some of the Original Starters and New Developers presented in Chapter 3.

> If you were currently teaching National Diploma would you reconsider this using the new GNVQ specifications?

The Front Line Troops had one of their number who was actually using the new specifications. Of the remainder, three gave no answer to this question while the rest provided some interesting insights into how this dilemma was being faced at that time. One stated that the main reason for wishing to stay with the National Diploma was because he was more familiar with it, and in the experience of this respondent "it's more tutor friendly". He felt that higher education institutions, such as universities, were more comfortable with performing arts from the National Diploma curriculum. One respondent was prepared to go along with GNVQs despite the fact that "they are very prescriptive", but questioned whether they have "as much clout as the National Diplomas at the moment". In spite of these reservations, several interviewees made it clear that the switch to GNVQ could be made for funding reasons in their college. One said of his/her college managers 'I think they do [want to switch] now and I think it is driven by economics. The actual cost for this year any way will mean we will be told to go down the AVCE route which is obviously a replacement of GNVQ ". Another respondent said: "yes the management have a preference, it (GNVQ) just fits better with the system". These responses reflect the impact that the QCA was having with its National Qualification Framework. The financial importance to colleges of running only those courses which had been approved for Schedule 2A is also apparent.

Finally, given that the National Diploma had undergone considerable change in its structure as a result of the arrival of the GNVQ, the Researcher was keen to know whether the revisions had been generally acceptable to the Front Line Troops or not.

> What do you think is the essential difference between the original National Diploma and the new National Diploma?
>
> When the National Diploma was to be rewritten would you have preferred to update the previous structure or were you attracted by the new single subject structure?

The general consensus of the Front Line Troops was very positive towards the new version of the National Diploma although it should be noted that the Researcher's involvement in its design may have coloured interviewees' responses. The respondents welcomed the greater clarity in the documentation and the fact that despite the single subject titles of each programme there was still flexibility within option units to move between different pathways. This was an aid to imaginative curriculum planning where it would be possible to present students with a range of opportunities "without forcing them to do things that they are not really cut out to do". One respondent particularly welcomed the fact that Common Skills appeared to have gone forever. They welcomed the fact that the content was more clearly defined from the point of view of devising schemes of work, especially in terms of the specific evidence that the students had to produce. These points, together with the reading lists and other resources suggested, were regarded as an improvement on the past.

## 5.6 Summary

The questionnaires have explored the structure and training intentions of the 1987 BTEC qualification relative to Research Question 1. Findings suggest that the programme is perceived to provide an appropriate career preparation which can fulfil student career expectations. The combination of a 'core' of broad based studies, balanced by a chosen performance discipline, was the legacy of this successful structure intended to apply in the GNVQ. Due to the early date of the questionnaire data collection it was not possible to explore these same issues with regard to the GNVQ which was only just being introduced at that time. However, interviewees and documentation suggest that the earliest form of this qualification failed to gain general approval due to a number of factors:

- The 'core' units were weighted towards the business and 'support services' - failing to take student motivation into account
- The 'specialist' units were not identified as 'discipline specific' but were written generically, intended to fit all performance choices
- The assessment procedures did not reflect the changes which were being introduced at that time in other subject areas
- The requirement for external testing did not confront the assessment of practical performance - which should be the fundamental purpose of the qualification

Interview data demonstrated diverse attitudes toward the new GNVQ Qualification with some of the interviewees excited about the clear structure and assessment intentions and others lamenting the loss of creative autonomy and the imposition of directives which were designed to a common pattern.

The new structures were the result of a series of Government inspired initiatives aimed at establishing a National Qualifications Framework and the policy dimension of this research arising from Research Question 3 will be discussed in Chapter 5 with the help of appropriate theoretical models.

# Chapter 5

# Discussion of the Research Findings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# Discussion of the Research Findings

## 1 The Argument

This investigation of the development of the BTEC vocational training qualifications in the Performing Arts has focused upon the original (1987) National Diploma and upon the Advanced GNVQ (1997) in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries. These two qualifications (and the associated qualifications which have grown out of them) have dominated the pre-vocational training in the Performing Arts field over the last fifteen years. During the time of the data gathering the two qualifications underwent considerable change in their own right and in relationship to each other – a process which is still ongoing in 2002.

The evidence from Chapters 3 and 4 point to a paradox which needs further discussion. As one of the New Developer interviewees put it: "We had in the National Diploma, a very popular qualification. What was needed was to transfer that into GNVQ". That transfer never occurred and the GNVQ failed to supplant the National Diploma as so many at the time believed it was destined to do, and as the Government of the day had strongly indicated that it would.

Why this unexpected failure of national policy?

Chapters 3 and 4 suggest three major reasons for the continued existence of the National Diploma 'against the odds':

1. Whereas the BTEC National Diploma was designed, revised and developed 'bottom up' i.e. with considerable input from, and consultation with, the staff

teaching the programme on the ground, the GNVQ was very much a 'top down' programme that was given to schools and colleges to implement in a directed manner.

2. Whereas the BTEC National Diploma was designed in a manner that was reasonably congruent with the inherent differences and constraints of the various disciplines in the Performing arts field, the GNVQ was based on a generic, competence model which did not sit well with the practicalities of training in dance, music, drama etc.

3. Whereas the National Diploma was structured in such a way that it had considerable appeal to young people who were hoping to make a successful career as performers, the GNVQ was predicated on the assumption that most of these young people would not be successful and that their ambitions were unrealistic.

Each of these major points will now be discussed in turn using theoretical models where appropriate to achieve better understanding of the dynamics behind the history of the two qualifications.

## 2 Contrasting approaches to Policy Formation and Implementation

In earlier chapters it has been suggested that the Government/NCVQ approach to policy formation had been dirigiste, i.e. a term deriving from 'Dirigisme - a policy of state direction in control on economic and social matters' (O.E.D. 1999). A dirigiste approach to policy can take two forms which the Researcher has designated as 'Interventionist' and 'Supervisory'. The regulatory body (QCA) has now ensured that

the interventionist form is built into the developments for the middle pathway of the Dearing proposals. All aspects of the programmes are to be carefully structured, directed and monitored with very little room for autonomy on the part of teachers. This interventionist approach was always the hallmark of the GNVQ. By contrast, the National Diploma in Performing Arts started in the 'supervisory' model of direction. It was conceived before the nature of Dearing's middle pathway had taken shape and under it colleges enjoyed a 'semi-autonomous' position especially in the assessment and delivery processes. However, as the 1990s progressed, the awarding body itself (BTEC) was being progressively steered into 'interventionist mode' as described in Chapter 3. One can argue that, for the Performing Arts, this has proved to be the problem rather than the solution as witnessed in the continuing, convoluted restructuring efforts designed to 'make it fit'.

