

CASELOADING IN FURTHER EDUCATION: A SYSTEM OF DEVOLVED  
BUDGETS TO EMPOWER TEAMS, OR TO OBTAIN MORE FOR LESS?

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## **SYNOPSIS**

This report considers the use of Caseloading within Further Education. It includes a detailed description of Caseloading and the differing models available. A review of the limited literature available on Caseloading is included, and discussion of the environmental features that affected the development of Caseloading is undertaken. The changing political, economic, employment and curriculum delivery aspects of Further Education and their specific effects are outlined.

A case study of one Further Education college is reported, and evidence presented from interviews with staff involved in the Caseloading project using a devolved budget model. The objective of the study was to follow a pilot group of Caseloading teams through an academic year and assess the staff reaction and the success factors against the outcomes of teams operating under the standard budget management model. During the case study this objective changed, due to circumstances within the college. The match of the interview evidence with the other case study evidence is discussed and related to the environmental pressures affecting Further Education currently. This is supplemented by an external survey of the implementation of Caseloading, its advantages and disadvantages. Discussion of the research methodology and method is undertaken and the organisational context of the research and the findings is explored.

The benefits and implementation of devolved budget methods are considered in depth, in an organisational framework, with analysis of the stakeholder perspective on the change. The management of cultural change to establish new working practices and management models including de-centralisation of controls is outlined, in the context of the Caseloading model.

Empowerment through devolution creates a theme throughout the study and its potential as a motivational tool is explored. Conclusions regarding

the use of Caseloading are drawn and alternatives for achieving similar objectives are identified. Future avenues for continuing the research are briefly outlined which would continue the exploration in a direction which matches the dynamic environment impacting upon Further Education in England.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 What is Caseloading?**

Caseloading is a term that has been around in Further Education since colleges were made independent of Local Education authorities in 1993. It is however a term that is not widely understood. Its use raises mixed emotions in people. Managers see it potentially as a tool to get more work out of the same number of, or fewer people. Unions and staff seem to view it in a similar way, and therefore tend to resist it. There is a general conception that Caseloading is about individual workloads and weightings for types of activities, following a social services type model, where staff have a “caseload” of clients. This, however, is only part of the Caseloading model. The full Caseloading model is based on individuals or teams, with output targets related to their student recruitment, and the devolution of the resources to achieve those outputs.

The move towards “student centred learning” and away from traditional, closely structured programmes has generated a need to change staffing processes in Further Education. As the Kedney and Scribbins (1995b) report investigating the inception of Caseloading states,

“Different learning situations and indeed different kinds of learners call for different shapes or sizes or services from those structuring their learning, and those variables go towards making up the caseload of the number of staff involved.” (p4)

Sallis (1996) sees Caseloading as a practical method of utilising resources effectively,

“This is a truly professional approach to curriculum management and one that allows the philosophy of total quality management to flourish. It returns the responsibility for the curriculum and students’ learning to staff teams.” (p93)

With fewer student timetabled hours and a move towards resource based learning in all areas the closely defined role of the lecturer has to develop to match the changes in the experience of the student. Lecturer contracts which limit contact time and place restrictions on flexible ways of working place barriers to implementation of flexible delivery models. In some colleges Caseloading is seen as a way of avoiding the restrictions of the lecturers “Silver Book” control. It was in attempting to remove the restrictions inherent within this nationally negotiated contract that the first impetus for Caseloading was developed. Kedney and Scribbins (1995b ) point out that,

“At one level work - or case-loading may thus be seen as a natural outcome of the recent past as it seeks to find a new balance between regulation and freedom and flexibility, and between efficiency and equity. Thus, the detailed, shared but partial codification of the Silver Book can thus be replaced by a more comprehensive, map covering most or all of the lecturer’s duties and contractually available time.” (p5)

As most colleges have now moved to more flexible, college negotiated, contracts this is less of an issue in itself. However, restrictions usually remain in defining and controlling the use of lecturer time and much time and effort within colleges is still spent on discussions regarding equity of workload, appropriate activities and the amount of time that can be directed by college managers. Caseloading is an attempt to move the basis of this discussion from a continuing battle between college managers and teachers, to one where the teachers allocate the activities, based upon their professional skill and judgement. The overall level of

resources remains within the manager's hands, and the allocation within a Caseloading model must be transparent for it to work; but in essence Caseloading presents a cultural paradigm shift, from one of control and direction to one of devolution and empowerment. However the model adopted must relate to local circumstances. Initially it was felt that a standard Caseloading model would be useful in removing what were perceived as restrictive practices. Having investigated this hypothesis Kedney and Scribbins (1995b) concluded that,

“Early in our investigations any hope of finding **the** model or a model that could be universally taken up and adapted to local need vanished quickly, and colleges at the leading edge have consistently asserted that their work is experimental and that any lessons learnt should be treated with due care and attention.” (p57)

Kedney and Scribbins go on to outline three clusters of key purposes for Caseloading. These are identified as descriptions of models emerging in the early discussions on Caseloading, rather than authoritative or stable descriptions.

“The first such approach has a primary concern for a long term view of key values. It is holistic and general rather than specific and detailed, and as such might be characterised as being over-idealistic rather than immediately practical or concerned with detailed matters of implementation. It calls first for debate about end purposes and seeks exemplification through pilot projects which seek to demonstrate broad goals by tackling case-loading in the round rather than the detail. It seeks to lead by example, but only as and when other sections of the college appear ready does it take quantum leaps from past practice to new ways of thinking and acting.

The second approach is, by contrast, specific and analytical and seeks to develop models in a scientific manner. It explores

definitions and boundaries with a concern for detail and shared understanding and builds block on block. One of the features of its early stages of development is the mapping of the key elements of the professional role which can serve the setting of resource allocation and the work- loads of staff. It may primarily be concerned with the management of resources but its transparency can also serve industrial relations issues.

The third style has pragmatism as its key characteristic, seeing the introduction of case-loading as a largely political matter where change will call for some continuous redefinition of relationships and management of the boundaries. It draws on the elements of the first two as they appear to respond to current need, seeing the delivery of further education as a process of continuous change and re-definition. Managers manage by negotiating with individuals, teams and the organisation as and when circumstances demand.” (p59)

These three perspectives were refined through practice within colleges into two predominant models of Caseloading within FE.

## 1. Workloading

Workloading aims to balance individuals workloads, by recognising the different elements that may make up a teacher's activities. These activities extend beyond “class contact” to tutorial and recruitment activities, preparation and new developments, professional development and marketing. All the various activities are categorised and assigned a weighting factor. These weightings are usually based upon a measure of the complexity of the tasks and the preparation and expertise required to carry them out. Different styles of teaching and assessments will therefore carry different weightings as will activities directly connected with learning, in different settings. A workshop activity which requires supervision but little preparation or assessment will therefore have a lower weighting than

a formal taught session with detailed theoretical input and related assessment. Numbers of students in a group and the level of the subject will also be reflected in the weighting.

Workloading calculating formulas are used to adjust nominal working time and create weightings and compensations for each activity carried out. All teaching staff will therefore have the same nominal working load. The weighting of activity will adjust the actual workload to reflect the complexity of the tasks being undertaken.

This system allows for recognition of non-teaching duties, and the different demands of varying teaching duties. It is more sophisticated than the old course levels systems, which graded a course more highly the more advanced the level, and reduced the teaching load accordingly. The system is designed to produce equity of workload and clear management systems for allocating work to staff.

Drawbacks identified with the workload system include the continuing focus on class contact hours and compensation for those hours. This does not break the old culture of hour counting. In addition it can be very complex and bureaucratic, with detailed systems of weightings required and detailed systems of recording. The control of the activities and the weightings remains with management, engendering a control attitude. The responsibility and ownership of the activities is not placed with the lecturers. The system also starts from a base of measuring work. In an atmosphere of tension, where everyone feels that they are the one who is working hardest, everyone will seek to have an actual reduction in workload through this system. In a time of capped resources the opposite is the objective of managers. The workload system can therefore feed feelings of distrust and conflict and entrench both sides in time consuming disputes over weightings and relative values.

The Workload system, in my view, does not achieve the improvements in flexibility, ownership and resource utilisation that are being sought from

Caseloading. In some instances where it has been tried the College has moved on to a more team based Caseloading model, or has abandoned workloading altogether.

## 2. Caseloading

The Caseloading model is one which usually encompasses teams, rather than individuals. In this model the team is responsible for managing a caseload of students, linked to their recruitment targets, and achieving a set level of outcomes, usually qualification outcomes. They are given the responsibility for delivering these outcomes within the resources generated by the students numbers. The team can deploy the resources in a flexible way, to best achieve the outcomes and meet the needs of their specific students. The individual workload and balance of team members may differ and they may choose to specialise in activities or diversify. They may also decide on the learning styles to adopt and the types of staff that should be employed on the programme. The ultimate Caseloading model devolves the budget for curriculum delivery to the team, for staff, consumables and equipment. The staff then plan how to deploy those resources to achieve the planned outcomes. The manager's role is to monitor activities and ensure budgets are contained and targets met. Development activities become the responsibility of the team and they are free to release individuals from teaching to undertake other activities which the team see as necessary. Annual teaching loads are not considered in a Caseloading model, as the team allocates activities to members to meet the curriculum and development needs. Sallis (1996) identifies the benefits of a Caseloading model in assuring quality and outlines the devolved model as one where,

“...it is the teaching unit's decision as to how much resource is put into direct teaching, projects, tutorials, workshops, resource-based learning or any other approach to learning. Academic units are given the freedom to adopt new and innovative approaches if they feel it is to the students' benefit. They can decide on the workloads



of their staff and distribute work in ways which meet their curriculum goals rather than have staff workloads determined by senior management.” (p92)

Control of resources therefore passes to teams, rather than remaining with managers. This has potentially far reaching implications for the roles of all staff involved in Caseloading. In reality the model of Caseloading adopted is along a continuum of autonomy which gives more or less responsibility to the teams involved. These models are not mutually exclusive and some colleges are using a hybrid model. Generally the second model is the one being developed, although it may start off as the workload model.

In this investigation I will concentrate on the second model, and explore to what extent the perceptions of managers, staff and unions, as outlined above, are mistaken. This investigation will take the form of a casestudy of one institution that is working towards a devolved budget Caseloading model. The views of the stakeholders within the institution and their reactions to Caseloading will be explored. I will also explore the implementation of Caseloading in other colleges and the level of success achieved.

A wider context, looking at the political and financial pressures placed upon further education since 1993 will also form part of the discussion, with a reflection on how these pressures have made Caseloading an area for exploration by generating the imperative to change ways of working, and especially of management of its most valuable and expensive resource, the staff.

## **1.2 Review of the Literature**

The terms, conditions and working arrangements of teaching staff in Further Education have continued as the subject of debate since the 1980's. Following Incorporation in 1993 this debate gathered speed, as the separate colleges became independent employers, each with their

own agenda and preferred ways of working. Caseloading therefore came to the fore as an issue following Incorporation, as a potential method for changing ways of working. To date very few formal studies have been conducted on Caseloading, although it is an area which a number of colleges are exploring or utilising. In June 1995 a report was published by the College Employers Forum, a body representing Further Education colleges, on Caseloading systems. This study by Kedney and Scribbins (1995a) on behalf of the CEF and the Association of Principals of Colleges (APC) outlines their initial investigation and gives the only exploration of any detail into Caseloading in practice within the sector. In the preface to the report the tone and approach to the introduction of Caseloading is set by Keith Scribbins, Chair of the review group,

“...feedback show the potential of the new ways of working with our most precious asset, our colleagues.” (95/1)

Caseloading was therefore at the outset intended to be a method for changing working practices, at least by the employers. A number of pressures are identified within the Further Education sector which give rise to interest in Caseloading. These include; the move from teaching to learning, more student centred approaches, the changing role of the teacher, flexible employment contracts and the rate of change within the sector. The impetus for Caseloading methods is identified in the report as coming from the pressure for greater flexibility. This is flagged as an industrial relations issue. Resource management, to create efficiency gains, including spreading activity throughout the year is a second driver towards Caseloading methods. A cultural change towards control of resources at delivery level is identified as the third driver for change. The report highlights the support within the sector for the cultural change aspects and the empowerment objective as a long term aspiration in using Caseloading models. This is an encouraging sign within the report, which along with the follow up report, tends to focus on the need to change working practices and make savings, rather than the benefits to the delivery teams of adopting this model.

In order to collect information on Caseloading, as they acknowledge that there exists limited literature which relates to the framework, colleges were surveyed for their responses to Caseloading and the methods used. The variety of approaches and the lack of a single definition for Caseloading is also acknowledged. These points are referred to in greater detail in chapter 2.

In the conclusion to the report Kedney and Scribbins speculate as to whether Caseloading is more than a passing initiative which excites the Further Education sector. They do propose it as a mechanism for coming to grips with some of the changes affecting the sector and the kinds of cultural shifts in management style and methods that will be required.

The CEF paper 95/1 was followed up later in the year by another report 95/5. This report puts Caseloading in context as a vehicle for change and presents college case studies using different Caseloading models. In the introduction to the report the Chief Executive of the CEF, Roger Ward highlights the fact that some of the high ideals which lead to an exploration of Caseloading become translated into more modest reforms following attempts at implementation. This I think is a salutary lesson for those who view Caseloading as a quick fix answer to human resource allocation issues. The detailed content of this report is discussed at length below, in considering the political pressures which have influenced the introduction of Caseloading methods. The report outlines the differing Caseloading models and the reasons for their introduction. The central focus remains on changing teacher working practices and making efficiency gains. The aspirations of creating cultural change and empowerment are occasionally acknowledged, but the weight of evidence is on the practical industrial relations side, rather than the idealistic involvement and empowerment side. The introduction and background report is followed by a description of seven colleges and their approach to Caseloading. In the concluding section of the report, reflecting on the evidence of the case studies, Kedney and Scribbins observe,

“Case-loading has the potential to be very simple or very complex.....But in a turbulent environment needs to be approached with care and sensitivity.” (95/5 p57)

To date the search for one key model which encompasses Caseloading for the whole sector has failed, as Kedney and Scribbins note, Caseloading models are very context specific. The report does not come to any firm conclusions regarding the use of Caseloading, but it does stress its potential value as a mechanism for change. It sets out the evidence and asks us to draw our own conclusions, as only time will tell. Looking back from four years on I have tried to draw some of these conclusions within the report that follows. The CEF reports therefore create the framework and context for the discussion of Caseloading. As the mouthpiece of the employers they put forward the organisational perspective on the use, design and benefits of Caseloading. I hope to follow this up by giving a context specific description of Caseloading and the views of other stakeholders.

To allow colleges to follow up on Caseloading models and discuss the ideas around Caseloading the CEF published paper 95/6 which outlined the colleges who were actively exploring Caseloading models and the type they were proposing.

In 1996 the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) published a report on Caseloading as the second volume in their new Developing Further Education reports. This report by Sue Carroll built on the introductory discussion in the CEF papers and discussed further the pressures for change making Caseloading an attractive model. The two distinct types of model, referred to as “Workloading” and “Caseloading” are outlined. The development of the model, which tends towards the devolved budget Caseloading system is also considered. A detailed discussion of the issues raised by Carroll is undertaken in chapter 2.

The common themes motivating the introduction of Caseloading are identified. These include; flexibility, changes to teacher working practices, funding models, the breadth of activities undertaken and creating a link between resource input and measurable outputs. The study goes on to include ten case studies which use a variety of Caseloading and resource allocation models as illustrations of the issues involved in the introduction of Caseloading. No general conclusions are drawn, the reader is left to follow up the specific experiences which best match their requirements and priorities. To date no further detailed report or study of Caseloading models in Further Education has been produced.