Bringing new programmes of pre-vocational training to birth and successfully implementing them in many hundreds of schools and colleges requires an appreciation of how various systems and processes interact and work together (or sometimes against each other). As a minimum there are:

- Systems and processes which produce the vocational training policy at ministerial/government level and which may be rooted in manifesto or election pledges. An example in this thesis was the commitment to the GNVQ as part of the pre-election preparations by John Major's Cabinet in 1994/5 (Shephard 1994)
- Systems and processes by which civil servants in the government departments and quangos (e.g. NCVQ, QCA) go about the business of translating

ministerial determinations into curriculum plans. An example in this thesis would be the QCA's responsibility for bringing the GNVQ and the National Diploma into the National Qualification Framework

- Systems and processes by which the awarding bodies such as Edexcel work with government departments, quangos and users to decide content, give guidance, and run the assessment system for the new qualifications. An example from this thesis would be the redrafting of the GNVQs after the Capey and Beaumont reviews (e.g. Capey 1995).
- Within each school and college there are systems and processes by which new programmes are evaluated, chosen, marketed, and implemented at the classroom level. Several of the Front Line Troops, for example, maintained that financial considerations might outweigh curriculum considerations when their Senior Management teams made the choice between GNVQ and the National Diploma.
- Within the classroom there are systems and processes by which students undertake their study and training, leading to assessment and if successful the award of the qualification. There were many comments from interviewees in the study about the difficulties of the assessment system, for example.

Given the importance of such systems and processes, it would be useful to examine the paradox of the survival of the National Diploma from the viewpoint of those who have written about systems in policy formation and implementation. The two

authorities identified in Chapter 1 will therefore be used: Sir Geoffrey Vickers and Peter Checkland.

**Sir Geoffrey Vickers**

One of Vickers central concepts is that successful policy making is 'the setting of governing relations or norms' rather than the setting of goals, objectives or ends.

> "The meaning of stability is likely to remain obscured in Western cultures until they re-discover the fact that life consists in experiencing relations rather than seeking goals or ends" (Vickers 1970 page 73).

Immediately this suggests that the top-down, dirigiste approach to the introduction of the GNVQ allied to a competence model of student assessment, might be less effective than the BTEC/EDEXCEL approach of seeking stable partnerships with schools and colleges on the one hand and government quangos on the other. The Researcher would argue that this was certainly the case given the evidence in the findings from this research.

Vickers recommends the replacement of the 'goal seeking' and 'goal-seeking-with-feed-back' (cybernetic) models by one in which personal, institutional or cultural activity consists in maintaining desired relationships and eluding undesired ones.

This is a cyclical process and operates as follows: previous experiences have created for us certain standards or norms and also at a more general level - values. The standards, norms and/or values lead to a readiness to notice only certain features of our situations - they determine what facts are 'relevant'. These facts are evaluated against the norms which leads us to take regulatory action and modifies the norms or standards 'so that future experiences will be evaluated differently'. (Vickers 1970). This process can be seen at work with regard to the Common Skills component of the

National Diploma where the second (1998) and third (2002) versions did not include them as a course requirement. Similarly during the period of its currency the National Diploma in Performing Arts spawned a number of associated qualifications of which the most notable have been the First Diploma in Performing Arts and the National Diploma in Popular Music; both of which proved to be very popular. But there was also room for highly specialised variants such as in Dance. (The Researcher was responsible for establishing a National Diploma in Contemporary Dance at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds.)

Vickers emphasises that at every stage in the making of policy it is necessary make a judgement or a decision. The concern in policy making is to focus attention on "the evolution and modification of the course, the norm, the standards, the governing relations that is inherent in every policy and the selection and ascertainment of the facts relevant to it" (Vickers 1965). He uses the term 'appreciation' to describe this activity following the ordinary usage in which we speak of 'appreciating a situation'. Reviews of policy, in his view are, or should be, preceded by such 'appreciations'. In designing the National Diploma in Performing Arts in 1987 the team was not in a position to make policy but by following established BTEC procedures they were able to exercise some elements of 'appreciation' in the way that they modified assessment and delivery requirements to enable the new 'subject' to be accommodated effectively [OS 1]. By contrast, the later introduction of a fully directed (i.e. dirigiste) approach for the design of GNVQ from NCVQ (subsequently QCA) does not fit this concept of 'appreciation' at all

Vickers' model points out that occasionally there is a mismatch between what is expected as a desirable or acceptable standard and what actually happens. In this situation 'the simplest way to reduce such disparities is to change the standard that creates them, and this is a common and most important form of adaptation' (Vickers 1965). The mismatch between what was intended and what in practice occurs on the ground can show up as 'transgressions'.

Transgressions are deliberate activities or opportune events in which the participants undertake to do what they are not supposed to do, not allowed to do or not recommended to do. Several transgressions within the original National Diploma were revealed in this research. For example the original rule on work experience was abandoned or modified in many colleges, presumably aided and abetted by the Moderators or External Verifiers. Similarly with Common or Core Skills the original requirement was to teach the skills within the course units but many schools and colleges began teaching them as a separate entity and at the time of writing this has now been consolidated within the system of Key Skills for GNVQ. As this last example shows, some transgressions have become part of an evolutionary process of development, (as Vickers suggests), and have been incorporated into subsequent revisions of the curriculum.

Conversely, a failure to make 'adaptations' can lead to a failure of the original policy and one can see how close the Government came to this in the unfolding story of the GNVQ.

1 The nature of the GNVQ Performing Arts curriculum is designed to be more 'academic' than the National Diploma it is to replace, losing many of the practical performing aspects. This shows particularly in the assessment regime which relies upon multiple choice tests rather than live performance.

2 Staff and students reject this model in favour of that permitted under the National Diploma and continue to sign up for the National Diploma in spite of its likely demise. They are encouraged by the mounting criticism of the GNVQ from many quarters and by BTEC itself.

3 The Government faces a dilemma. It can stick to the original intentions behind the GNVQ, enforce the requirements of its competence model more rigorously, and end the National Diploma as planned. Doing so, however, risks considerable 'transgression' in the system. Alternatively it can launch an 'appreciation' of the GNVQ (the Capey and Beaumont reviews) while allowing the continuation of the National Diplomas albeit under some new terms which migrate it closer to the GNVQ model.

4 The Government opts for the second alternative although the decision represents something of a *volte face*.

However, the lack of a full 'appreciation' of the difficulties posed by the GNVQ model, and the desire to migrate the National Diploma towards it, leaves a situation with unresolved tensions and difficulties which engulf the Performing Arts qualifications in yet more restructuring.

The need to be able to influence the course of a policy is important and Vickers identifies three ways in which this is possible:

1 The policy maker may alter the course of affairs

2 He can alter his own course in relation to them

3 The policy maker may reorganise his 'appreciative system' so as to enable a wider and different set of possible responses to be brought to bear on any problems. This third approach enlarges the possibilities of the other two.

It is useful to apply each in turn to the history of the Performing Arts vocational training in this period.

For the policy maker, who in this case is the Secretary of State for Education reporting to the Cabinet and Prime Minister, altering the course of affairs may be unacceptable or at least politically dangerous. Once the policies have been delegated from central government to one of the designated agencies, it would require either a new ministerial team or a change in the government of the day to effect such change easily. During the period of this research this did happen and in May 1997 there was a change of government. The changes which were under way were put on hold for some months until policies were evaluated to fit the changing ideology. The policy maker altering his or her own course in relation to problems has also occurred during this period. A prime example was the decision after the General Election of 1997 to allow the National Diplomas to continue alongside the GNVQs rather than replacing them altogether. However, there was less evidence of willingness on the part of the Government to relax or revise the 'internal' structure of the GNVQ programmes even

though it was the flexibility of the National Diplomas which had been such a positive factor in the Performing Arts field up to this time.

The third approach, which Vickers describes as 'reorganising the appreciative system', entails adopting one or more of three possible responses which he lists as follows:

1 By changing its organisation

2 By changing what may be loosely called its culture (he defines this as the mutual expectations and self expectations of its members)

3 By changing its personnel .

In the period of this research, the policy making 'quangos' were indeed changed. In particular the NCVQ was merged with the SCAA to become the QCA. However, the Researcher would argue that this change made the problem even worse initially because it brought together two seemingly incompatible cultures - NCVQ & SCAA This change in culture brings us onto the second of the Vickers' responses. The merger meant pulling together a group which had been connected for some considerable time with A levels (SCAA) and took its directions from the Department of Education, with an organisation that had been associated with vocational training qualifications (NCVQ) and took its direction from the Department of Employment. The ensuing clash of cultures was problematic, according to commentators (e.g.Williams 1999) as well as respondents in this research (ND No 5; also Figure 3.16). Nevertheless, as Vickers' analysis might suggest, there was a longer term benefit in that the National Qualifications Framework could be made to cover all three of the Dearing pathways more easily and comprehensively.

The third of the options, changing the personnel has been beyond the scope of this research but the anecdotal experience of many of the respondents has been to report that the rapid shifting round in personnel in awarding bodies has caused many problems in terms of the communication of any required changes in regulations for the qualifications. One of the Front Line Troops to pilot the interview schedule suggested that there should be a question on communications with the awarding body as her experience was that it was an ongoing problem, and another of the interviewees (a Head of School) gave the following comment: "their service from the centre over the last two years has been little short of abysmal" [FLT 2]. The implication from Vickers is that given a problem a change in personnel will help to rectify it but clearly the examples above suggest that there can also be a negative side where change can actually be a problem in itself.

Constructs to be used in analysis of policy making and policy implementation are notably extensive in Vickers and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore and apply every one. However there is one further pair of concepts which are particularly apposite to this research. Vickers sees the making of policy as the exercise of different types of judgment and distinguishes between 'reality judgments' and 'value judgments' both of which are necessary for 'appreciation' in policy making.

> "The relationship between judgements of fact and value is close and mutual for facts are relevant only in relation to some judgement of value, and judgements of value are operative only in relation to some configuration of fact" (Vickers 1995 page 54).

'Reality judgments' he describes as being more susceptible than any other form of judgment to 'proof' and 'value judgements' cannot be proved correct or incorrect, "they can only be approved as right or condemned as wrong by the exercise of

another value judgment" (Vickers 1965). Two examples from the evidence of this research illustrate this point. First, the difference in individual viewpoints between those who believed that the course should encourage students in their motivation to become (star) performers and those who thought that it should track them into business/administration jobs could reasonably be described as a clash of value judgements which would result in different perceptions of the 'fact' (a reality judgement), when preparing an appropriate curriculum for student needs. Secondly in the situation where the requirement for assessment, as a formative element in the learning process and as a summative element for student performance, is regarded as a 'reality', evidence suggests that the value judgements for a Business Studies qualification would be vastly different to the more aesthetically charged judgements of the performing artist. In each of these two examples above the observation of 'fact' would cease to be congruent with the appropriate norm of each viewpoint. Consequently as a result of carrying out the 'apprecation' one would expect changes in the structure of programmes (in the first example) and in the assessment processes (in the second example). In a case where the policy-makers themselves hold one of the competing perceptions the results of the appreciation not be easy to achieve in the short term.

The paragraphs above have dealt with a situation where policy in broad outline is devolved from government departments to sponsoring organisations in order that they may be put together in a form which will be implemented by further organisations i.e. Schools and Further Education Colleges. In this we see, as Vickers asserts, that policy making is an institutional process, ' a function, in part, of the nature, structure,