### **1.3 Building on the evidence outlined in the literature**

Within Carroll's report two college experiences are explored in detail, at Northbrook College and Accrington and Rossendale College. The Accrington and Rossendale model is the one which uses the devolved budget Caseloading model as outlined above, and is the model on which the case study model was based. The aims of the Accrington and Rossendale project as outlined within the FEDA Caseloading report are reproduced in full below as they were the guidelines used to develop the Casestudy College model. They therefore, provide a useful reference point for the discussion of the model.

*"The system should:*

- \* be perceived as fair*

*The present system takes no account of the number of students for whom a lecturer is responsible. Differences in the amount of additional work generated by a class contact hour are widely recognised to be unfair. Caseloading should overcome these inequities.*

- \* *be based on outcomes*

*The funding methodology emphasises the accountability of colleges and awards funding according to outcomes, in terms of recruitment, retention and achievement. This accountability should be integral to Caseloading.*

- \* *emphasise recruitment, retention and achievement*

*The changed emphasis from recruitment alone as the main basis for funding colleges, to recruitment, retention and achievement should be recognised in the allocation of resources, including staffing costs.*

- \* *encourage flexibility*

*The present system puts up barriers to flexibility. Caseloading should encourage flexibility by ensuring that lecturers, as well as students, can benefit from it.*

- \* *reward efficiency*

*Under the traditional system, any efficiencies made by a team benefit the central budget and not the team itself or their students. Caseloading should ensure that any savings made as a result of the team's efforts, benefit that team's own budget.*

- \* *empower and enable teams*

*Teams of staff should make decisions about how to deliver the curriculum to meet their student's needs. They should be free to use available resources as they think appropriate, rather than according to bureaucratic formulae, such as those that monitor course and class contact hours.*

- \* *work in conjunction with other current demands*

*Increased administration is a growing problem for lecturers. The development of Caseloading should seek to make use of existing systems, where possible, and not create additional administration.*

- \* *acknowledge “we want you to work differently, not harder”*

*The college states that this is one of the ways in which increases in efficiency can be achieved. However, according to college management guidelines new contracts mean an increase in class contact hours. Caseloading should provide a system where the emphasis is on an increase in outcomes - more students and/or more qualifications. It is up to the lecturer and the team to decide on how to achieve this.*

### **Essential Elements**

*To address the above criteria, the essential elements of the Caseloading system that was agreed at Accrington and Rossingdale College, were:*

- \* *resources for part time staffing and for consumables will be delegated to the team as one budget*
- \* *teams can use the budget in whatever way they think most appropriate for the needs of the students, within the context of college policy*
- \* *resources will be allocated according to the number of FEFC units the team achieve*

- \* *programmes not funded by FEFC will be translated into FEFC unit equivalents. “ (p41-43)*

In devising the Caseloading model for Casestudy College the Accrington and Rossingdale model was used as the basis. A parallel, but independent, development was also instigated, in the introduction of new types of post. The posts, on support staff contracts, were designed to increase flexibility and to address some of the concerns of lecturing staff regarding the increasing administrative load. Learning Adviser and Vocational Assessor posts have been introduced. These staff work with students in workshop, classroom or real work settings to guide and assess their learning. They also take on a large amount of the tracking and monitoring responsibility for groups of students. This involves monitoring attendance and assessments and following up on poor achievement. Assessors visit students in work placements and monitor and assess progress. This frees up lecturer time to deliver theory work, and formal teaching sessions, assess written work and develop the curriculum. Curriculum teams are encouraged to include Learning Advisers and Vocational Assessors in their teams to form a more flexible mix of staffing and more efficient use of resources. Staff on these contracts also work all year, rather than on lecturer contracts, which allows for continuing delivery through work based learning and commercial workshops such as in Catering, Hair and Beauty areas.

The Casestudy College Strategic Plan contains a commitment to introduce Caseloading, although it does not specify the model to be used. Following initial research into the various models used within the Further Education sector, based upon feedback from the FEDA study, the devolved budget model was adopted. This model was discussed with senior staff, managers and NATFHE, the recognised lecturer union. It was decided to pilot Caseloading in 1997/98 to assess the model's suitability and the potential for use across the whole college. This case study follows the



development of the project and the move towards Caseloading with the college.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **POLITICAL PRESSURES AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CASELOADING IN FURTHER EDUCATION.**

#### **2.1 Background**

Further Education colleges were removed from Local Authority control in April 1993. As Incorporated colleges they were independent and responsible for their own budget control, employment contracts and strategic planning processes. The Incorporated colleges were to be funded in a new way, based on recruitment, retention and achievement of students. In 1992 the details of the mechanism were still unclear, but achievement based resourcing was seen as the fairest way of allocating scarce resources. Caseloading follows this reasoning. If resources follow activity and success then only the most appropriate activities will be undertaken, those which provide quality provision which meets client needs. Fletcher (1992) agrees that colleges should be funded in a way which links success in promoting student achievement. He cites four reasons for this, summarised below, which can be translated into drivers promoting the exploration of Caseloading models, (p169)

1. Current models take no account of success. Resources are given to teams based on student numbers, in a more or less arbitrary way, Caseloading makes direct links between activity levels, student success and resources.
2. No account is taken of student progress and no allowance is made for value added, which acknowledges the starting point for the student and their relative support needs. Caseloading can create a system where the team can allocate resources to support student needs directly, rather than by central formula.

3. Measuring full time equivalents is flawed. Calculating students as FTEs creates arbitrary resourcing distinctions. Linking to units of funding generated will encompass entry, on-programme and achievement funding.
4. The current arrangements presuppose a course based system. Flexible delivery should allow for modular credit based on participation and achievement. Devolving funding units generated to delivery teams can allow for a flexible matrix programme system where students can mix and match provision, and the resources follow the student.

Caseloading was generated in part as a mechanism for coping with the cultural changes being forced on Further Education. Gorringer (1994) highlights this in his discussion of the move from an “allocation” to an “earning “ model of funding. Bush and West Burnham (1994) also identify output budgeting as a rational model, rather than one which focuses on inputs. By this method resource allocation can be directly related to achieving the objectives of the organisation. Gorringer (1994) points out the change from a Local Authority model which always seemed to be a struggle to get more money, to one based on earning money based on delivery of high quality services. He identifies that the emphasis has therefore changed from a model based on competency, to one that takes a holistic view of delivery of services. Hours of work, holidays, and reward schemes all need to reflect this change. This shift in resource allocation model creates a greater need for systematic planning because resources must be related to objectives in advance. The objectives themselves must also be specified in a systematic way. In addition, priorities are established, because alternatives will be available, and performance indicators are necessary to assess the effectiveness of the use of resources and allocation of future resources.

Along with the independence given to the sector came an expectation that efficiency gains would be made. In the first three years after Incorporation colleges were expected to increase in efficiency measures by 8% per annum. This was to be achieved by delivering more outcomes, with a lower level of resources. "Outcomes", is political speak for recruiting more students, increasing the retention rates of students, and raising the qualification rate. All of this was to be achieved by raising quality and reducing cost. Students are no longer individuals as far as the Further Education system is concerned, they are multiple units of resource. Each student programme carries a number of units of resource. These are calculated on entry, during the programme and at exit, so that pre-course guidance, the teaching and learning process and the achievement level are all tied into the funding mechanism. Retention of students is given high priority by the triannual census points, which ensure that only students still undertaking the programme are funded. Central government is also increasingly tying resources, especially resources to facilitate growth in student numbers, to specific initiatives and outcomes. One such initiative is the Widening Participation funding, which is intended to promote increased participation by disadvantaged, disaffected and excluded groups. If the target numbers of such individuals, identified by postcode, are not recruited growth funding is removed. The additional funding cannot be used to support work in other areas as that is not contributing to a government priority. The implicit assumption from the government was that Further Education was inefficient, largely due to poor working practices, lack of focus on quality and little emphasis on student achievement. Commenting on fieldwork undertaken by Rix (1997) in a Further Education college in 1997 Capizzi et al (1997) state that

"...national policy was generally perceived as hostile and economically determined." (p46)

This expectation of achieving growth, efficiency and quality is referred to by Leever and Dixon (1999) as,

“the three-card trick of achieving more and better for less”. (p1)

Leevers and Dixon go on to say that expansion in colleges has occurred in line with government targets, but generally without a corresponding increase in financial resources, and that colleges have achieved significant increases in efficiency. They highlight how difficult it is to bring off the third element of the trick, to also make it better quality. In order to achieve these efficiency gains staff contracts terms and conditions came under the spotlight. Staff expenditure was, and still is, the largest part of any college's budget. Reductions in this expenditure was the major tool in the efficiency drive. Since the early 1980s there had been pressure from the government to change the contract terms and conditions for lecturers. The national terms and conditions were contained in a document called the “Silver book”. This detailed the class contact hours that various grades of lecturers could be asked to undertake during any one week. This became the chief mechanism for controlling the workload of lecturers, as changes to timetables, overtime and changes to the teaching year all had to be agreed within the framework of the Silver Book. It became a political issue to remove what were seen as restrictive practices and to remove the Silver Book protection for lecturers nationally. Scribbins (1993) claimed that lecturers were clinging to formulations of the 1970s in the Silver Book. He stated that,

“The philosophies of teaching and learning have changed. It is not that the class contact hours, for example, are too low, it is simply that they are an outmoded way of characterising the job”.

(TES December 3 1999)

This pressure continues ten years later, despite the warning given by Leevers and Dixon (1999) that,

“Effort should be concentrated on improving the student rather than the teacher - the quality of the learning experience rather than the issues such as contact hours or contracts.... ” (p8)

In 1989, after a long dispute some initial changes were agreed by the employers and the lecturers unions, which streamlined the grading and pay structures in Further Education but did not affect the fundamental contract terms.

The contracts and terms and conditions of lecturers, enshrined in the Silver Book, were seen as an obstacle to change, as stated in the Kedney and Scribbins (95b).

“There can be no other industry in which there has been such fast change, or such a big change in technology, which has managed to retain the belief that rigid demarcation and time control is the essence of professionalism.” (p8)

Following Incorporation national bargaining was removed, as each college became an individual employer. National conditions and pay levels for Further Education lecturers began to disappear after April 1993. Unlike other public sector workers, including the health service who have a comparable decentralised structure, pay rises were not centrally funded from that date. Any changes in pay, terms and conditions were left to the individual colleges to negotiate and fund. This divisive strategy has created a range of practice across the sector and led to increased difficulties for attempts to create a national framework of conditions. The terminology adopted to refer to this fundamental change in the status of colleges reflects the watershed that the changes 1993 represented. Incorporation, always with a capital I, is used as the shorthand term for the whole package of changes emanating from the 1992 Education Act, and which still has knock-on effects in 1999, with the first closure of colleges which have not coped with the financial independence and accountability foisted upon colleges.

In attempting to find equitable solutions to the pressures facing staff in Further Education a number of groups looked to Caseloading as a method

for creating equity and flexibility in employment practices. Other professionals use Caseloading models effectively, to manage resource allocation and workload. It was felt that Further Education could benefit from their experience. As Carroll (1996) highlighted,

“Caseloading has been the focus of considerable interest since the Incorporation of colleges in 1993. Further Education managers are striving to find new systems for deploying and accounting for the human resource represented by academic staff, to ensure maximum flexibility and productivity.” (p1)

The Colleges Employers Forum, a membership organisation representing the majority of Further Education colleges, was established in 1993. This forum acted as the advisory service for colleges and led in negotiations with unions on a national level. It was intended to replace some of the previous national negotiation machinery with a centralised body, due to the diverse size and nature of colleges and the lack of expertise they held individually. The CEF advised on new contracts and working practices for colleges who wished to remove the Silver Book contract rules previously accepted by all LEAs. In response to the perceived need for new ways of working for lecturing staff, to create greater flexibility and make the required efficiency gains, the CEF commissioned a report on Caseloading in autumn 1994. The report considered the pilot studies and plans that were emerging across the Further Education sector in 1994/95. As the report states, (Kedney and Scribbins 95a)

“The growth in activity (regarding Caseloading) has coincided with the coming together of a number of pressures on colleges which individually, but more particularly in combination, have radical implications for the development of Caseloading.” (p2)

Austin (1994), who extolles the virtues of Caseloading as a method of creating flexibility and giving teachers more scope for professional judgement cautioned,

“It emphatically isn’t a quick fix for our current difficulties.” (TES 24 June 1994)

The actual role and scope of Caseloading was still undefined in 1994, and perhaps remains so today. In a follow up report by Kedney and Scribbins (95b) the introduction identifies that,

“For some of its supporters it appears to offer a cure for all the ills associated with the current management of staff time. Indeed for them it holds out the possibility of professionalising staff management by linking work allocations to actual work-loads.” (p3)

The assumption here, often expressed by the CEF, is that the lecturer’s workload is low and that changes are necessary to ensure that lecturers undertake additional work, controlled and defined by managers. The political aspects of Caseloading are also articulated in this report,

“...seeing the introduction of case-loading as a largely political matter where change will call for some continuous re-definition of relationships and management of the boundaries.” (p59)

The changing role of the lecturer and the changing shape of the curriculum and curriculum delivery styles is seen by the CEF as central to Caseloading developments. These changes are the main driving forces behind the Caseloading pilots being undertaken shortly after Incorporation. The CEF generally was seen not only as the employer’s mouthpiece, that is the college management’s, but also the government’s mouthpiece. The Chief Executive of the CEF was seen as someone with a very specific political agenda, to change the ways of working of lecturers and to force confrontation to achieve that change.

The changing role of the lecturer becomes increasingly tied up with the changing of employment contracts. Carroll (1996) identifies Caseloading



as a method of easing the introduction of new employment contracts for lecturers, due to the recognition it gives to the full range of duties undertaken by the lecturer. McGavin (1996) also refers to Caseloading as being viewed by college managers as a way of introducing new contracts and recognising additional, non-teaching, duties. The CEF start from a point which does not allow for increased flexibility and efficiency without contract change. The roles of curriculum delivery teams are placed centre stage, with their contribution to the increased achievement levels clearly stated. The 95/5 report states that colleges need to move away from a bureaucratic and administrative culture towards a devolved and delegated decision making system. Caseloading is seen as a central element of this cultural shift. These cultural shifts, viewed as imperative by the employers and their representatives may be viewed in very different ways by the lecturers and their representatives. As Peeke (1999) points out,

“...teachers may favour curriculum innovation that involves updating the content of a programme of study, but be fundamentally opposed to attempts to change teaching practices and methods”. (p7)

Caseloading can be seen as a feature of cultural change, creating the flexibility and framework upon which cultural change at the underlying level can be generated. Caseloading, if used to change contracts, terms and conditions can remove the basic assumptions which underpin the ways of working for lecturers. As Peeke claims, the predominant attitudes of the individuals within an organisation establish the culture and the ways of working. Caseloading was viewed by CEF and some colleges as a way of creating the change they desired, creating major organisational shifts through changes to team working arrangements. The CEF report identifies Caseloading as a catalyst for cultural change, one of empowerment for the front line delivery staff and away from managers. Carroll (1996) sees Caseloading as a mechanism for shifting from a system based on inputs, to one based on outputs. That is, rather than counting class contact hours and lecturer time, the unit would be learning outcomes achieved, within the

resources generated through the unit funding methodology. Teams would be assessed on student achievement in terms of credits achieved, how they had utilised the resources available, and what they had achieved, rather than whether they had adhered to timetables and balanced their registers. This would create a framework where staff were responsible for deciding how to deploy their time and how to manage the student learning process. The impact that this may have on the managers role and the cultural shift required are outlined later in this discussion.

The claim within the CEF report that Caseloading could remove bureaucracy in management structures is not born out by later findings, especially of the workload models, a major criticism of which is that it is overly bureaucratic. This is accepted in the 95/5 CEF report,

“The formulaic approach to mapping has not found universal favour, being seen by some as over-complex and potentially very bureaucratic.” (p67)

Carroll (1996) also identifies bureaucracy as a drawback of the workload model,

“It appears to be complex and bureaucratic, involving the development, acceptance and application of complicated weightings and formulae.” (p9)

The CEF was seeking to remove the underpinning of regulation of class contact hours from lecturer conditions, and saw Caseloading as one method of achieving this. These were seen as industrial relations issues, rather than innovative management issues aimed at empowering teams of delivery staff. In addition the resource implications of flexible working practices, with the imperative for efficiency gains was heavily emphasised by the employers. In 95/5 Caseloading is identified as an empowering method, under the team delegation rather than the workload model,

“If the culture of top down management, with its concern for precise measurement and accountability, can give way to devolution of powers and responsibilities to a team delegating Caseloading thus shifts the deployment of resources closer to those charged with managing and delivering the service. Empowerment takes the process yet further. It enables those charged with the service to proceed with a minimum of managerial or institutional intervention beyond the initial allocation of the resources and consequent calling to account for the use of those resources against outcomes. Individual lecturers thus operate through a blend of self and peer group regulation rather than a written rule-book and managerial intervention.” (p5)

Carroll (1996) also identifies one of the objectives for the introduction of Caseloading as empowerment of teaching staff.

“..Empowering staff as professionals, responsible for managing the learning of a caseload of students, by giving them the necessary autonomy to apply their professional expertise for the benefit of the ‘client’, e.g. control of resources; self direction and regulation within agreed frameworks.” (p7)

This empowering view is one that accords with the view of many in the Further Education sector, and the one which drives the Caseloading model at Casestudy College, but it appears at odds with the hard line resource driven position usually espoused by the CEF on behalf of the employers. This is probably the product of a report written by committee rather than a stance adopted by the CEF as an organisation. In 95/1 report the resource imperative emerges,

“No-one is likely to doubt that the development of Caseloading has to be seen in the context of financial constraint. The associated need to raise productivity and to plan for the lean years to come are

influential factors impacting on every college and Caseloading is both a response to, and is affected by, that factor.” (p7)

In 95/5 it further stated,

These (financial) pressures have resulted in a growing interest in Caseloading as a means of obtaining better utilization from the teaching force currently available within colleges.” (p11)

The CEF reports identify increased motivation and morale, through Caseloading empowerment as one reason for its introduction. In 1998 NATFHE identified in the report on their nation wide survey (Burchill1998) that managers in all responding colleges, including those using Caseloading, considered the morale of staff to be low, and that absenteeism was rising. The role of Caseloading as an empowerment tool will be returned to below.

The drive for greater efficiency was accepted within the sector. If colleges failed to use this drive to increase lecturer outputs the CEF felt that new custom and practice would arise which would block future changes. An alternative view, based on cultural change is put forward by the employers looking for a more holistic view of the changes required. This move would place the resources under the control of the teams delivering the service, and create a flexible team which could respond to customer needs. This would change the whole face of the organisation.

“What is sought is nothing less than a irreversible change to a learning environment.” (95/1 p4)

This objective and benefit is supported by Carroll (1996), who identifies the opportunity to develop and deliver student centred curriculum on an individual need basis, as an anticipated outcome of the team based Caseloading model. The CEF report states that the colleges expressing a view about cultural change and Caseloading, saw it as an opportunity to

empower staff delivering the curriculum. However, they caution against assuming that the experiences of some employers in seeking widespread cultural change through devolved management can be transferred to the whole sector. In the event the Caseloading models moved in this direction and away from the strict industrial relations focus placed upon them by the CEF. Enthusiasm for the freedom that Caseloading models are designed to generate is also reported by colleges engaging in Caseloading pilots. In a time of increasing change, following Incorporation even the CEF saw that the rate of change and the economic pressures may undermine this co-operative and empowering basis and confirm the reality of economic pressures.

## **2.2 Changing Roles**

As the changes following Incorporation gathered speed, underpinned by the funding mechanism, the roles of curriculum delivery staff also began to change. The development of flexible learning facilities, and cost effective output generation led to a tension between cost and quality. This created more pressure on the roles and responsibilities of lecturers and their existing working practices. This gave greater impetus for the move to new contracts for lecturers and away from the Silver Book. The CEF report (95/1) makes the link between resources, workload and Caseloading clear,

“Focusing on the activities of academic staff in a period when the value of resource base is declining makes the relationship between productivity and Caseloading a critical issue.” (p9)

Caseloading can therefore be seen from the employers point of view as a way of increasing productivity without increasing cost (or possibly decreasing costs). This method was, and still is, seen as a way of breaking the restrictive practices of the Silver Book. In an attempt to promote new delivery methods and to promote learning, rather than teaching, many colleges adopted new roles within curriculum delivery.

The role of the lecturer increasingly included student guidance, tracking, reporting and monitoring. As retention and achievement of students became central to achievement of funding, as well as achievement for students, increased emphasis was placed upon documentation and action planning. Some roles were centralised to remove the variance generated by a wide range of lecturers undertaking standard tasks. This mainly focused upon recruitment and guidance, with central student services teams established to co-ordinate admissions and guidance to programmes. This provided an impartial service, staffed by trained and informed guidance staff, rather than teaching staff. Guidance staff were also employed on support staff contracts, rather than teaching contracts, at lower rates of pay. The central service was therefore seen not as just more effective, but also more efficient.

It did however take away from the lecturing staff the discretion over recruitment to programmes. In some instances open access policies were adopted, to promote wider participation. These were co-ordinated throughout the central services and allowed the usual entry requirements to be waived for mature students. The double impetus of access and funding may be seen as driving these initiatives, as growth targets were established. However in an attempt to hit growth targets damage was done in some cases to retention and achievement levels, to the detriment not only of the students, but also of the funding. In an effort to achieve the growth targets it seems apparent that entry requirements for programmes were relaxed, in line with the idea of widening access. This led in some cases to students accessing inappropriate programmes, on which they failed to achieve, and were thus de-motivated and could not progress to their planned goals. In order to generate extra units from each student additionality, adding extra qualification aims, became the norm. This enhanced the student programme, sometimes without adding to the input costs, due to dual accreditation. This placed additional pressure on to the students and their achievement suffered through dilution of personal aims and overloading of programmes. Interviews by subject specialist staff, following the central admissions process were generally re-introduced to

counter this aspect, returning one area to the control and management of the teaching staff.

Changes to working practices were intended to reduce bureaucracy and centralisation, but as can be seen from this one example the reality was often the complete opposite. A greater effect on Caseloading projects, and specifically at Casestudy College has been the introduction of new roles into the curriculum delivery teams. Caseloading was intended to create flexibility and to remove some of the arbitrary boundaries between tasks and the definition of those tasks. The whole emphasis of the Silver Book was on what constituted class contact, and the hours of class contact were regulated. The activities undertaken were therefore regulated. By introducing new contracts and new roles these restrictions were removed to some extent.

At Casestudy College new learning adviser, assessor and trainer roles were introduced into some delivery teams, which created a major cultural shift. These new roles affected the lecturer's role, by undertaking some activities which had been the exclusive province of lecturers. This coupled with the continuing debate over lecturer terms and conditions created uncertainty for lecturers who felt that their position was being eroded, to the detriment of the quality of provision. Following detailed discussions with unions and agreement over demarcation of roles these teaching support staff are now integrated into teams. In some areas the majority of the student supervision is carried out by these teaching support staff, with lecturers undertaking only the formal teaching and the personal tutorship of students. The administrative side of the students life, with assessments, tracking and monitoring is done by teaching support staff who are on contracts which do not specify contact hours and which cover the calendar year, rather than the academic year. In areas delivering NVQs in real work environments this has led to the development of commercial operations where students are trained using commercial clients and supervised by trainers, rather than being given off the job theoretical input by lecturers. These events have overtaken Caseloading

plans in these areas to some extent, as the flexibility and cost savings sought have been achieved in different ways.

An interesting point is that the acceptance at Casestudy College of these new roles within teaching teams was facilitated to a large degree by the claim by the recognised teachers' union (NATFHE), that the lecturers were having too much paperwork to do to be able to teach effectively. The new teaching support roles were introduced as a way of reducing the administrative burden on lecturers and allowing them to concentrate on their key tasks of tutorials, teaching and advice to students. The introduction of these, in CEF terms, para-professional, roles introduces management issues, as well as issues for lecturers as they change the scope and nature of Caseloading. The CEF identified the coincidence of Caseloading and the development of the "para-educ" role as highly significant.

### **2.3 Changing contracts**

Between 1994 and 1996 most colleges moved away from the Silver Book, by negotiating at a local level with unions to develop new contracts. These were often based on the CEF recommended contracts, but varied widely in limits on contact hours and other terms. In a survey published in September 1998 NATFHE reported that less than 10% of lecturers nationally remained on the Silver Book (Burchill 1998). This change broke the national framework and removed the collective strength of the unions to negotiate regarding terms and conditions. Since the change of government in May 1997, new initiatives have been instituted to create a new national framework of terms and conditions, not to put back the Silver Book, but to standardise contracts across the sector. The new Labour government made it clear that they expected to see a national framework and the teaching unions included a national framework in their pay claim in January 1998. The House of Commons select Committee Report on



Further Education (19 May 1998) is quoted by the AoC (AoC 13/98) as recommending that:

“It is important to establish certain model conditions for the employment of Further Education staff, reflecting the fact that it is a national service.”

In the preface to the consultation document regarding a national framework the employers association, the AoC (the successor to the CEF), stated that they and the teaching unions were committed to a strong national negotiations framework and that it was to the benefit of all parties to create a national collective agreement on pay and conditions. The unions entered discussions with the AoC to compile a new national framework. This national framework gave bandings of class contact hours ranging from 800 - 900 hours per annum. The employers side accepted this framework and saw it as an opportunity to re-open discussion on contracts locally. NATFHE nationally however rejected it, by a very small margin, on a small secret ballot response.

The contracts negotiated by individual colleges were, by 1998, seen in some areas as being too restrictive and putting too many constraints on the working time and definitions of lecturers. As financial pressures continued to bite across the sector some colleges felt that the new contracts were not meeting the needs of their core business. Casestudy College was one of these colleges, who had created a contract at the lower end of the class contact levels, and with high levels of holiday and self managed time allowances. This was felt to be restricting the scope of managers to change curriculum delivery styles and practices in areas where the delivery teams were still made up completely of lecturers. The new national framework was seen as one way of re-opening discussion on lecturer working practices, and changes to them were postponed in order to await the outcome of national negotiations. In the event, with the framework being rejected and the employers side unwilling to make further concessions as demanded by NATFHE the Casestudy college decided to

go ahead with changes to lecturer working practices. The AoC reported on 3 March 1999 (AoC 4/99) that the dispute with NATFHE over the Silver Book was finally at an end and that,

“After several attempts to negotiate a detailed national contract it has been agreed that this would no longer be the focus for national negotiations.” (p1)

The AoC and NATFHE decided to continue discussing terms and conditions and pay, but not hours of work, this is to be subject to local agreement. The dispute is therefore declared a draw, with agreement to disagree over hours the only outcome. This places the emphasis for discussions on contract hours back with the Colleges. The TES quoted the NATFHE General Secretary as saying,

“For six years, the only thing NATFHE and AoC have talked about is hours. What this decision has done is to say if we haven’t been able to solve one thing for six years, it shouldn’t stop us talking about other things.” (TES March 5 1999)

These changes included the acceptance of Caseloading, which had been discussed and developed with NATFHE’s assistance, but not in the event implemented at Casestudy College. The more radical changes however were to lecturer contact hours, with proposals to increase the annual class contact limit. The Caseloading proposals were again reduced to a peripheral issue by these changes. The contract changes, working practice changes, staff profile changes and funding changes all conspired to push Caseloading further off the agenda after 1998. This does not appear to be because the changes which Caseloading was designed to bring about were unnecessary or unwelcome, but that the changes had to a large extent been made by other means. Economic pressures had in many cases created more rapid changes than were envisaged by either the unions or the employers and events had overtaken the Caseloading models. As the NATFHE branch secretary confirmed at Casestudy

college, the changes to lecturer roles and the introduction of teaching support staff in teams had been achieved far more quickly than he had ever envisaged.

In the conclusion of CEF 95/1 the report highlights the difficulty in ascertaining what Caseloading actually is. It also considers whether it will come to fruition as an initiative for empowerment and change. Considering the position from four years later it is tempting to take the view that events have overtaken the initial objectives of Caseloading and that the rate of change has been even faster than either the employers, staff or unions expected, removing the need of Caseloading as a framework if not a philosophy. In 95/5 the CEF identified that contract change was essential to the future of Further Education,

“Unless the current bargaining process delivers the changes necessary to match changes in curriculum content and delivery, along with the new management and governance needs of the college resulting from Incorporation then the future looks bleak for some institutions.” (p8)

The first wave of contract changes was completed in most colleges by 1995. In 1999 many colleges are looking to revise these contracts still further, either through a national framework, or local negotiations. The impetus for these changes is as ever, financial and political. Considerable changes have been made in working practices since 1993, usually without the full introduction of Caseloading. It may be that the next round of changes will remove any idea of Caseloading as a specified model of curriculum delivery, with the ends achieved through other means.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CASE STUDY

#### 3.1 Conducting the research within the college

In designing the research brief and investigating ways of observing and analysing the implementation of a Caseloading project I decided to use a case study approach. This case study is based on one Further Education College and the devolved budget model of Caseloading it planned to introduce. By using a case study approach I am able to study a contemporary phenomena, within a real life context, creating a structure that is explanatory, exploratory and descriptive ( Yin 1989). A case study allows an investigation of process, in this case the management of an innovation and it allows the investigation to consider the whole context of the organisation, not merely the isolated events.

“the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events...such as...managerial processes.” ( Yin 1989 p 14)

Caseloading, and its appropriateness for the organisation can only be evaluated if viewed in the context of the wider organisation and its internal and external environment. A case study, with its holistic approach allows this. An exploration which separates Caseloading from the rest of the organisational development and changes would not create a meaningful study, because the factors are all inter-related and intertwined. This inter-relationship of organisational elements is further explored at the beginning of Chapter 5.

The research deals with the operational links within Casestudy College, rather than mapping frequencies or separate incidents. As Anderson (1998) identifies, it is examining the how and the why, creating an

explanatory structure, not a scientific study, best suited to examination through a case study. Anderson (op cit) quotes Yin's (1994) definition of a case study,

- “1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
    - investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
    - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident
  2. The case study inquiry
    - copes with the technically distinct situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as a result
    - relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangular fashion, and as a result
    - benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection”
- (Anderson 1998 p 153)

A case study approach to the study of Caseloading is appropriate because it fits the model outlined above. The phenomenon, Caseloading, is current and its implementation is a real-life event within the organisation. The implementation of Caseloading as a model is tied up with the wider organisational environment. It is a product of this environment as well as a change to it. The desire to introduce Caseloading has come from within the organisation, through its planning and review process. The way it will be implemented and evaluated will also be a product of the internal structure and processes. The phenomena cannot be separated from the context. A large number of variables are presented in this study, the events and influences of the managerial style, operating systems, culture, financial constraints and working practices are all discussed below. These are the crucial aspects, which will affect the implementation of the project,

rather than clear-cut data presenting statistical analysis of success or failure. These variables present evidence from a range of sources within the organisation. This is triangulated with data from the external surveys, the literature and the external environment to assess the development of the project. The college has taken a stance, as evidenced by its strategic planning objective, to introduce a Caseloading model. The case study will test the validity of that stance and attempt to establish whether the proposition underpinning the objective, that it would be of benefit to the college, is born out in practice.

The case study sets out to observe an event within a single unit, a college, as such it fits with Cohen and Manion's observation that,

“ The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.” ( p 106)

The purpose of this case study is to study the implementation of Caseloading and its impact on the organisation. General conclusions regarding change management within a single organisation will be drawn as well as evaluation of the success of the Caseloading model. Wider generalisations about management innovation in colleges and Caseloading models specifically are made below, in chapters 5 and 6. Further reference to the use of case study as a framework for studying Caseloading and organisational change is made in section 3.2 below.