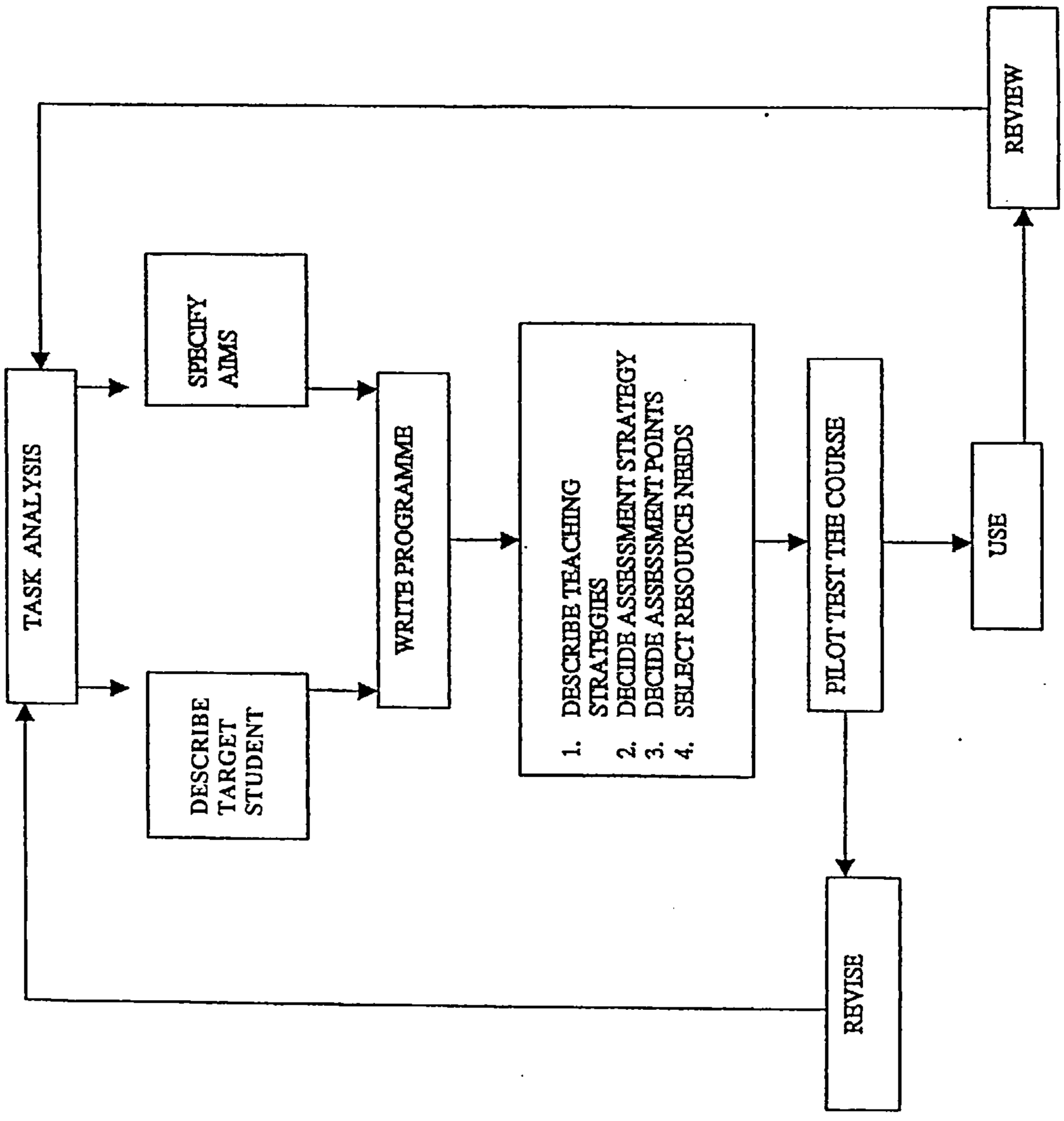
and history of the institution concerned' (Vickers 1965). Policy implementation at the institutional level depends not only upon the individual skills of members but also on the limitations and facilities inherent within the institution and the relations with the policy makers.

Vickers once more provides illumination for this process by pointing out that even at the highest levels of the largest organisations: " appreciations are made and decisions taken by individual men, [sic] who are always more – and less – than the embodiment of one institutional role". If we add to this the fact that these individuals feel that they operate within a context of constant and confusing change (as many of the Front Line Troops and New Developers did) then this does not bode well for the consistent or coherent implementation of government inspired policies across the whole system.

**Peter Checkland**

Analysis of the current research findings can draw upon both kinds. The hard system approach is depicted in the diagram in Figure 5.1 below. Evidence from the Original Starters shows that their design process matches the structure admirably. As their proposed course was derived from their existing experiences the 'target students' were known to them and at their initial meetings the 'aims' were agreed, the structure of the programme was decided, and the unit titles were decided. In the structure, all of the elements 1 - 4 within the box in the flow chart in Figure 5.1 were clearly specified and the course was tested out in 33 participating F.E. Colleges. During this pilot period, modifications were solicited and some where built into a revised design which was never actually introduced, leaving the original structure and regulations in use until 1998.

**Figure 5.1**




**Programme Design as a System from Romiszowski (1970)**

Reasons for the non-implementation of the re-written specifications were not known by the Original Starters nor were they given copies. The Researcher would argue that it was probably because a GNVQ qualification in the Performing Arts area was due to appear and the prevailing expectation was that this would replace the National Diploma. It is doubtful whether the GNVQ benefited from such rigour as the National Diploma at the initial design and testing stage. The evidence from the interviewees, and indeed other researchers, is that the process of design and piloting was rather rushed with the inevitable consequence that many of the problems later encountered 'downstream' could have been anticipated and corrected at the design stage especially by reference to the National Diploma experience.

Many modifications of the original National Diploma came about quite naturally as 'transgressions'. For example, evidence from the 'Front Line Troops' [e.g. FLT 3 & 4] shows an ambivalence towards Common Skills which was contributed to by BTEC when they removed them from the unit totals. Also the original requirement for 'work experience' proved to be unrealistic for programmes in locations remote from centres of performance activity. This is evident from analysis of the student questionnaires where the 'specialist' college (which was proximate to London) showed a large percentage of students [48%] able to obtain occasional professional work compared to the FE colleges [36%]. All of these 'transgressions' contributed to evolutionary or organic development of the qualification. In the course design, the Original Starters and the unit writers which they assembled each brought experience and perception

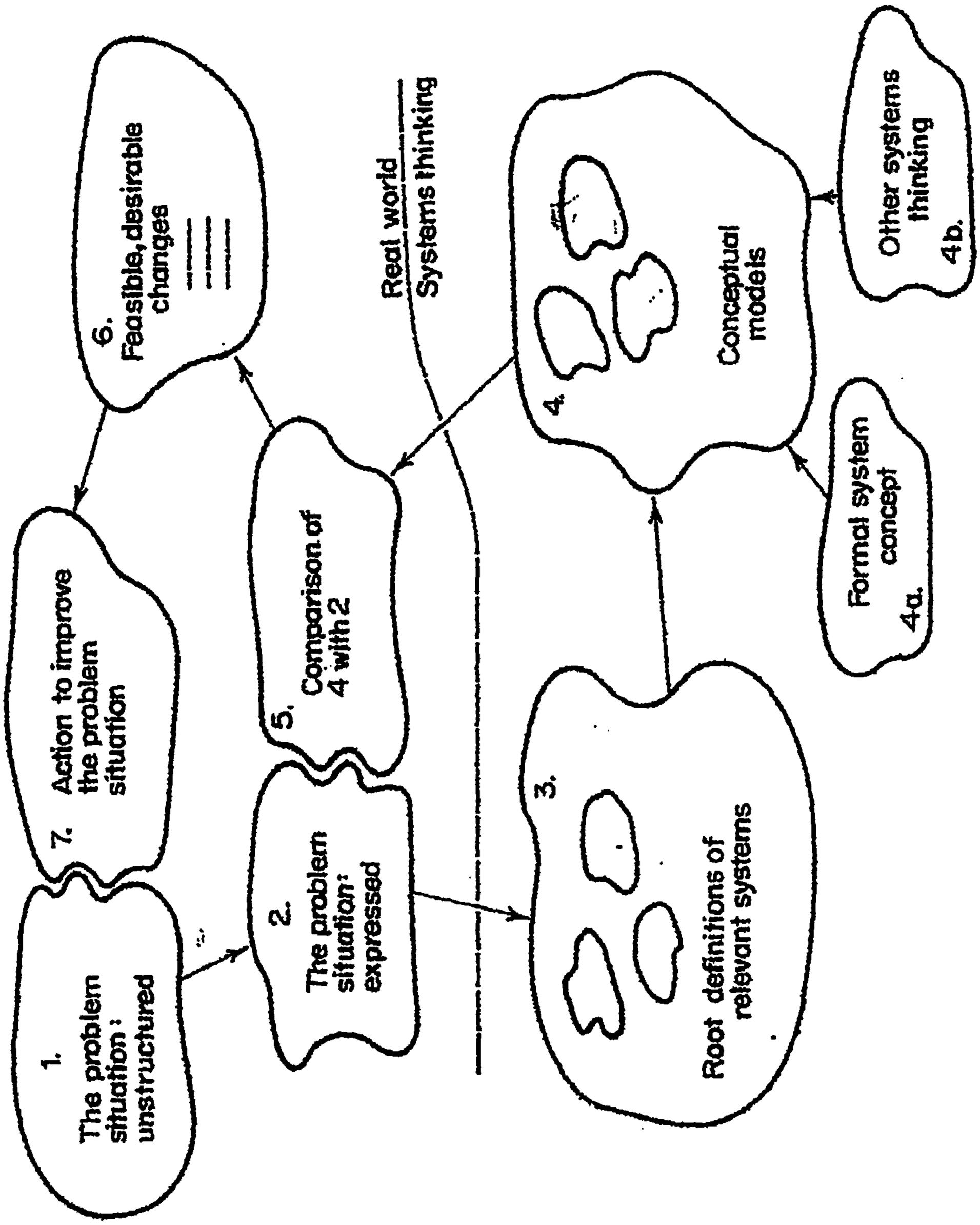
from their own particular discipline and the 'hard' systems approach in Figure 5.1 was, in essence, the result of a consensus .

This suggests that the second of Checkland's definitions for human activity systems can apply.

> The methodology contains two kinds of activity. Stages 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 are 'real-world' activities necessarily involving people in the problem situation; stages 3, 4, 4a and 4b are 'systems thinking' activities which may or may not involve those in the problem situation, depending upon the individual circumstances of the study (Checkland 1995 page 163).

This quotation is also represented in the form of a helpful diagram in Figure 5.2. This suggests how soft systems methodology offers a very useful template to provide some valuable insights into the data and analyses of this thesis. It will be appropriate for the stages to be examined numerically exploring the analytical opportunities they provide for the present research.

Figure 5.2




Summary of the Methodology from Checkland (1975)

**Stages 1 and 2.** Checkland (1985) describes this as an 'expression ' phase providing a description of "the situation in which there is perceived to be a problem". To do this it is necessary to collect as many varied data from a wide range of relevant sources. The data gathering for this thesis is particularly relevant for building up a comprehensive picture of the problem. The range of activities has been considerably varied and eclectic: surveys from a large population of staff and from two different populations of students, interviews with three different groups of lecturers and officials with experience of the development and delivery of the Performing Arts courses and access to documents etc.

From the research for this thesis the apparent problem appears to be 'the failure of the GNVQ in Performing Arts and the Entertainment Industries to replace the National Diploma in Performing Arts as the Government intended'.

**Stage 3.** This phase is concerned to identify the systems relevant to the improvement of the problem situation and provide a defining statement known as the 'root definition'. "A root definition should be a concise description of a human activity system which captures a particular view of it" (Checkland 1985 page 167). Arising from the research data a list of 'systems and processes' was presented earlier in this chapter and constitutes elements which are directly relevant for this purpose albeit without 'root definitions'. They refer to activities by which:

- government ministers produce the vocational training policy;

- designated departments and quangos (e.g. NCVQ, QCA) translate policy into curriculum plans;
- awarding bodies co-operate to decide content, guidance, and assessment systems;
- schools and colleges choose, market, and implement programmes;
- students undertake their study and training, leading to assessment.

Within Stage 3 of a soft systems analysis it would be necessary to devise root definitions for these systems. As in all the stages in the soft systems approach the formulation of root definition statements can be subject to modification as the other stages are worked through, leading eventually to an overall root definition of the total problem situation. Checkland attaches great importance to the root definition and recommends spending a great deal of time in arriving at the most satisfactory statement. The analyst is urged to define what the systems ***are*** as opposed to what they ***do***. And as the systems will be ***human activity*** systems this will demand an element of creativity together with semantic precision and sophistication.

The bulleted list above describes what is being ***done*** as activities. However, in the first instance, what the systems ***are*** could be expressed by a minor modification and reordering of the words. Two examples are presented here:

- first on the list, 'government ministers produce the vocational training policy' could become 'vocational training policy produced by government ministers'
- second is 'schools and colleges choose, market, and implement programmes (of vocational training)' could become 'programmes of vocational training selected, marketed and implemented by schools and colleges'.

However, an exploration of the situation ***behind*** these activities would need to be considered and in his writings Checkland gives many examples of root definitions for routine systems which appear quite simplistic but also apposite. For example he arrives at a root definition for that well known phenomenon the Pop Festival as 'a system to celebrate a particular life-style using pop music as an emblem of the sub-culture concerned'. This cleverly takes in all of the various reasons for such events and whether they are free or otherwise.