The case study consists of observations of the planning and implementation process involved with the project, the results of the implementation and the views of those involved in the project. The information was gathered through informal interviews with participants and observations by the researcher.

In my role as researcher I observed the case study, in my role as a manager within the College I participated in the case study and the Caseloading project. The stance taken by the case study is an interpretative and exploratory one. It is not possible or appropriate to undertake a scientific study of the project, or to remain detached from the implementation and the wider organisational issues. The views may therefore be subjective and influenced by my personal perspective as someone closely involved with the development of the organisation and the Caseloading project. I undertook the project as a participant observer and attempted to reflect this in my analysis.

The case study is based upon one organisation, and forms part of the research project regarding implementation of Caseloading in Colleges. It is complemented by other aspects including external surveys and exploration of Caseloading models adopted. This external survey describes the prevalence of certain Caseloading models, but it is not intended to be predictive of a common model. The internal study is based upon interviews with stakeholders within the organisation, those most closely involved and interested in Caseloading and on observation of the planning and implementation of the Caseloading project and reflections on its success and further development.

As a participant observer I am engaged in the development and implementation of the Caseloading project. My observations are therefore partial, and I will attempt to use the interviews with other stakeholders and the empirical data to temper this subjectivity, triangulate the material and provide a balanced view of the outcomes. My role within the project and how it may have influenced the responses given by interviewees is discussed further below (sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.3). As Cohen and Manion (1989) point out,

“This form of research is eminently suitable to the many problems that the educational investigator faces.” (p 128)

The benefits of participant observation, which relate to this particular case study include being able to make observations over time, which allows development of a more informal relationship and a natural environment. Non-verbal behaviour and cultural aspects can be observed as well as the espoused organisational view. Observation can be made on an on-going basis, giving context and meaning to events. The case study is not intended to create generalisable truths applicable to other situations, but it may give insight into the aspects of Caseloading implementation that need to be considered. The College used is not set up to be representative of the whole sector, but does present an example of how change is viewed within one organisation. The view is valid for that single organisation and makes no claims to represent all organisations. The case study of Caseloading is a study of an organisation and the changes within it rather than a study of a specific phenomenon divorced from the wider organisation. The development of Caseloading reflects the general development stage of the organisation and as such mirrors other cultural aspects; it cannot be separated from the organisational development as a whole and viewed as a detached artefact for study in a vacuum.

In taking a qualitative approach to the data I am collecting I defined only the general concepts at the outset of the research. These I refined and redefined as the research progressed. In conducting the case study I hope to identify patterns in the data which can illuminate the concept of change management and organisational development. During the data collection I will adopt a qualitative stance of “attending to my own cultural assumptions as well as to the data” (Brannen p 4), as these cannot be separated from the data and the case study as a whole. Further discussion of these assumptions is contained within section 3.1.3 below.

### **3.1.1 Designing the interviews**

In designing the interviews which form the basis of the in-house research I attempted to remove as much of the personal perspective as possible and stand back from the events in order to reflect on their significance. I



planned the interviews to be informal. A set of questions was established, and communicated to the interviewees in advance, but the exact wording and the sequence of the questions was not vital to the structure of the interview. The interviews were not completely informal, but in order to elicit the views of the participants I allowed a conversational style to develop. This not only allowed for a more relaxed and, hopefully, free flowing discussion, it also acknowledged that I was acquainted with the participants prior to the interviews.

I chose to set up face to face interviews with my participants rather than issuing a self-administered questionnaire so that I could follow up any points raised and gather a wider range of views. The self-administered questionnaire I used with external organisations worked well in gathering fixed scope data and gave me a source from which I could draw quantitative comparisons. In the case of the internal interviews however I felt that a different, more personal approach would gain more useful information. This study was designed to give more practical and detailed response, rather than only an outline of the process. I felt it was important that I gather the personal as well as professional views of the participants, and the informal interview provided an appropriate vehicle for this.

In establishing the interviews I felt that I was conforming to the definition of Cannel and Kahn, quoted by Powney and Watts (1987) and Cohen and Manion (1989), who suggest that an interview is a conversation,

“initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic descriptions, prediction or explanation.”

(p6 Powney and Watts)

According to Powney and Watts this definition allows for the most, or least, structured examples. It is the intentions of the researcher that turns a chat or discussion into an interview. By defining, shaping and recording my

conversations with the participants, I turned my informal discussions into interviews. The rules of the interaction were defined by me as researcher, and accepted by them as participants. To the extent that the interviews were explicit and arranged they were formal; to the extent that the conversations were prescribed and the order and language defined, they were informal.

The informal respondent interviews ensured that the locus of control remained with me as interviewer, but allowed the flexibility to follow up issues raised by the participant and to vary the style and order of the questioning to fit the situation. By using the informal interview I was able therefore to obtain a greater depth of information and allow the participants to contribute their own views, rather than commenting on my views, or making standard responses. I was aware that by using this method I was opening the research to subjectivity and bias on my part. As Truckman suggests, the interviews provided access to the thoughts of the participants, their preferences and attitudes. This was the information I wished to elicit, rather than the impersonal views given from a professional standpoint.

In the event I feel that all of the participants, other than the College Principal, have this personal view. They all responded from their professional knowledge, but were able to detach themselves slightly from that and offer a personal perspective on Caseloading. This was especially so in the second interview with the Director of Finance, who reflected on the project and other aspects of change within the College. This more unguarded view may have also been influenced by his decision to leave the College at that time. This added an increased impetus to my desire to conduct a second interview with him to gain a "hindsight" view.

In the case of the Principal, he allowed me to detach the process from our normal routine interaction, and responded to the questions in his formal Principal role. I found this to be a strange situation personally. My overall feeling on completing the interview was that I had just interviewed him for

the Principal's post, due to the nature of his responses regarding organisational change, flexibility and development.

As I have stated above, I was aware that the interviews would inevitably be biased, by my views and the existing relationship between the participants and myself. Cohen and Manion (1989) quote Kitwood as saying that an interview is

“a transaction which inevitably has bias, which is recognised and controlled”. (Cohen & Manion p37)

They explain that each participant in an interview will define the situation in a particular way. As my interviews were informal and designed to elicit personal and professional views rather than facts it was not possible to triangulate the data supplied. By using the same structure for the interview with the Principal and the Director of Finance I did attempt to assess what the perceived organisational view of Caseloading is. The answers were remarkably similar, with both managers seeing Caseloading as a means of empowering staff and giving them control over resources.

The bias within the interaction was also likely to come from the participant's view of me as interviewer. This I attempted to overcome by formally setting the interviews up in advance, explaining what the research was for and how the material was to be used. I feel that my colleagues “played the game” in this and treated the interviews with a suitable formality. In Kitwood's terms I tried to have an explicit theory that took the various factors influencing the interactions into account.

Powney and Watts quote Brenner regarding interviewer bias,

“To want to interview without interviewer influence is a contradiction in terms.” (p37)

In planning on the interviews I therefore attempted to be aware of the impact of my personal and professional opinion, and I feel that I succeed in this. All the participants were aware of the reasons for the interview and the research. They also knew of my professional involvement with the Caseloading project. The question I have asked myself is “how many of their answers were affected by what they thought I wanted to hear?” A number of mutual assumptions were made during the interviews, regarding the Caseloading project and its implementation. The role of Caseloading in the wider organisational development, and the restrictions placed upon it, were all unspoken assumptions by the participants. In order to overcome any invalidity here I can only bear these aspects in mind when assessing the comments of the respondents to the questions. Good research, as identified by Phillips (1993), whatever its basis will be objective if it holds information up to serious scrutiny and criticism. I attempt to do this with evidence presented as part of the case study to decrease the subjectivity caused by my close involvement with the subject matter of the research. My personal knowledge is both a bonus and a drawback. I am aware of the potential bias of the individuals and their professional and personal perspectives on Caseloading. I can therefore take these aspects into account during the analysis. I may have also caused some of the invalidity and bias by my interaction with them as interviewer, as it is not possible to shed your whole professional personality before conducting the interviews.

I decided to audio tape the interviews, rather than take notes during the sessions so as to generate a comprehensive record of the interview which I could reflect upon later. I was anxious to create as informal and relaxed an atmosphere as possible for the interviews and I felt that by being able to give my full attention to the interviewee and engaging them in conversation I could obtain more significant results. By removing the restriction of note taking and allowing the questioning to follow a “natural path” I endeavoured to elicit more information from the interviewees and create a more representative discussion.

### 3.1.2 Negotiating the interviews

In deciding who to interview I aimed to include a representative sample of the people involved in the Caseloading project. In the event the plan was amended due to the limited nature of the project implementation. However the interviews conducted over the case study period were selected to gather the views of the major stakeholders in the Caseloading project and reflect on the organisational implications of the model.

The following interview schedule was established,

Individual	Purpose of the interview
Principal	To obtain a “view from the top” of the definition of Caseloading and the role it has to play within the organisation
Director of Finance	<p>To obtain a “view from the top” of the definition of Caseloading and the role it has to play within the organisation.</p> <p>These two interviews were designed to establish any variance of views in the senior staff involved in the project</p>
Director of Finance (2)	To reflect on the implementation of the project, Caseloading potential benefits and implementation problems.
College Accountant	To assess the fit of the Caseloading design with the financial systems and assess reasons for the implementation problems of the Caseloading model

NATFHE Secretary	To gain the union view on the Caseloading project and the model being implemented
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The interviews were set up in advance, initially by face to face discussion, outlining the research project and how the interview fitted into the case study aspect. These discussions were followed up in writing, thanking the individuals for agreeing to participate, confirming the date and time of the interview and that they would be confidential. I also informed the interviewees that I intended taping the interviews. The outline questions that I intended to use were also included, to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to reflect on the questions and give a more considered response. I decided that giving the questions in advance would be a better preparation for the interview than "going in cold". This in part was due to the type of questioning, which asked the interviewees to reflect on the organisation, its systems and the benefits of the Caseloading project. I felt that the advantages of having notice of the question, and the opportunity to reflect on their significance within an organisational context outweighed any negative aspects of "rehearsed" answers. It also enabled the interview to be placed in a slightly detached environment, which separated it from the normal working interaction. I have considerable contact with each of the interviewees through my role as a manager at the College and I wished to distance the interviews from this general interaction. By creating a situation one step removed from our normal interaction I hoped to avoid undue contamination of the evidence through familiarity.

As outlined above, I wished to be aware of any cultural or organisational assumptions that would affect my data. As a participant observer I was involved in the implementation and design of the project, in order to step back from this involvement and create some objectivity in the analysis of the interviews I therefore endeavoured to create a slightly false environment for the interviews to remove the bias created by existing

relationships. I informed the interviewees about the nature of the research, as I did not wish to create suspicion regarding the questioning, and to reassure the interviewees what use would be made of the data collected and of the confidentiality of their responses. Throughout the design of the Caseloading project I have informed those involved that I would be using the project as a study in some research I was undertaking. Within an educational establishment this was viewed as a normal circumstance and individuals were willing to co-operate. In this way, although a participant observer I did not have any need for a “cover” to hide the reasons for my interest from those involved.

I was concerned regarding the effect my professional role would have on the responses to the interview questions. This was especially so in the case of the union secretary, with whom I have a formal relationship, as the senior manager for staff within the College and specifically the manager involved in union discussions and negotiations. During the interview the union secretary alludes to this, and the work we have jointly undertaken on Caseloading, but he is able, I feel, to remove this consideration from his response to the questions. In this instance our professional relationship aided the interaction. During our professional interaction we have developed a mutual style which allows for constructive interaction. This is based on a recognition of the constraints we both operate under, I as a senior manager and representative of the College interest, he as a representative of a vocal group of staff. This relationship allowed the interview to be conducted in a constructive manner, with the non-verbal interaction recognising the wider political aspects of Caseloading. The interview concentrated on the model developed within the College and the potential impact it would have on groups of staff. The environmental influences generating pressure for change I have alluded to elsewhere remained an almost completely unspoken element of the discussion. However, at the end of the interview the union secretary refers to the changes in staffing that have occurred, bringing about changes to the curriculum delivery team structure. He accepts that this has happened far

faster than he anticipated, reflecting the view that organisational Caseloading outcomes may be achieved by other means.

I attempted throughout the interview stage to be aware of the bias that my professional role may give me in considering the research evidence, and how it may affect others in the answers that they gave to me. This may include; giving the answer they thought I wanted to hear, especially from colleagues aware of my personal involvement in the project. In addition they may feel obliged to give the “College Line”, as Caseloading is one of the strategic objectives of the College they may reflect this back, as committed managers. In the event, other than in my interview with the Principal, the interviewees gave what I considered to be honest and objective responses, not affected by their view of the “right” answer.

### **3.1.3 Conducting the interviews**

The interviews were conducted at pre-arranged times within the College, but usually away from the normal work setting or time. Only in one case was the interview interrupted, this when the Principal answered an external phone call. Each of the interviews was taped and later transcribed by the interviewer. The interviews lasted up to one hour each. A second interview was held with the Director of Finance following the problems with implementation of the devolved budget model, to ascertain his views on the reasons for this and on the Caseloading project in general.

The questioning followed the outline given to the interviewees in advance. The questioning was therefore semi-structured, in that a framework of questions was used. However this structure allowed the freedom to follow up on points raised by the interviewees, or for them to raise issues. In all cases, even if supplementary points were raised the areas in the original questions were covered. It was not necessary to fully structure the interviews so that questions and responses could be directly compared.



This was a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one and the interviews were conducted as general discussion with allowance for asides and relaxed interaction. The benefit of this approach is that it allowed for probing of points and a constructive discussion of the issues, rather than a restricted dialogue, which would have produced far more “in-role” answers from the interviewees. In addition such a semi-structured format allowed for the collection of much richer data, and allowed me to reflect on the non-verbal interaction within the interviews.

In the case of the interview with the Principal and the first interview with the Director of Finance the same structure and questions were used. This was intended to give a direct comparison of their responses and to establish the organisational view of Caseloading, including the question “What is Caseloading”?

In reflecting on the interaction with the interviewees and the possible bias prompted by my professional involvement with the project (as outlined above) I also reflected on the gender aspects of the interviews. All of the interviewees were male and the interviewer is female. As I am known to the interviewees this gender split may not be directly relevant to the analysis of the responses. Any bias is likely to come from their reaction to me as an individual in my professional role, including being female in a senior role, rather than from reaction to me as a female researcher. The fact that all the interviewees are male does highlight an organisational issue, that I am the only female in a six strong senior management team at the College. The second tier management is more evenly representative, but the management culture within the College is very male dominated.

The Caseloading project, with its emphasis on efficiency gains may be seen as a masculine objective, to achieve more for less. On the other side the empowerment issues and the devolution of authority to the delivery teams, could be considered a feminine perspective; creating an environment where individuals and teams can decide their own priorities and actions to meet student needs. The failure of the pilot project to

progress further than the discussion stages may also be viewed from a gender divide issue. The organisational objectives dictated that the project should be implemented. The organisational controls and mechanisms meant that it could not possibly be implemented in a meaningful way. The information remains within the control of the male dominated senior team, denied to the other layers within the organisation. Thus the project may be viewed as an expression of the gender divide within the organisation, with the male senior team and the more female dominated middle management and operational tiers.