A first attempt at a root definition for the complete problem situation which is the concern of this research could be:

***'A programme of appropriate training to prepare for eventual work in some chosen area of Performing Arts'.***

A root definition should thus be an account of what the system is. The next requirement is to construct a 'conceptual model' which is an account of what the system must do in order to be the system named in the definition.

**Stage 4.** In this phase a conceptual model based upon the root definitions is formulated. Data for this is supplemented by 4a and 4b which serve to focus inputs at this stage. The reader should be aware that the resulting conceptual model of the system would be compared to 'present realities' in the next phase of the process. This will be in order to illuminate problems and hopefully identify a possible solution or at least some alleviation of the problem.

> "The value of the formal system model is that it enables questions to be framed which, when asked of the conceptual model, reveal inadequacies either in it or in the root definition which underlies it" (Checkland 1970 page 64))

He gives two approaches to the task.

1 The conceptual system may be described in terms of its 'state' i.e. the elements which comprise it, their current condition and their relationships with external elements which affect the system. This is a method appropriate to many physical systems natural or man-made.

2 The conceptual system may also be described more organically as an entity which receives inputs and produces outputs. The system itself transforms the inputs into outputs. This 'transformation system' can also be applied successfully to many physical systems.

The second of these approaches appears to be the most appropriate for this research project. This can be expressed in its 'hard systems' form as in Figure 5.1 but provided that external elements and other systems which impinge upon it remain under review and are built into the plan the 'soft systems' scenario can be followed. The assembly of a completely comprehensive 'state' description of the Performing Arts vocational training system is beyond the scope of this research. Analysing the introduction and development of these qualifications according to the scheme 'input - transformation-output' may yield some useful observations and explanations. Inputs would be described as students wishing to train for a career in some aspect of the Performing Arts and outputs would then be students who had completed the designated training.

Defining what must be done to construct a conceptual model to complement the root definition requires, in this case, a concentration upon the transformation section. In this the nature and structure of the 'appropriate training' is defined and within the

originally defined problem area it will need to highlight the dichotomy between the National Diploma and the GNVQ situations. In this case the contrasts between the two types of structure must be articulated as alternative approaches to achieving the required output. Some examples of these contrasts are shown in Figure 5.3 below:

**Figure 5.3**

| **Original National Diploma in Performing Arts** | **Original GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries** |
|---|---|
| Ability to effect and influence changes. | Modifications only possible from NCVQ |
| Core plus pathways | Generic descriptors - interpret for any of the disciplines |
| Each unit graded separately | Overall grade for the complete qualification |
| Straightforward, flexible assessment and grading | Highly complex assessment and grading |
| Ambiguity about common skills | Mandatory requirement for Core/Key Skills |

The presence of contrasting alternatives at this stage in the process anticipates, to some extent, the subsequent stages but this is inevitable in a human activity system. The eventual conceptual model in this problem area would need to set out an exhaustive list of the areas of contrast in order to provide the necessary leads for Stage 5 to explore.

**Stage 5.** This phase concerns the comparison of conceptual models with 'reality'. It provides opportunities for comparing systems hypotheses and concepts as a means of "teasing out the complexities of reality" (Checkland 1984). Conceptual models are brought to face the problem situation itself. The various data sources in this research

provide many examples of components for the model which proved to be problematic. Three examples are present below:

- Four items in the Capey Report (1985) dealing with GNVQ Assessment and grading fall into such a category:

  the manageability of the assessment regime

  core skills ( as they were called at the time)

  grading

  the external tests

- Also there is the mismatch between policy content and implementation for GNVQ and for the National Diploma
- The intentions of the policy makers and the expectations of the students.

**Stage 6 .** This is concerned to ***define possible changes*** and in the search for these Checkland suggests testing them against two criteria. They should be ***desirable*** and they should be ***feasible.*** In this thesis evidence from interviewees and documentation suggests that the original National Diploma in Performing Arts had sufficient flexibility to enable modifications to be effected 'organically' within the transformation section, by teaching staff and students, to improve the relevance and effectiveness of the system. These were both desirable and feasible. However, with the GNVQ, due to the speed of its introduction and the inherent dirigisme of the policy structure this type of flexibility was not available despite the fact that at the same time some modifications were being recommended in other subject areas.

The examples in Stage 5 may not always meet both of these criteria if they are in the Performing Arts area. For example in the recommendations for the areas reviewed by Capey (1995) the suggestion to address 'Core Skills' by a programme of staff development does not address the issues of the question of their inclusion in the first place. Similarly complications in the overall grading system is only 'tweaked' and fails to reduce the bureaucratic load. From the suggestions for external tests the particular problems of Performing Arts are not mentioned. In this analysis what Checkland (1995) describes as "the chill wind of reality" has still to be faced.

**Stage 7.** Closes the feedback loop as it involves taking action based upon the recommendations in Stage 6 to improve the problem situation. In doing this, if a new problem emerges then the methodology can be applied afresh to deal with it.

## 3. Congruence with the disciplines in the Performing Arts

The second reason suggested in the introduction to this Chapter for the successful continuance of the National Diploma and the failure of the GNVQ to replace it entirely was that the National Diploma could cope better with the essential differences as well as the similarities between the disciplines that comprise the Performing Arts. It is now time to examine this suggestion in more detail. Three aspects of this 'better fit' come through strongly from the fieldwork. These are: the structure of the programme; the greater autonomy given to the teacher; and the assessment regime. Each will be considered in turn.

The structure of a course may take a number of forms. It may consist of a list of discrete units each self contained but having some clear link to other units or it may be a progressive structure where satisfactory completion of one section is essential before being able to move on to the next.

In 1986/7 the awarding body, BTEC, presented a number of structures which could be adopted for the National Diploma in Performing Arts and the decision was arrived at by a team of practitioners who had themselves already approached the awarding body with a 'ready made' specification based upon their previous experience. In many ways this was an ideal situation since it precluded the need for much of the later pilot testing. A great deal of the experience which went into the design of the original course had arisen from the similar courses which were being run on a non-approved, but nevertheless highly successful, basis by all of the representative colleges. The team made recommendations for teaching strategies while the assessment strategy to be used was that published by BTEC for all of their courses. The combination was sufficiently loosely structured to allow for differences arising from the idiosyncrasies of different subject areas [ BTEC a ].