As the only female in the senior team the treatment of the researcher during the project and general interaction may also be significant as it impacts on the dynamics of the interviews. The researcher is given the status of an “honorary man” within the organisation. It has been reported by male colleagues that interaction at the senior level is slightly less aggressive since she joined the team. However the method of working remains masculine and all managers are expected to adhere to this working style. Attempts to divert the style and create a more democratic and participative style have been responded to by blocking behaviour including talking over contributions, patronising comments and ignoring suggestions. This forces the female manager to act in the same way as the male managers to achieve her goals. This experience reflects the issues outlined by Holmes (1995) in her discussion of interactions between male and female colleagues and responses to female senior managers. Some of this background may be reflected in the interaction where the interviewees respond to the interviewer as a colleague who fits into, and indeed embodies, the organisational culture. If the Caseloading project had been fully implemented the interview schedule would have included discussions with curriculum delivery staff and their responses to the model. This would have created potentially more difficulties in separating the interviewer’s organisational role from that of the researcher, as the perception of the interviewer as a symbol of the corporate culture may have been more difficult to overcome with individuals who had little personal interaction with the interviewer.

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

The investigation into Caseloading within Further Education is based on a case study of one general Further Education college. This explores planning within one organisation for the introduction of a pilot Caseloading project. The systems used, the reactions of the staff involved and the success of the project are explored through the case study. This takes the form of a discussion of the college culture and the different perspectives of the various stakeholders.

The case study method allows for in depth analysis of the Caseloading project and its impact on the organisation. The case study allows for the development of the research and an evaluation of the Caseloading project outcomes in terms of organisation effectiveness and efficiency. The study relies on empirical evidence, within a context of the wider issues. As the study is based on a particular organisation, it allows for detailed analysis of the specific case and facilitates access to data and analysis over the one year term of the study. The study is not intended to generate a universal model as it is particular to one institution, but it may be possible to draw some general conclusions regarding the Caseloading approach which may be applicable in other institutions. The study is therefore grounded very strongly in the context of the organisation and is not an abstract discussion of current theory. Any qualitative research including a case study, is bound to be influenced by the researcher's individual perspectives (Schofield 1993) and the data will not speak for itself, it must be interpreted by the researcher (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995). The results cannot therefore be wholly objective, but will be translated and assessed through experience and alternative evidence. It is not the goal of such a study to produce a scientifically based research outcome which can be replicated and generalisable for all such situations. The research is intended to illuminate the subject from the viewpoint of one organisation through a description and analysis of the specific situation. In this way areas of further research may be identified and illustration of general

points generated, but it is not the intention to identify generalisable or replicable findings which may be adopted as universal frameworks. In order to view the wider context for the project multiple methods of evidence and data collection were used. This created a macro-environmental context for the specific case study and a frame for the discussion of the environmental and political factors impacting on the organisation being studied. Further information on the wider use of Caseloading within Further Education has been gained by a survey of other general Further Education colleges to assess the spread and usage of Caseloading models.

### **3.2.1 Choice of research method**

The case study was felt to be the most appropriate method for researching the areas of Caseloading as it allows the flexibility of studying empirical data generated by a real world project, with flexible design parameters. This allows the flexibility and scope to reflect on data and analyse its reference to the organisation that forms the “case”.

Colin Robson (1993) defines case studies as,

“...a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. (p146)

The Caseloading investigation meets these criteria in that it is empirical, based on real world, live data, observed and collected by the researcher. The phenomenon being investigated is contemporary, it is happening currently and the study follows the development of the phenomena. The study also involves multiple evidence, from documentary sources, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, as well as personal observation and reflection. Robson discusses the link between ethnographic studies and case studies, identifying the ethnography as providing a rich background for the case study. In the Caseloading study however I prefer

to consider the background which involves the investigation of the perceptions of those involved in the Caseloading project, as a stakeholder analysis.

The Stakeholders are people with an interest in the project. They have a real stake in its success or failure and they in some way shape the outcome of the project. A study of the Stakeholder views therefore underpins the study and reflects upon the organisational implications of the project, rather than taking the form of an ethnography.

As the study was designed to follow a real project as it developed over an academic year the case study approach allows the flexibility of method and design that is required by a fluid environment. As Robson states,

“ It is true that one of the great strengths of a case study is its flexibility”. (p148)

The design for a case study can be emergent. In contrast to a scientific or experimental design based study, it is not imperative to stick to a design generated before the study began. By the very nature of a real life case such rigidity would be unfeasible. By allowing for adaptations in the design and direction of the study it provides a framework for the study without restricting the scope or anticipating the direction of the outcome. In the event the study changed from the original objective of following a selection of pilot Caseloading groups, as the pilot was not implemented due to management information difficulties. The flexibility inherent within the case study approach therefore became apparent, when the study was re-defined to analyse the feasibility of introducing a Caseloading model.

By using the case study it is possible to work within an environment which is familiar to the researcher. The evolving nature of the study and the researcher's familiarity with the environment is therefore incorporated as a strength of the research, rather than a drawback to the study. The effects of this familiarity and the effect of the researcher adopting a new role

within a familiar environment are obviously something that must be taken into account during the design of the study and throughout its life.

From a feminist research standpoint, being familiar and having close relations with these individuals being interviewed is a necessity. Reinharz (1992) quotes Denise Segura as asserting that being familiar with her interviewees allowed her to have shorter, more focused interviews because she was familiar with the area and the individuals. This “knowledgeable friend” stance can be very useful in allowing an insider’s perspective on evidence. It can also allow for questions to be asked, or subjects to be probed which under normal conditions may not come to the surface. There is also the corresponding danger however that in an organisational context it is more difficult for an insider to ask certain questions, or to probe. The regular role of the interviewer must also be put to one side as much as possible to allow for objective reflection and objective responses to enquiries. This is an issue that must be born in mind when designing and negotiating access to information and especially when conducting face to face interviews.

The core of the research will be qualitative, taking a relativist approach. As the case study will focus not only on the actual structure of the Caseloading project, but also on the reactions of those involved and their motives for being involved, it will necessarily have a subjective aspect. As Johnson (1994) outlines, social research seeks to elicit the meaning of events and phenomena from the point of view of the participants. The stakeholder analysis formed from semi-structured interviews will create the basis of this relativist perspective. By combining the conventions of social science research, from a relativist perspective, with the management research tool of a stakeholder analysis, the information elicited will be given not only an individual, subjective frame, but also an organisational frame.

The researcher is obviously bringing subjective values to the project and is bound, in some way, to be influenced by these values. These will affect

the choice of study, the method of study and the rationale for the conduct of the study. They may also affect the interaction with the individuals involved in the project and the information available to the researcher. Each of these aspects will be considered and explored as the project evolves, to make the effect of these values as transparent as possible.

As an insider to the organisation the researcher must ensure that the advantages of the insider position are not used to exploit that position. As a senior member of staff within the institution the researcher is able to obtain information that is not necessarily easily available to other staff. Such access should be used with discretion and the consequences considered when compiling the research report. The organisational position of the researcher may also have an impact on the other participants in the research, in that they may feel obliged to co-operate, but may provide information in a way which they feel the researcher wants. This is a potential pitfall in the research that the structure of the interviews and the negotiation of access must seek to overcome. By careful access negotiation with those involved and a transparency in the motives for the research, abuse of the insider position can be avoided, but it should not be ignored.

An underlying aspect of the research, through exploration of the stakeholder analysis, is to consider how individuals and teams within an organisation can be empowered by increased autonomy. In most organisations teams and individuals do not control the resources they use to achieve their objectives. Resource control is a central tenet of organisational power. As a manager I have the say over numbers and deployment of staff and other resources, yet I expect the teams so deployed to achieve targets and objectives, linked in to organisational aims. This can be an alienating and negative element of organisational arrangements. This system of resource deployment is ingrained within management theory as the appropriate method of maximising efficiency. The manager's role is to manage and it is resources we manage, rather than developments or processes, or people.

The Caseloading model devolves resources linked to activities, to the teams charged with achieving the outcomes. In this way it can be seen as an empowerment model. The project could therefore be seen as a piece of feminist research, in that it is concerned with giving the control of resources to previously disenfranchised groups. The project is not based on strictly feminist methods but it is worth reflecting whether the underlying push to empower individuals and teams through Caseloading can be seen as a feminist motive, giving autonomy and control to traditionally restricted people. Reinharz (1992) would accept the research as feminist, as she uses as one criteria for such a label, that the research is being conducted by someone who considers herself a feminist. This debate itself could be a lengthy one, but is not central to the research.

The consideration of how individuals will react to the authority and responsibility that will accompany the devolution of resources is central to the research. The extremes of welcoming the opportunity as a chance to be innovative, and a rejection of the task, as part of the management function, are likely to be encountered. The motives behind these and other responses will be explored through the case study, and again hinge upon the evolutionary nature of the case study model.

The rationale of the case study approach also embraces the semi-structured interview technique to be used for eliciting the stakeholder analysis. This approach again distances the case study from an ethnography, in that it does not require long periods of participation in the life of the research participants. In fact, the elements of insider research within the case study generate the need to create a distance with the organisational life. The semi-structured interview allows for a free interaction between researcher and interviewee, around a central theme, but allowing for development of the area into new unexplored issues. Further probing on issues raised can generate valuable insights and new research directions, which would not be available within a positivist approach. By nature organisations and individual's relations within them



constantly evolve. The study of an organisational aspect must therefore have the scope to evolve, inherent in the case study. The situation being studied is dynamic rather than static, the research method and the research project must therefore mirror this and be a dynamic structure which can respond to changing circumstances. The context of the study, Further Education, is one which is experiencing continuing change. To expect a static environment in which to conduct research within such a turbulent area would not be realistic. If realisable it would also throw doubt upon the validity and relevance of the research to the real experience of Further Education.

Open-ended interviews allow individuals involved in the research to develop their own description of events and to reflect on how it affects their lives. From this the researcher can attempt to create grounded theory and an analysis of the data generated. This approach allows the interviewees to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words, rather than those of the researcher. This feminist approach is one way of overcoming the issue of insider research. The interviewee is given the scope to describe the activities in their own words, rather than selecting from the pre-chosen responses of the researcher. The tendency to bias from the insider researcher can therefore be countered if not altogether reduced. The issue of the interviewee wanting to say what is expected remains to be addressed by the detail of the interview negotiation and structure.

The nature of the semi-structured interviews, as a basis for a stakeholder analysis restricts the open ended nature of the interviews to some extent. It is not appropriate to take the complete interviewee guided approach, which has few or no structured questions. The structure of the interview requires reference to organisational aspects, rather than purely personal reactions and reflections. A structure that creates scope for discussion of these aspects and allows for evolution of the areas explored is appropriate, underpinned by areas of questioning and probing, rather than strict closed question interviewing.

The interviews, to be of value in eliciting individuals' real reactions to the concepts within the Caseloading project, need to be conducted in an atmosphere of trust, where the interviewee is believed. This is not to say everything is to be taken at face value, when areas are raised which the researcher perhaps does not wholly believe. Probing and exploration can then be used within the semi-structured interview to establish the validity of the remarks. Adopting a scientific approach to the interview and allowing scepticism regarding the honesty of the responses goes against the relativist and feminist structure of the case study. The responses can be cross compared to establish veracity and representation, but responses should initially be accepted and recorded. This approach is more likely to elicit the real responses of the interviewee and act in some way to counter the insider bias. The researcher and the interviewee already have a relationship within the organisation. By trusting the interviewee that relationship can be used to create a freedom of disclosure and aid the information flow. Confidentiality of information and negotiation of access is therefore even more important when adopting this approach. Otherwise the researcher may be believing and trusting the interviewee but the interviewee may not trust the researcher.

The ethics of researching within a familiar organisation must be considered throughout this study. The conduct of the research and the report will take these factors into account. The case study can allow for the discretion in approach that is required to accommodate issues of ethics and confidentiality. The availability of alternative strands through the research adds further weight to the decision to adopt a case study approach. As an insider to the organisation, with a certain status and position, the researcher must reflect on the impact of these organisational issues when conducting the research. The case study creates a framework that can not only reflect this, but can utilise it as a strength in analysing the data collected.

When designing the case study and the semi-structured interviews intrusion into the sensitive organisational areas is to be avoided. When conducting research within a known institution it is possible that interviewees may divulge information that they would not want known by other members of the organisation. It is therefore important to maintain strict confidentiality and not to put people in a position where they may reveal things that they may not intend. The self-esteem and self-image of participants must be protected. The identities of participants cannot be kept confidential in this type of study. However, participants will be identified by their post within the organisation, rather than by name, as it is as the postholder that they participate and express their views from an organisational perspective. This is made known to participants at the outset, when involvement is being negotiated.

Another aspect of insider research that Robson (1993) highlights, is that usually such research is linked to change. There is a need to separate the research from the organisational pressure concerning the change if the research is to be meaningful. But as Robson identifies,

“...a report which does not communicate to the decision-makers in that situation is a waste of time”. (p7)

The Caseloading project will have a number of audiences: these will include the academic staff assessing the report for an award. Elements of the report will also be presented to the senior management team at the case study college as a management report on the feasibility of Caseloading. Other aspects of the report will be presented to the college Academic Board, as an outcome of the feasibility study. The report findings and recommendations will also be shared with teaching unions to discuss ways of implementing (or not) the Caseloading model.

The objective to introduce a Caseloading model has been an element of the college strategic plan for the past three years. Therefore there is an organisational driver behind this project with particular organisational

outcomes in mind. The Caseloading model is not specified within the plan however, and the project focuses on the most appropriate model to achieve the organisational outcomes. This organisational pressure is one that must be made explicit within the study, so as to avoid the pitfalls of compiling a report that comes to pre-determined conclusions. The full report, presented for an award will not be formally presented to the organisation, although it will be made available on request.

The place of the resulting case study within the research framework needs to be considered. What is the study attempting to illuminate and how does it connect with other research? The internal management objectives of the organisational reports may have an internal validity and justification, but consideration also needs to be given to the justification for the wider study. What is it the study is trying to achieve? Very little detailed work on Caseloading has been published, although a number of colleges are working on Caseloading models. The degree to which the findings of the single organisation case study can be generalisable to other organisations is questionable. However a single case can provide valuable insights into Caseloading specifically and devolved management models generally. The exploration of models being used in other colleges may aid the development of a wider Further Education context for the study that increases the generalisable elements. Exploration of the wider management context and the political imperatives that are driving the changes within Further Education will also create a framework for presenting the findings of the research in a structured and valid form.

Although the case study is a flexible structure, allowing for an evolving framework for the research, it also creates a format that gives a discipline to the study. A single case study creates an insight and may give valuable indicators to others who are exploring devolved management models and issues concerning staff roles. No organisation is a static, closed system and therefore the findings will not be completely replicable in other organisations, and probably not in the same organisation at a later date. But the findings can be generalisable to the extent that they reflect on the

environmental pressures affecting Further Education and the management models used to respond to changing demands and budget constraints. These conditions are general to all Further Education colleges, and therefore the responses of one specific college will have resonance in other colleges. This response to sector wide conditions and constraints also creates a framework for the findings to be representative of all cases. As stated above, all organisations are unique, they respond to their own specific environment, however they learn from the experience of each other. Within Further Education a network of common practice evolves, and the experience of one college informs the decision making of another college.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH OUTCOMES**

#### **4.1 Interviews**

##### **4.1.1 The Principal**

The principal said, “Caseloading is a shorthand term in my view for the way we identify a workload related to students or clients...we would be looking a recruitment, retention and achievement and working out a volume of work related to the caseload on the basis of what is appropriate for the area of work.” He did not see it primarily as a devolved budget model, although that could come into it at team level. Individuals could also have their personal caseload outside of a team structure. His view was therefore at variance with the agreed model. Although he did not directly advocate the weighted workload model, he did see Caseloading as a method of assessing the workload, and effectiveness of individual staff.

He expressed the view that staff should be rewarded appropriately and that Caseloading could identify bonus or PRP elements that could be paid to individual staff. In practice the team based approach is likely to mitigate against this. He felt that Caseloading could give individuals and teams more autonomy and control, and would help achieve the organisational objectives.

Flexibility of role and workload were central to the concept of Caseloading held by the Principal. He saw it as a method of moving away from the existing teaching staff working practices, which he sees as restrictive. Support Staff such as Student Services could also work on a Caseloading model, taking responsibility for groups of students and their progress through the College. He acknowledged that Caseloading had been in the strategic plan for a number of years and that “we should have moved it on

much more quickly, and we haven't because we have prioritised around issues such as pay and conditions". In response to a question about working practices (formally agreed limits on teacher hours and duties) he responded, "effectively there wouldn't be any working practices....we won't have working practices as a separate document under Caseloading". He wanted to move away from the restrictions of timetables, which form the only link some staff have with the recruitment, retention and achievement levels of students. The team-based approach is probably better and "we should be using it as a tool to reduce bureaucracy and to delegate a degree of autonomy and responsibility". The whole impetus behind Caseloading is to change the culture of colleges, remove intransigence and promote service focus. This is tied to the move to drive down costs and change working practices.

This view is very much based on the "Social Services" type Caseloading where individuals and teams have a client group they are responsible for. This is not exactly the same as the agreed College Caseloading model, which is very team based and relies on the corresponding resources being devolved to promote flexibility and changes in working practices.

The Principal's espoused view was that we need to give more responsibility and authority to the delivery teams and individuals, to promote ownership by delivery staff. "Caseloading is a tool in effective management...in delegating responsibility to people you trust". "staff are sceptical of management intentions, I don't think there is one staff view.... The focus on College goals has left them feeling a bit tender". "It will be very difficult to implement Caseloading without addressing the rewards structure as a whole". This is done through devolution of control and appropriate rewards systems. The rewards were bounded by the necessity to further reduce the percentage staffing spend. The incentive for the organisation is therefore to promote efficiency by increased flexibility and reduced cost. The organisation needs to back the change and if it needs new systems they will be prioritised if they are important enough. The College will spend the money on MIS if it needs it. In

retrospect the MIS was prioritised and a great deal of money spent on software development. In the event these systems did not create improved information, and generated much confusion frustration and scepticism amongst managers who had expected improved information. The organisational backing was not given to this initiative to ensure it succeeded, in the principal's terms it was not seen as important enough.

The Principal's view was very much about cost saving, devolving responsibility and changing working practices based on a caseload of clients, rather than necessarily a devolved budget model. He did not address the specifics of the model or its implementation. His view was the strategic vision that the culture needs to change to focus on student needs. Caseloading is one way in his view of bringing things closer to individuals within curriculum delivery teams. Caseloading is part of the vision, in that he sees it delivering change. The practicalities and methods of achieving these aims are not necessarily within the frame.

#### **4.1.2 Director of Finance (1)**

The Director of Finance had been involved in the initial design of the Caseloading model and was aware of the reliance it placed upon the devolved budget aspects. He considered the model to be an empowering tool, in the same way as expressed by the Principal. By devolving the resources to the teams they are enabled to innovate and manage the process. "Giving them the freedom to vire between expenditure and income but also giving them incentives to bring in more money....so its about enabling the managers further down the organisation." Without control over the resources to deliver the programmes they are not able to manage the whole process in the way they would wish as other managers continue to constrain them. . He also expressed the view that there is a need to retain some central control, as Caseloading may increase bureaucracy, but that it allows relations of spend to activity. As with all service organisations a major budget aim is to reduce the staffing



expenditure. “That would be a pragmatic gain, but the real gain would be getting the spend nearer the ground, where it’s better allocated, freeing people up....it has the knock on effect of making people more accountable.” The current system is patriarchal and managers have responsibility without authority, they cannot decide how to spend their own budgets.

The Director felt that the conditions had now changed and that the cultural change towards Caseloading is no longer central to the organisational objectives. In a blame culture, which tight operating restrictions tend to create individuals are less likely to want to take responsibility for budgets. “It would be better to do it in a time of growth” “In a time of restricted budgets it is vital to hit the FEFC right on the nose, by devolving to lots of separate cost centres that is difficult to do”. He felt there were a lot of systems lessons to learn from having to hit specific targets.

In the Director’s view the systems do not need to be very sophisticated, but the will to do it is more important. Simple cost centre systems would be enough. “In some ways we try to do too much with too many models...to become too sophisticated”.

As a measure of success of devolved budgets he would expect staffing spend ratio to drop, to have managers using the information, equipment being purchased and guided learning hours reduction and move towards resource based learning.

The Director of Finance considered the Caseloading model to be an excellent management and motivational tool that would help the College achieve its aim of increasing student recruitment, retention and achievement. This would be helped by a cultural shift which focused on the relevant performance indicators, they need to concentrate on the important issues, not just generating information that is not pertinent. However, he differed from the view held by the Principal over the

implementation of the Caseloading model. The motives expressed were the same, but as he was more closely involved in the day to day budget management aspects of the Caseloading project his view was tempered by an awareness of the restrictions placed upon the model by the organisation.

#### **4.1.3 Director of Finance (2)**

I conducted a follow up interview with the Director of Finance later in the academic year, when it was obvious that the Caseloading model had encountered implementation problems. The devolved budget aspects had not gone ahead, which undermined the whole structure of the project. I had drawn the personal view that the model had been too ambitious and that the College Management Information Systems were not capable of supporting the Caseloading model.

I therefore started the second interview from this premise, which we had discussed in our professional capacity.

The Director of Finance expressed the view that organisational issues had meant that the Caseloading model could not be implemented at that time. The first of these was the accounting structure, which was not sophisticated or flexible enough to allow the devolution of budgets. Many of these shortcomings had been rectified during the year, but it was not feasible to start the budget reporting to the detail required mid way through the year. The other aspect which he felt had blocked the implementation were the organisational changes to the structure. As he said, “we are putting obstacles in our way by constantly changing the college structure”. The College Accountant tried to instigate the accounts structure to support it but the change in the programme areas got in the way.” He felt that a stable structure was required for teams to be able to effectively manage devolved budgets and resources and to plan for the future. A number of structural changes were made at delivery team level, with programmes and staff changing areas and budget centres being reformed to reflect this.

Stable charging areas were therefore not available throughout the year, to create a basis for planning and budget management.

On the issue of the model itself the Director of Finance did not feel that the complexity of the model was a major issue. He felt that “the model is not that critical, it’s the back up to support it in reporting and consistent structures, or it will fall apart”. On a positive note he felt that the work done during the year on refining the accounting and charging systems as well as the payroll charging systems would create the required basis for budget devolution. He felt that a “dummy” year where managers receive reports on their budgets in detail and staff development to help them interpret the reports would be the best way forward. As the reporting systems will be new for the beginning of the academic year the managers may not have the skills, knowledge or experience to deal with budget controls.

External pressures and the changes to the funding system were major elements in restricting the control managers will have over their budgets. “...now all different types of funding are tried to be brought in it adds complications to the reporting.” As growth funding is restricted management and innovation become increasingly difficult. Previously growth has allowed for flexibility and given scope for development. As funding is more restricted now, closer monitoring is required and restrictions on activities. This has a major effect on the budget holders who are unused to being accountable for their budgets. Growth has been encouraged in the past with little relation to budgets. A new focus is needed now to re-educate the managers to understand the implications of all their actions from a financial and organisational aspect.

From the manager's point of view, he felt that devolution of budgets in a time of budget cuts could be a de-motivating factor, rather than an empowering factor. “That’s right, people have more responsibility but no sweeteners. It could become a system of shooting the messenger.” Under devolution the managers are then expected to own decisions which they

have little control over. Restricted budgets in a time of financial constraint are more difficult to manage as there is less room for manouvere, previous growth had allowed more freedom and less accountability. “..growth masks inefficiency.”

The Director of Finance was concerned that unless the managers could see some gain from the model they would resist. Complete freedom to allocate their resources and devolution of all resources including additional income, was the only way that managers would feel the model was fair. As yet this was not possible. . “In some ways I think it’s about abdicating responsibility by managers further up.”

He felt that there is merit in the devolved budget model and that it could create flexibility and management controls closer to the needs of the service. He was confident that the MIS systems were developing that would enable a full implementation of the system. He was concerned, however, that this should not got too far, with responsibility for all overheads being devolved, such as space utilisation, heating, lighting and maintenance. The managers felt that they had very little control over these issues. Attempts to devolve such areas may detract from the central point of staff utilisation flexibility to improve student retention, and achievement. He feared that concentrating on the practical aspects of premises would allow for abdication of responsibility for management of the curriculum delivery.

“I’m no longer entirely convinced of the use of the cost centre structure. It’s a way of aggregating responsibility in a different way and giving some people some extra freedom. The speed of change has affected it. Three years ago I agreed with it, now I’m not so sure. I would certainly give the information, but not necessarily give them control. As I’m not sure it can now be effective.”

This interview was conducted shortly before the Director left the College and FE altogether. He had become disillusioned with his role as a senior

manager and the constraints he was forced to work under. His commitment to education continued, but not to the current FE system. This sense of weariness came over in the non-verbal aspects of the interview. He felt that change could happen, that teams could be empowered and quality improved, but that he did not have the energy required to continue attempting to achieve this in the face of other imposed changes.

#### **4.1.4 College Accountant**

Unlike the Principal's and Director's emphasis on devolution of control and encouragement of flexibility and quality of delivery, the College Accountant saw Caseloading as a control and monitoring mechanism, as it "focuses the targets for those managing the budget." He was all in favour of the model, as it complemented the work he was trying to do on cost centres. He felt that in a time of budget restriction it is important to give managers information on their budget so that they can be tightly controlled. By giving information he felt managers would be encouraged to seek additional income from more diverse sources to support provision. If they are allowed to keep the income they generate this will be a motivating factor; it will allow them to develop their area and be innovative. . "Previously none of the surplus was returned to the area, so they saw no benefit in doing it. If they get half the surplus back to their area it can benefit them. Gives them an incentive to look for new business." He acknowledged that not all areas are able to generate high levels of income, and suggested that some areas may need to be set more challenging targets to reflect the mis-match of opportunity and possibly allow some cross subsidy. "We need to concentrate on the most viable units to deliver, without compromising the curriculum offer."

"Managers can see what the real costs and income of a programme are and make decisions."

The Accountant felt that the College MIS systems would be ready for the coming year to give information on devolved budgets and that he preferred forecasts to be made so that a picture of real expenditure can be built up.

This then gives a firmer foundation for budget planning in the future and allows allocations to be “tweaked”.

The implementation difficulties foreseen by the Accountant were training for the managers and the need to make allocated budgets of a meaningful size. He also recognised that the devolved model must still work within the boundaries of the overall College budget. Devolving amounts which do not allow any freedom, or which are unrealistic will act as a demotivator. He felt that the College had not gone down the line of cost centres previously because with the growth in activity, and therefore budgets, there had been no need to do so. The budget restrictions now make it necessary to make areas accountable for their costs. Devolving responsibility could lead to greater control in his view, “...it will get people thinking and owning the problem.”

The different perspective of the Accountant on the Caseloading model is perhaps to be expected. He did not consider the model from a curriculum delivery viewpoint, but from a budget control and allocation view. This view is not incompatible with the model, and his systems are central to the effective implementation of the model. He accepted that the systems could not in effect support the process, but was hopeful that during the following year they could do so. In this he agreed with the Director of Finance who suggested the dummy run year, with reporting and training to managers to develop familiarity, benchmarks and skills. In reality the systems did not allow for cost centre reporting and linked management information as the Finance Director and the Accountant hoped. The information available to managers was no better, and in some cases worse, than previous years.

The answers given to the questions, not attempting to adopt the management line of empowerment to create flexibility was perhaps a more honest one. The Accountant answered from his own perspective rather than from the objectives within the strategic plan. He is in touch with the reality of implementation, and gave a straightforward analysis of the situation.

#### **4.1.5 The Union Secretary**

NATFHE are the recognised union for all teaching staff within the College. When discussions were first held regarding the introduction of Caseloading NATFHE was invited to participate as it was expected that it would have an impact on the lecturer's role. NATFHE were therefore consulted regarding the Caseloading model and implementation. They attended the dissemination events with managers and commented on the guidelines before the Academic Board agreed them. Generally the model was received well by NATFHE, who saw it as a positive step. In giving delivery staff more control over their activities. Initially NATFHE were wary of the proposals, as they often are with changes that may affect their members, but through the consultation process they were positive about the model. I interviewed the NATFHE secretary to gain the view of the union about the model and as representative of the views of the teaching staff. Initially I proposed to interview staff within the teams involved in the Caseloading pilot. However, as the pilot phase did not happen I chose the NATFHE secretary as representative of an informed teacher's view on Caseloading.

The NATFHE Secretary felt that the devolution of responsibility to teams is a good thing. He felt that it could empower people in a positive way. He wanted to ensure that individuals and teams gained the support they needed to make it work and that it was not "thrust at them". Dealing with the financial aspects may be daunting for some and they would need development. As he said, "It's good to empower people and if they want empowerment and responsibility it's (Caseloading) good."

He felt that staff generally would see it as a positive thing and an opportunity because they would have more control over change. The negative side would be if things went wrong and they were blamed. This would be de-motivating. . "...People will see it as an opportunity, there are loads of times when you want to do something as a team and it takes

months. If it is a way of looking at change and giving the team a chance to do things its good.”

The NATFHE Secretary felt that devolving budgets could affect the management roles within the College, as the control would go to the delivery teams. Curriculum Managers may therefore feel that they had been shortcuted. “Programme Managers will end up with more responsibility...the Curriculum Mangers job is bound to change....I would fear for the CMs” Their role may become redundant if the delivery team controls everything. He said that under a fully devolved system he would fear for the security of the Curriculum Managers.

When asked about the national union line on Caseloading he said that they had not been able to give him any guidance. The general picture is that more colleges are trying it but that no national picture is developing at present. Locally they see it as an interesting initiative and welcome chance to pilot it to see how it can develop.

The drawbacks that NATFHE could see in the model are that if things go wrong it could be used as a sanction against staff. “What happens if it goes wrong, staff will probably think they will be hit with a big stick if it goes wrong.” Also, “this is not a system of workloading, which NATFHE would like to see. Staff may well think it is to do with workloading and look for something to be built into it”. Also it does not contain a weighted workload model, which NATFHE would like, to reflect different roles. They have no objection to the team-based model, and see that it can be flexible and benefit staff. NATFHE are keen to retain working practices that define parameters for staff workload. Caseloading could do away with these. NATFHE see the working practices as a safety net within which individuals and teams can vary activities. NATFHE would not wish to see their removal, because of Caseloading, or anything else. Their line is that it, “Raises questions of whether we need working practices if we have Caseloading. NATFHE feel that we do need the safety net of working practices. No objection to staff in a team working it out for themselves.



But it must come from the individual, not forced by the team or from elsewhere. Working Practices form the ground rules for the safety net.” In this can be seen the realisation that others, particularly the Principal, may see it as a method of removing the protection of the agreed working practices. The NATFHE secretary admitted that there is a feeling of mistrust of senior management by teaching staff, saying that, “...,there always has been. This is inevitable because of the different agendas.”

Caseloading is not seen as a potential big stick; it is seen generally as positive. The added management responsibility for managing the budgets, if it falls on the lecturers could be a problem, as they have enough to do. The question of what happens if an area overspends has to be faced. “Previously when we have budgets some areas always overspent and others had to bail them out. This needs to be faced, what happens when an area overspends? Taking budget away from others is demoralising, when they have managed properly”. He said that balancing this is a management problem, and that he would be knocking on the door if the resources were not there for a team. He acknowledged that the problems were likely to be in areas that didn't see the problem. They are the ones likely to overspend. The need to consider commercial income generated and how that is allocated is important. This last point was personally dear to the heart of the NATFHE Secretary as he works in an area that generates commercial income.

The NATFHE Secretary also commented that he had envisaged changes of roles being an outcome of Caseloading, with the use of non-lecturing staff for student supervision. This had actually already happened, and much more quickly than he expected.