As explained in Chapter 3, the final overall structure consisted of a core of six units (plus two units of Common Skills which were later dropped) and four 'option units' representing the component disciplines of drama, dance, music and stagecraft. This enabled students to have a common experience through the core but a specialised approach in their chosen disciplines through the option units. The endorsement for

this structure was shown in the responses to the Student and Staff Questionnaires. The interviews with the Front Line Troops gave further evidence of satisfaction with the course structure. It is interesting that the word 'flexibility' was used by a number of interviewees to describe one of the attractions of the programme. Further responsiveness on the part of BTEC was also shown with regard to the musicians who had been the least content with the common core of the National Diploma in Performing Arts. They had been able to move across to a National Diploma in Popular Music which was more specialist in its orientation.

It can be argued that this flexible responsiveness on the part of BTEC was a key reason for the continuation of the National Diplomas in the Performing Arts area. The expectation that the National Diploma in Performing Arts was to be scrapped in favour of the GNVQ failed to deter additional Colleges and Schools from applying for approval to offer it. Meanwhile BTEC itself was keen to maintain the 'Nationals' as they were a prime source of revenue bringing in more for Edexcel that the A-Levels. A successful lobbying campaign was therefore put in motion based on evidence of market demand for, and user endorsement of, the National Diplomas.

During the time that the Capey recommendations were being processed for the original five subjects in 1996/7, the GNVQ was introduced for the Performing Arts and the Entertainment Industries but arguably failed to take account of Capey's recommendations. An example of this can be discerned in the assessment area of GNVQ. Capey urged a move from element-based to unit-based assessment. However, this situation was not addressed by the awarding body. This is surprising

considering that the GNVQ in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries was introduced two years after the publication of the report which had made recommendations for all GNVQ subject areas.

The intention behind the GNVQ was to provide a programme which would be written in generic terms and theoretically could be undertaken within any one of the disciplines making up the Performing Arts. While all of the units of the programme were originally written by subject specialists they were edited and rewritten in a more generic form by staff from NCVQ. This resulted in outcomes worded in such an ambiguous fashion as to make them very difficult to interpret effectively within each of the disciplines. Further, there was little flexibility in the GNVQ structure to adapt the course requirements to the individual cultures of those disciplines, especially in assessment, while the opportunity to specialise was constrained by the use of 'additional units' that did not count towards the award.

Additionally, evidence from the Front Line Troops interviews shows that there was a reluctance to change the National Diploma for a new qualification which was perceived as very risky. The following quotes should gave a flavour of the feelings:

"...they have the perception of the GNVQ as being overly bureaucratic - that it's inflexible" [FLT1]

"... the thing got up and running without all of the thought having been put into it that was necessary" [FLT 2]

"far too much written records - I felt it was a little too restrictive" [FLT 3]

Owing to the lack of success of the GNVQ in this subject area there was a rapid attempt to rewrite it according to revised formulae. But the strictness of government directed control ensured that after the first drafts of the units had been produced and accepted by the Subject Advisory Committee the rules were changed and all the work had to be started again. At the present time this has resulted in an assessment programme and an enlarged paperwork burden which arguably has now been inappropriately imposed upon the new National Qualifications in Performing Arts - all 37 of them (Appendix 4).

The second aspect of the better congruence of the National Diploma with the requirements of the Performing Arts field lies in the approach to the role of the teacher, often in this field (as shown in the biographic data from the Staff Questionnaire) a practising performer. Under BTEC's National Diploma, teachers in colleges and schools had considerable professional autonomy. Interviews with the 'Front Line Troops' showed clearly that they were enthusiastic about the qualification because it allowed them to make their own judgements on the nature of the learning experiences which the students could have. Teachers could exercise discretion over:

- The manner and type of performances which the students produced
- Use of specialist facilities and performance groups proximate to the college
- The number of assignments required for each unit of work
- How best to generate an overall grade for each unit from the assignments completed
- Whether to use real or simulated work experience

- Whether to teach Common Skills within the disciplinary units or as an additional unit
- The need to address every one of the course objectives

Assumptions about the role of teachers implicit in the GNVQ model were rather different. They are described in a study of the implementation of GNVQ as follows: "The current managerial approaches to education risk reducing teachers to technicians who simply deliver the official curriculum to young people" (Gleeson & Hodgkinson 1995). "Whatever the theoretical justification for this model even a minimal engagement with the literature on curriculum development and change would have warned the architects of GNVQ that teachers could find this approach indigestible"(Yeomans 1998). The views of the Front Line troops interviewed in this study would endorse these reservations. Under the GNVQ in Performing Arts teachers had very little discretion as to how they would 'deliver' the curriculum or assess the students. Teachers had to design unrealistic aspects of performance in order to be 'in line' with other colleges or schools irrespective of any local advantageous opportunities for student learning.

The third aspect of the better fit between the National Diploma and the requirements of the specialist field of Performing Arts lies in the approach taken to assessment. "There is always going to be the tension between the skilled performance or the skilled production and something else that makes it a bit special. That something else that makes it a bit special is often very difficult actually to assess in a concrete kind of way"[OS 7]. As this comment from an Original Starter reveals, assessment issues are

problematic in the performing arts. It is very difficult to make judgements upon an ongoing performance. Assessment 'on the wing' is needed and this requires very clear criteria being used to evaluate the students. The subjective element, even of the meaning of such criteria, is very strong. The 'Original Starters' therefore decided that since there is no absolute measure of skill in performing arts, the only aspect of practical performance to be realistically assessed was the amount of progress made by each student - it is reasonable to expect a good level of agreement on how students have progressed irrespective of their starting points. This approach had the merit of relative simplicity and retained the all-important (in the eyes of staff and student) focus on skilled performance rather than (external) written tests of formal knowledge. Indeed teachers could decide not only how many assignments to set but even how to compute an overall grade from the grade given for each one. It had the disadvantage, however, of being difficult to moderate and standardise.

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By contrast, the GNVQ competence approach to assessment (i.e. outcomes admixed with grading criteria) had, for all its standardisation, been subjected to constant criticism for fragmenting understanding, being overly bureaucratic and heavy on paperwork (Hyland, 1994) (Smithers, 1993) (Wolf, 1995) and also according to Young for ignoring knowledge development (1995).

"GNVQs probably have the most complicated assessment procedures in the history of vocational qualifications" (Spours 1997). Staff in schools and colleges who were used to the assessment approach of the National Diploma, were therefore understandably reluctant to see the GNVQ imposed.