## **4.2 Conclusions from the Interviews**

Benefits of Caseloading were identified generally by all of the people interviewed, these included,

Control over budgets by delivery staff

Flexibility over resource allocation by managers

Links between income generated and spending power

Incentive to generate income

Responsibility and authority for budgets devolved down the organisational structure

Freedom to deploy resources as agreed by the delivery team

Budget reporting transparent

The benefits of Caseloading were therefore acknowledged. In retrospect the limitations of the College systems to deliver the model were also acknowledged. The model was unable to be implemented due to the lack of support systems to provide the budget reports and cost centre analysis. The level of awareness of the managers regarding budget controls was also inadequate. The College has previously given very little autonomy over expenditure to managers and has therefore not built up a bank of experience in such management. At the beginning of the new academic year the Curriculum Managers were given staffing budgets in monetary terms for the first time. Previously the staffing budget had been expressed in teaching hours. By redefining the budget into monetary terms the managers become responsible for the actual expenditure, including on-costs and cover arrangements. This has created anxiety amongst the managers who feel that they do not have control over expenditure. It has also highlighted the fact that the planning figures supplied by the Curriculum Areas, on which the budgets are based, are in some cases unrealistic. The largest movement towards achieving accurate forecasting

and planning has been achieved through the allocation of resources in line with the plan, corrected by actual enrolment statistics at the census point.

The role of the managers in making the Caseloading model work is therefore central to the project. Their willingness to accept responsibility for resource allocation and generation is key to the successful implementation. This requires considerable further staff development to ensure that they are confident regarding the funding formulas and their authority within the financial regulations. The concerns felt by the managers regarding their role is I feel, very understandable. As the NATFHE Secretary pointed out, the managers who do not control budgets are under threat, as what is it that they manage if not the budget?

#### **4.3 Response to External Questionnaire**

In order to establish the extent and type of Caseloading working within English Further Education Colleges a questionnaire was sent to a sample of 120 Colleges. Questionnaires were sent out to arrive at the beginning of January, with a requested return date of January 30 1998.

The sample was selected by identifying Colleges whose FEFC funding was within a band 10% less than the case study college, or greater. The rationale for this selection was based on the assumptions that,

1. this would give roughly comparative College sizes
2. Devolved budgets are more likely to be instituted in Colleges with FEFC budgets above £10m

Forty-six replies were received to the questionnaires. Of those, 14 were undertaking some form of Caseloading and another four are planning a Caseloading model. It may be reasonable to assume that few of the Colleges who did not reply are undertaking any form of Caseloading, and therefore were less motivated to reply.

### 4.3.1 Outcomes

Question	Subject	YES Responses
1.	Use of Caseloading	14
2	If not is any planned?	
2a	Not considered it	8
2b	Discounted it	11
2c	Considering it	8
2d	Planning it	5
	devolved budget	2
	weighted workload	0
	combination	2
	other model	1
3	If using Caseloading, what model	
3a.	devolved budget	4
3b	weighted workload	6
3c	combination	1
3d	other model	2
4	When did you introduce Caseloading?	
	1994	0
	1995	4
	1996	4
	1997	6
5	Categories of staff covered	
5a	teaching	12
5b	teaching Support	4
5c	technicians	3
5f	admin	1
5g	managers	2
5h	all	1
6	Areas of use	
6a	all	10
6b	selected areas	2

6c	volunteer areas	1
6d	other	1
7	Reasons for introduction	
7a	financial savings	6
7b	increased efficiency	10
7c	effective resource control	13
7d	financial control	4
7e	relate resources to income	6
7f	create equity of workload	11
7g	resolve workload issues	9
7h	recognise levels of teaching	6
7i	recognise non-teaching	6
7j	devolution of budgets	7
7k	other	1
8	Has it been a success?	
8a	completely	2
8b	partially	2
8c	no	3
8d	too early to tell	5
10	Future plans	
10a	extension	0
10b	continuity	2
10c	refinement	10
10d	abandonment	1
10e	other	0

### 4.3.2 Analysis of External Survey Results

A number of insights can be drawn from the data. Considering the models used only 6 of the 14 are using a weighted workload model, which only covers teachers. All of those using a devolved budget model cover teachers, half also cover teaching support and technicians. Of the two Colleges who claim a success with Caseloading, one is using a weighted workload model, the other a devolved budget model, both of which only

cover teaching staff. Only one College intends continuing their current model, as they feel it is too early to judge its success, all other intend to further refine the model, and one to abandon it all together. This highlights the amount of work still to be done on the Caseloading concept to be able to create a fully functional model that delivers its objectives.

Of the Colleges using a devolved budget model, most cite financial controls, increased efficiency and effectiveness and resource control as reasons for introducing the model. This bears out the assumption that the budget model is often finance driven. One respondent also introduced this type of model to resolve workload issues and recognise levels of teaching and non-teaching activities. This fits more closely with the intended Casestudy College scheme which although a devolved budget model is also intended to give more resource autonomy to the team. The planned result of this is to allow the teams to resolve workload and balance issues, rather than create a fixed weighting system across the whole College.

Of those using or planning a weighted workload model equity of workload is the prime reason stated for introducing the system. The financial issues and increased efficiency and effectiveness are also high on the list of reasons for its introduction. Financial constraints may therefore be seen as driving initiatives towards new ways of working. Of the one respondent using a combination model (details not specified), they reported mixed reasons for its use, and that it is too early as yet to assess the success of the model. The workload models come out as partial successes for the majority, with one success and one failure reported.

#### **4.3.3 Strengths And Weaknesses Identified**

Of the Colleges which were using some form of Caseloading the following strengths and weaknesses were identified.

## **Strengths**

### Identified strengths of the weighted workload model

- Equitability

- Review of workload and efficiency seen as priority

- Objective approach to teachers' duties across college

- Recognition of non teaching activities and ability to direct these

- Efficiency

### Identified strengths of the devolved budget model

- Accountability

- Staff understanding of resource to income link

- Staff attitudes and participation

- Team focus on targets and income

### Identified strengths of the combination model

- Individualisation of workload

### Identified strengths of the other model identified

- Teamwork, flexibility & relevance to current issues

## **Weaknesses**

### Identified weaknesses of the weighted workload model

- Management time spent negotiating applications and "beancounting"

- Exceptions which occur

- Staff concentration on number of hours rather than hour content

- Staff perception of inequity in system

Union issues re contracts

Bureaucracy

#### Identified weaknesses of the devolved budget model

Managers ability to implement system

Resistance to let go of control

Pressure on middle managers

High training investment required

Needs investment to succeed

Making it actually change practice is difficult

Managers not having time to operate system

No resources to apply it to lecturers

Danger of empire building

#### Identified weaknesses of the combination model

Complexity

#### Identified weaknesses of the other model identified

Time require to plan and cultural shift required to implement

### **4.3.4 General comments made by respondents**

The complexity of the models and the resulting difficulties in implementation forms the major comment from respondents. The investment in planning, training and monitoring time is also given as a drawback to the system. This is reflected in the number of colleges who have considered a model and discounted it (11) and those who are refining their model (10 out of 14), and the one that is abandoning it.

The need to ensure that managers are conversant with the scheme and can explain it to their teams is also specifically commented on. The



removal of central control, which is essential to either model also seems to cause conflict. Standard rules for workloads and hours do not sit comfortably with the devolved workload model. In some cases the use of Caseloading has produced little real benefit, especially in relation to the time invested in planning. The concept may therefore be seen as a distraction within the organisation, or it could become an area for the unions to use as a basis for continuing dispute over contracts and conditions of service.

None of the respondents wholeheartedly endorsed Caseloading, but Colleges seem intent to continue with some model of Caseloading. The stakeholder analysis at Casestudy College implies that the driver is from senior management, as a cultural change measure, to generate increased flexibility of delivery and working practices. This appears to be replicated in the motivation identified by the respondent colleges.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Caseloading is essentially an attempt to create new ways of working for teaching staff, new ways of facilitating learning, managing resources and staff time. The motives behind the desire to create these changes are many and varied, as are the reactions to the changes. Different individuals and groups within colleges and across the sector have different views, depending on their perspective. They are all stakeholders within Further Education and their reactions to Caseloading affect the eventual models and methods used to implement change, including Caseloading. Within the case study we are dealing with individuals' perceptions of reality, and attempting to capture that (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995). Whatever they assert to be true is valid as part of the study, and can be triangulated with other data later. How they view their role within Further Education and how this may be affected by Caseloading is central to their reaction to change and to the Caseloading model. Peeke (1998) comments on the different stakeholders in Further Education and the different goals and beliefs they may pursue. Mitroff (1983) comments that different stakeholders tend to define organisations' problems in different ways, and devise different solutions. As he goes on to say, stakeholders do not exist in isolation within an organisation, they are part of the living, working culture of the organisation. Changing the college culture, in the way required to implement a Caseloading model, requires working at various levels on the micro and macro determinants of the culture. To do this we need to establish what cultural values the different stakeholders hold. Change is never neutral. It will always have positive and negative affects, depending on your standpoint at the time. How individuals react to change, including Caseloading, is therefore affected by their role, position, personal circumstances, professional view and political allegiance.

Caseloading has consequences for the organisation beyond the financial and structural changes necessary to create a Caseloading model. It must also affect the prevailing sector management style if it is to be successfully implemented. This in turn will impact upon the demands placed on individual managers, in ways they may welcome or resist. Teams will be affected by the management style and the practical changes, and they may embrace, accept, subvert or reject the model. Much will depend on the culture within the college and the benefits seen as emanating from a change to Caseloading. The lack of a national Caseloading model, and the different perspectives individuals and groups hold also affects the stakeholder's reactions. There is no consensus as to what Caseloading is across the sector and this leads to suspicion and misinterpretation which can hamper change.

## **5.1 The Stakeholders' View of Caseloading**

A range of stakeholders can be identified who will all have a view on the models of resource allocation and staff deployment within a college and whether a devolved model such as Caseloading should be adopted. These will include, the teaching staff themselves, the unions, the middle and senior managers. Each of these groups will potentially view any issue differently and this view can have a major impact on the success of the implementation of any change. From a political point of view devolved budgeting is seen as having support from all areas (Boyle 1991). Public sector managers generally are regarded as lacking incentives to innovate and perform well as any profit motive is lacking. Devolved budget responsibility is seen as one way of introducing an incentive by making managers responsible and accountable for controlling and allocating resources. This not only makes managers more accountable to the funding bodies, but also brings managers more in touch with customers, as they can affect directly the level and types of service on offer through allocation of resources. A daunting thought possibly, if you happen to be the manager.

### **5.1.1 The Teaching Staff**

In a time of continuing change and increased pressure to achieve specific outcomes the teaching staff often feel suspicious and cynical regarding any change to ways of working. Individuals working within the Further Education sector have been forced to cope with change on a grand scale since Incorporation in 1993. Issues regarding workload and management options have been included in this, and,

“teaching staff have had to manage not only their workload but also construct some explanation of what is going on and where they fit in the ‘new FE’”. (Capizzi et al 1998)

Their view of Caseloading is affected by this attempt to create “fit” and to analyse what the effect of change is going to be for them and for their students. At Casestudy College the Caseloading project was not fully implemented, and therefore did not really impact on the role of the teaching staff and the way they operate. Many other changes, some of which have been outlined elsewhere as possibly removing the urgency for Caseloading, did affect the teaching staff directly. Development of new roles within the curriculum delivery teams had a direct effect on teaching staff. The introduction of Teaching Support roles into teams placed more emphasis on the theoretical input, tutorial and guidance aspects of the teaching role. Other aspects were removed from their direct remit and taken on by the “para-educ” staff. In some instances this was seen as a positive, giving the lecturers scope to concentrate on what they saw as their key role. In other cases it was viewed less favourably, as some of the less responsible, more flexible tasks such as placement visiting and assessing were removed from the teaching staff remit. This placed extra pressure on some teaching staff, who were required to deliver more “formal” aspects, rather than the less defined areas of the whole curriculum.

### **5.1.2 The Unions**

The Caseloading project was discussed at length with the recognised teaching union, prior to its proposal. Initially the unions were wary of Caseloading, as they saw it as a method for increasing the workload of teaching staff through a weighting system. They were however content to discuss the proposals and to influence them. During the discussions the union representatives became advocates of the Caseloading system, because they viewed it as an enabling system, which allocated resources equitably and allowed for team control over resource allocation and role definitions. The union secretary highlighted their acceptance of the Caseloading model in his interview, seeing it as a positive way forward.

The union response to other changes, specifically the development of the teaching support role was more cautious, and required considerable debate and discussion to agree roles and boundaries. The acceptance of these roles by the unions was based upon twin pressure, one that lecturers were undertaking too many administrative tasks, and two, that some areas would not be viable if staffed only with lecturers. These two aspects combined to create an acceptance of the need to compromise on roles, with definitions of boundaries being established and safeguards built into the agreed frameworks.

### **5.1.3 The Managers**

Devolving authority regarding resources utilisation to delivery teams, as in the Caseloading model, has implications for the role of the managers within a college. For the senior managers it removes their direct influence from the decision making process regarding staff utilisation, timetabling and resource purchase. They retain the responsibility and authority to allocate the unit of resource, linked to activity level and to set the strategic objectives, within which the teams operate. But they lose the authority over specific resource allocation decisions. As this becomes the remit of the curriculum delivery teams. They control the detail of the resource

allocation and through this the developments and innovations within the curriculum area. Changing the resource allocation model can threaten the established role of senior managers, in controlling resources and therefore power within the organisation. Sallis (1996) identifies the changes that are required, culturally and structurally, to achieve this level of change,

“It requires considerable trust on the part of managers as it passes power from the centre to the operational units. What the senior manager retains is the key quality monitoring function. They oversee the results of the process - retention rates, success rates and customer satisfaction, rather than controlling resources.” (p91)

This kind of change inverts the authority structure and gives authority to the staff within teams, rather than to senior managers. This authority must be coupled with responsibility for the achievement of quality goals and outputs if it is to succeed in organisational terms.

Middle managers' roles may be seen as being eroded by the Caseloading model, and it is conceivable that they would feel threatened by such changes. During the interview with the union secretary this was alluded to. He expressed concern regarding the role and position of middle managers under the Caseloading structure as it was possible to construe the model as bypassing the middle managers and giving autonomy to the curriculum delivery teams. The functioning of the Caseloading model actually depends to a great extent on the middle manager, and it does not remove them from the authority loop. Their role becomes one of monitoring expenditure and allocation and promoting development. They are more involved in curriculum development and innovation through their ability to utilise the devolved resources. These managers may resist the move to Caseloading as they may view it as a method of imposing expenditure cuts by “remote control”, that is making it the responsibility of middle managers to implement difficult and unpopular decisions which will be forced upon them by budget restrictions. They may also see it as an

increase in workload, especially of paperwork as they need to keep more careful track of all income and expenditure.

As a motivating tool the freedom to take decisions, and make mistakes may be empowering, or it may be viewed as a control mechanism, by which manager performance will be judged, apparently on impartial grounds. If rewards do not accompany the additional responsibility, managers may also feel that they are being taken advantage of within the structure. Caseloading will be unable to succeed unless any areas of reluctance such as these are worked through with the managers involved.