In the end, the National Diploma approach, while welcomed by staff, was to prove politically too far removed from the prevailing competence culture of GNVQ and too lacking in external reference points to survive an era of league tables, public concern about standards especially in FE Colleges, and the drive for parity of esteem with A Levels. BTEC began to move the National Diplomas towards a competence model for example by discouraging numerical grading:

> The use of clearly-designed criteria is more likely to yield consistent measurement of student performance from centre to centre than rigid adherence to set pass marks. Achievement of a particular mark is subordinate to the achievement of criteria determined by the aims and objectives. Consequently, any numerical grading used must be related to these criteria; if they are not so related, they must be adjusted. Although, for the time being, letter-grading and number-grading are acceptable, course teams should note the potentially misleading appearance of precision in number-grading. (BTEC 1986 - para. 24)

Meanwhile staff teaching the National Diploma began to seek advice as to how best to incorporate portfolios of evidence and other aspects of GNVQ into their assessment practice. The Researcher, for example, in the role of Moderator/External Verifier prepared guidance notes (unpublished) for schools and colleges for which he was contracted identifying those issues in the GNVQ which could be adopted into their delivery and assessment of the BTEC own brand qualifications.

> Although the emphasis changes from time to time in assessment requirements of the qualifications the following methods provide all of the basic needs and can be modified or customised to meet most requirements.
>
> The assessment of the programme BTEC National etc. can be improved by adopting **some aspects** of GNVQ procedures.
>
> a Portfolios of Evidence
> b Observation Schedules for Assessing Practical Activities
> c Internal Verification - Formalised and Fully Documented
>
> (Joseph 1998 page 1)

At the time of writing (2002) there is an impasse with regard to assessment. The demand from teachers and students, if better external assessment is required, is to have external examiners view performances. This is however a very expensive option for the awarding body; written tests are much cheaper to administer. The second version of the National Diplomas of six discipline titles introduced in 1998 (Appendix 4) did not have any external tests as the QCA and BTEC/Edexcel were unable to agree how to conduct the practical tests. It remains to be seen what will happen with the new range with 37 titles (Also Appendix 4) under the umbrella of the National Qualification Framework.

### 4. Market Appeal

The third and final reason suggested by the findings for the continuation of the National Diploma was its market appeal to young people who were more motivated by the explicit performance elements and technical training in such a programme than one that was more 'academic'. There is little doubt from the student questionnaires that those studying the National Diploma really believed that they had the possibility of becoming a performer – even a 'star' performer. The staff concurred that this was indeed the view of students and set out to harness their motivation so that they would come to understand the realities of professional performance life with its 'practice, practice, practice' and demands for self-discipline. In part, the students' strong identification with the life of a performer may have been bound up with their belief

that luck plays a goodly part in success alongside ability and training, but their goal was not in doubt.

By contrast, it is clear from the evidence presented in Chapter 3 that some NCVQ officers were determined to design the GNVQ in Performing Arts on a diametrically opposite premise i.e. that the students were most unlikely to 'make it' as performers and had to be tracked into the more realistic path of business administration in the arts. The amount of time available for performance development was limited, written tests came in, and specialisation in one of the disciplines was relegated to additional units that did not count towards the final grade. Indeed the full title of the GNVQ award was Performing Arts and *Entertainment Industries.*

It is not, perhaps surprising with hindsight that the enrolments in the new GNVQ did not take off as planned. Nor is it surprising that colleges, newly independent of local authorities and responsible for financial planning in a much more meaningful way, went with the market demand in spite of the additional costs of running the National Diploma compared to the GNVQ. Finally, BTEC itself needed to protect its income stream from the lucrative National Diplomas and this may well have motivated the heavy lobbying of Government to retain them.

One could argue that in the complex system that was vocational training in the Performing Arts field that at this point the market triumphed over the dirigisme of the government agencies.

## 5. Further research

In this Chapter the Researcher has tried to tease out and explore further several of the themes that seemed to underlie the findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4. He is, however, very much aware that in investigating one small part of the vocational training field, more issues have been thrown up than have been concluded. Future researchers might wish to explore one or more of these contributary areas.

Replication of the present research will no longer be possible as the demise of the ***original*** National Diploma in Performing Arts will remove the possibility of using students to make comparisons between that qualification and later approaches. This would now be possible only with staff who had experience which goes back to that time. However investigations based upon the issues identified in the findings could provide a most important impetus towards developing a deeper understanding of the special requirements of this unique subject area.

The major areas of concern which suggest themselves are:

- The role of a Common Skills/Core Skills/ Key Skills component in the Performing Arts Qualifications - HND, GNVQ, ND, FD, AVCE. The mode of their delivery and the role of their assessment towards the overall qualification.
- Structural questions which centre upon the 'specialist' or alternatively the 'comprehensive or broad' approaches. The various versions of BTEC own brand awards and the GNVQ/AVCE will provide numerous opportunities for gaining insights into the relative merits and disadvantages of these.

- Follow-Up studies on the various Level 3 approaches. Where are the students now? What happened next and did they end up? Identify which of the approaches has been the most helpful (and the most unhelpful) as vocational preparation - a specialist or a comprehensive one.
- A project concentrating upon the huge number of changes in Performing Arts vocational training since 1997. Looking at the overlapping of changes in structure and in time between each substantive change and the effects of this upon delivery, student expectations and student preferences. Also to evaluate the policy mode which lies behind each of these
- An extremely fruitful area of enquiry will be the issues of assessment for the Performing Arts. Besides the usual concern with reliability and validity, outcome related and norm related, subjective objective etc. the precision with which test objectives for practical performances are selected may prove to be the real source of troubles. For example the Researcher (a musician) has yet to meet anyone who can define 'musicianship' with scrupulous precision and yet it occurs regularly in tests.

The introduction of the original National Diploma in Performing Arts in 1987 was a significant event as it was the first attempt to provide a preparatory course for each of the Performing Arts which was based upon the most vocationally relevant area of practical performance. The vicissitudes of policies which were mainly centred upon the GNVQ/AVCE and also on the subsequent versions of the National Diplomas have been explored in this thesis and as this process is still in progress the Researcher

hopes that further projects will continue to investigate this area. The main focus of further research should be upon the subject area described as Performing Arts and be analysed as a broad educational environment but also as a series of specialist disciplines brought together to provide a comprehensive approach united by a homogeneity of outcome.

However we must always be aware of the motivational impulsion inherent in the aspiring performer - as one of the interviewees reminds us

> "....lots of what happens in the arts is not actually about qualifications it's about learning on the job it's about access, it's about all sorts of things. And it is true that many actors do get trained at RADA. It is also true that a huge number of performers don't get trained anywhere" (New Developer No 4)

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