Under the Caseloading model the resources generated by activity levels will be allocated on a formula based method. How they are deployed will be up to the managers and the teams to decide. This puts increased demands on the middle managers within the college structure. Kedney and Scribbins (95/5) acknowledged that managers will be called upon to direct and deliver change, rather than conformity with current practice. The success of Caseloading will depend on the standards set by these managers, and the decisions they take regarding day to day operations and resource utilisation. In areas where some aspects are run on a Caseloading model and others not it will increase the complexity of their task. Managers will be charged with making decisions, which they must embrace. At the same time the senior managers must relinquish their control to allow for the decision to be operational. This is a radical shift for the majority of college cultures, which espouse an open approach to management decision making, but in reality restrict the flexibility of staff utilisation patterns. As Kedney and Scribbins note,

“Some-one.... will need to be empowered to decide when one or more members of a team may have little or no direct contact with students for considerable periods whilst this part of their load is carried by others”. (95/5 p74)

This is a change to the basic structure of all resource allocation within education, the amount of class contact a teacher is required to undertake. It has been jealously guarded on both sides and continues to be a matter of debate, if not national dispute since the agreement in early 1999 to leave it to local agreement. Kedney and Scribbins (95/5) make the point that,

“Recognition of a range of professional duties and their allocation over a 37 hour week and forty five week year against a case or work-load can be a natural outcome of delegating control to a line manager. Accounting how that time is spent in reaching the targets set for the case-load is seen by some as being more effectively carried out by a middle manager in consultation with his/her colleagues than through a standard college or national rule book”.  
(p5)

However they also point out that the teachers are reluctant to give up the concept of standard class contact rules, as they view them as protection regarding unfair workloads,

“...the employees’ obsession with retaining the practice of the standard class contact hour, possibly more for political and symbolic reasons than for reasons of good bargaining principle...”.  
(p9)

The reasons for this may be more than political principle. The role of the teaching staff and the control that they can exercise over their professional practice is seen as being under continuing threat as the culture and practice within the whole Further Education sector changes.

“The roles undertaken by teaching staff, their remit, responsibilities and boundaries have been under debate and subject to change over the past five years. This creates ambiguity and change which



has implications not in terms of staff roles, but of their identity". (Capizzi et al 1998).

The managers role in generating change within the organisation, and ensuring that it is maintained and embedded, rather than cosmetic, is clear. Caseloading can be one method of pursuing this change and achieving the mission of quality, flexibility and responsiveness which every Further Education college now seems to have adopted. Kedney and Scribbins (95/5) comment that,

"Case-loading, or something of its ilk will be needed if managers are to be able to remain true to the espoused purposes of the college without the type of detailed regulation afforded by the old Silver Book." ( p74)

This places a huge responsibility on the middle managers, for cultural change, curriculum change and to manage the resources allocated to them in a way which meets the strategic aims of the college. Rather than taking responsibility away, Caseloading may actually give the manager more responsibility. Within the Caseloading framework colleges must ensure that the training and the authority to undertake these tasks, if it is to succeed, accompany this. As Kedney and Scribbins point out decisions will also have to be taken regarding managers and areas who do not achieve their targets or utilise their resource allocation efficiently or effectively.

The Further Education sector was required to achieve high growth targets, as outlined earlier. From 1996 funding for growth was removed, and only partially re-instated in 1998. As Kedney and Scribbins point out managers are used to managing change through growth. As this change lever is removed, and the options open to staff who are reluctant to change, are reduced, the managers role as change manager becomes increasingly complex.

Boyle (1991) identifies the type of devolved budget model embodied in Caseloading as being a means of empowering middle managers because managers can make best use of resources and any savings can be deployed for investment in other areas controlled by that manager. The manager,

“...ceases to be a mere bidder for resources and instead becomes a manager of resources”. (p12)

This gives more opportunity to focus on outcomes, the student experience and achievements rather than the in-fighting over resource allocation that many managers are forced to engage in. The move to Caseloading would affect the accountability and control over resource utilisation, towards accountability based on performance, specifically, whether the intended outcomes are achieved by the deployment of the allocated resource. This does not remove all central controls however. Managers may have limited control over their major expenditure. Fixed staffing costs, as historical elements will affect these costs and changes may still require central authorisation. This will partly be to ensure that legal requirements in staff recruitment and terms and conditions are complied with. Limits to devolved control may also be placed on managers by others within the organisation who oppose total devolution due to their fear of loss of control and influence, or concerns that the financial control skills are lacking in the middle management layer.

## **5.2 Devolving Authority**

Caseloading is a model which devolves budget control to curriculum managers and delivery teams. Successful devolution of budgets must be within the framework of the overall strategic plan of the organisation, so that the teams are working towards corporate objectives in a co-ordinated, devolved, way. Planning is essential to successful devolution, along with adequate and timely management information. Devolution does not allow total freedom for managers, they must manage within the restraints

imposed by the organisation. Haythornewaite (1996) outlines the necessary elements of devolved budgets as combining managerial functions of;

- Definition of available resources

- Agreement on performance measures and resource levels

- Identification of the constraints on budget management

- Encouragement of initiative and innovation

- Clarification of responsibility and accountability

- Setting review periods

- Enabling monitoring of achievement

- Highlighting areas for change.

Devolution involves transferring responsibility and control to a local level with the identification of team objectives and targets, within the framework of whole organisation objectives. These team objectives are set and owned by the team and their line managers. The level of resources they are allocated and have control over is identified and the outputs they are expected to deliver is defined. This holds a number of advantages for the organisation including,

- Ability to react to changing conditions

- Control and use of information generated at a local level

- Clear identification of responsibilities

- More involvement of budget holder and an increase in their commitment to organisational objectives

- Leverage to change attitudes of other staff

- Incentives to be efficient and increase income

- Increased financial awareness, and control

- Increased control through improved accountability

- Broader involvement in budget setting and management

- Creation of an empowerment culture

In this way, devolving authority and resources to the delivery teams is seen as an empowering force. Kedney and Scribbins (1995b) regard it as a motivating factor, which can make better use of people skills and improve the quality of service. Cooke and Slack (1984) identify the authority to make autonomous decisions as motivating and an opportunity to be innovative in considering the wider picture, rather than being bound by constraints and rules. This empowerment fits with the demands of a professional workforce that they be given more control over professional decisions regarding the learning environment, coupled with accountability for resource utilisation and achievement of targets. Caseloading at Casestudy College, as agreed by Academic Board, was designed to be an empowering model, one which moves away from a centralist operating style and strengthens the role of the first line decision makers. Devolution of power to delivery teams also needs to be accompanied by a reduction in management layers. The organisation must have a flat structure if it is to operate a devolved model such as team based Caseloading. Otherwise bureaucratic blockages will arise within the system to remove the autonomy of the delivery teams and act against the Caseloading objectives. As Kedney and Scribbins point out, the management style within the college must fit with the Caseloading model if it is to succeed.

They see it as a series of questions regarding where the real authority and decision making power lies within the organisation. The report identifies a number of pertinent questions to assess how the management style of a college supports the Caseloading model.

- Who can decide, without reference to anyone else, whether a full time lecturer will do no teaching for six months whilst writing or developing new programmes?
- Who sets the maximum and minimum contact hours over a week, a term or the academic year for individual members of staff when the old

constraints/protections have been removed?

- Who will select which part time staff are not to be re-engaged when full time staff cover their classes?
- Who decides that a group of students may learn more halfway through their course by studying at home than by attending previously timetabled periods in college?
- Who approves 3 or 6 month sabbatical leave with pay?
- Who takes the “in loco parentis” position when it is needed?
- Who is the auditor or inspector referred to when questions arise as to the efficiency or effectiveness of specific programmes?
- Who accounts for college employment policies or ensures that equal pay or unfair dismissal claims do not arise from the decisions they take?

These are all issues and decisions that will impact on the middle managers and the teams. To create the autonomy and empowerment underpinning the Caseloading model, the power to make many of these decisions should lie with the teams. The responsibility to ensure the organisation is protected from legal action and financial difficulties lies with the senior management team. How they manage that is crucial to empowerment of the teams. Johnson and Scholes (1989) highlight the difficulties that can arise when it is unclear what decisions and responsibilities remain centralised and what is devolved to the cost centres. They also point out that decentralisation of operational decisions does not necessarily mean the decentralisation of strategic ones. It is necessary when using a Caseloading model, or any change driver, to establish the balance of responsibility and authority. This is to achieve a fit between the two sides, which empowers the managers and teams to

achieve their targets, and allows the senior managers to be reassured that the strategic objectives are being achieved through this method. The balance is achieved if the middle managers can manage, and achieve the outcomes, and the senior managers can lead and achieve the strategic objectives and mission. The management of this change, and the professional empowerment it engenders is central to the success of Caseloading development.

In a time of funding cuts or restrictions a devolved model may lose its empowering function, and it may take on a demotivating tension. When the middle managers are the ones charged with making cuts, to fit the budget, they have to accept the responsibility for the difficult decisions. This may be demotivating to managers who see Caseloading as a method for creating resource flexibility, not a system for imposing yet more output requirements from a reduced resource allocation. This may be a painful reality for managers who are sold Caseloading as a liberating management tool.

In their investigation of the “more for less” pressures facing colleges Leever and Dixon (1999) examined a group of colleges and their strategies for making efficiency gains. In these colleges budgetary control tended to be centralised, and tightly proscribed. The majority of colleges did not make use of devolved budgets other than for consumable items. The Caseloading model, with full devolved control of resources was therefore not generally used as a tool for efficiency gain. Colleges are reported as considering fully devolved budgets as requiring skills in managers which are not always available, especially in smaller colleges. They quote one college as considering that,

“budget delegation placed departmental managers in an invidious position, expecting them to develop and support staff at the same time as laying some of them off.” (p5)

The restrictions on financial resources and budgets for growth are therefore seen as mitigating against devolved budget models along the line of Caseloading . In their summary of how to achieve more and better for less, the “three-card trick”, Leever and Dixon highlight that successful colleges have, amongst other things, central strict management of staff budgets.

In his review of the introduction of devolved budgets in the civil service Boyle (1991) identifies a range of outcomes from the experience, both positive and negative. The positive outcomes are related to the flexibility managers are given to make more effective use of the resources they control. This allows resources to be moved to support development or to iron out peaks and troughs in demand. He also identifies that managers become more cost conscious. Costs are not real if you have no control over resources, and individual managers have no incentive to control costs when responsibility for spending does not rest with them. When cost savings are translated in resources that can be vired across budget headings to support different projects or expenditure managers are more likely to be closely concerned with cost saving. This also ties in with the notion of carry-over. Part of the Caseloading model at Casestudy College involved a carry-over facility, that is, savings made in one year, or money not spent, can be carried over to the next financial year. This allows for resources to be accrued over a longer basis to pay for capital or other large expenditure, based on the needs identified by the team. If carry-over is not allowed the incentive to make efficiencies and to invest for the future is removed. In addition it encourages the local government spending profile of rushing to spend all the budget before the end of the financial year, which does not create sensible resource allocation or usage. Negative effects of devolving budgets tend to be based on the lack of training for managing budgets, or the lack of usable information to control the budgets, coupled with a tendency on the part of senior managers to “claw back” resources when unexpected changes occur. This can be related to the sudden withdrawal of growth funding from colleges in 1997, which had the effect of reducing the scope for budget devolution and the

incentives for curriculum delivery teams linked to the achievement of growth. A major conclusion of Boyle's report is that Caseloading and devolved budget models generally will only win wide-spread support if they are not seen as a method for making cost savings alone. Its role in enhancing service levels and flexibility are important aspects in successful models.

### **5.3 The Stakeholders' Viewpoint on Change**

Considering the views of the internal stakeholders within Further Education, that is the various types of staff who work within the sector, rather than the students, parents, sponsor and associated agencies that have a stake in Further Education, leads to the conclusion that they are feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the rate of change. Since Incorporation in 1993 the rate of change has continued to escalate, and new initiatives have been continuously introduced. Some of the messages conflict and some of the political initiatives have clashed with the values held by those within the sector. Individuals, teachers, managers, principals and other staff within colleges are seeking to make sense of the changed environment, and to hang on to their assumptions and values which inform their view of what Further Education is about. This cultural shift has been difficult and it has led to change fatigue and scepticism in many areas. Individuals within colleges are attempting to make sense of their situation, in the face of considerable ambiguity and equivocation which accompanies the organisational change (Weick 1995). Part of the manager's role in a time of change is to help individuals and teams of staff to make sense of the changes, to interpret the external and internal changes and how they will impact on the organisation, and specifically on their aspect of the operation. Changes to the environment, from whatever source threaten the perspective that individuals have on their environment and the role of themselves and the organisation they are part of. Porac et al (1989), quoted in Weick (1995) talks about the "socially shared beliefs which define... and guide strategic choices." (p 400) and acknowledge that there can be some "intercultural variation" in these shared beliefs



(p405). However the central shared values and beliefs within Further Education are generally shared widely enough to allow for a common understanding and view of the role of the organisation, the impact of changes and the desirability of new initiatives for individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Any change within an organisation, including one which changes the prevailing culture, or what Levy and Merry (1986) term “second order change”, must fit with part of the existing culture. As Ruddiman (1994) comments in Gorringer et al (1994), some people will welcome change on the basis that “the grass is always greener”, others will want to retain the status quo. To facilitate the change there must be some connection to the existing position, to create a bridge to the new culture. Davies (1994) makes the link between resources allocation models and the organisational culture. The two must fit together as,

“Organizational culture defines the framework in which resource decisions are made. The culture is reflected in the way that resources decision-making frameworks operate.” (p345)

Caseloading at Casestudy College fitted with the espoused culture, one of flatter structures, less bureaucracy and empowerment of individuals and teams. The introduction of Caseloading still failed. Was this due to the systems within the organisation not being ready to support it, such as the MIS system, or because the culture did not support it? Perhaps it was a combination of both. If the culture supported the change to a Caseloading system then the resources would have been made available to create the MIS structure to provide the underpinning information to allow Caseloading to work. If the management team fully understood the Caseloading model and was committed to its implementation the organisational weight could have created a situation where Caseloading happened, rather than it never getting off the drawing board. Deal and Kennedy (1982) comment that many changes fail because not enough was invested in them. Those involved underestimate what it will take to make the change happen, and

put too little resource or backing into it. Casestudy College seems to have fallen into the classic change management trap, expecting change to happen because it is in the plan. Buchanan and Boddy (1992) identify that over one quarter of all IT projects run late, mainly due to poor management skills and communication. Within Casestudy College the management view seemed to expect that change would happen in MIS, curriculum or budget control because the plan said it would, rather than because integrated planning and development based on sound research and training had been undertaken. The change to Caseloading was not necessarily resisted. It never got off the ground because the organisational conditions to create and sustain the change were not there.

Management information is central to the development of Caseloading, and at Casestudy College, as in many others, the systems were not in place to produce the reports on which budget allocation and management could be effectively based and the organisational will was not there to create the systems which would support Caseloading in a devolved budget sense. Problems occur when, as Boyle (1991) points out,

"budgetary control (is) hampered by inadequate management information; information was often late, inaccurate, incomplete and indigestible." (p22)

In Levy and Merry's (1986) terms the depth of the necessary change was not recognised. It was viewed as a superficial (first order) change which did not affect the organisations core, rather than a deeper second order change which affected the very essence, or what Schein (1985) would term the "basic assumptions" of the organisation, Vickers (1965) calls "policy-making processes" and Davis (1982) calls "paradigm change". Buchanan and Body (1992) highlight features of successful change identified by Watson and Dunphy (p16), of these many areas were missing from the introduction of Caseloading at Casestudy College. These include wholehearted support from top officials; participants seeing it as reducing rather than adding to their burdens, participants joining in the diagnostic

process, creating realistic, planned simple scope change, with good timing, competent staff support and adequate rewards for implementers. Buchanan and Boddy also make the point that even if all the elements are available which support successful change it may be that,

“..other managers are pursuing different, perhaps personal, agendas through organizational change and that the politics of the organization may lead to shifts in priorities during the life of the project”. (p17)

Evidence from the interviews with staff within the college shows the different views of Caseloading, and the lack of consensus for the model to be implemented. The Principal was anxious to introduce Caseloading, and it was included as a strategic priority, but the resources and authority to bring it into being were not there. Schein (1985) and Ruddiman (1994) identify the importance of the leader in transmitting and embedding cultural norms and change. They also identify that the same person may be transmitting contradictory messages. The Principal at Casestudy College put forward the view that Caseloading is an empowering model, where the resources follow activity and teams can establish their own resource allocation priorities and to respond to Kedney and Scribbins, make decisions on staff utilisation. However in other activities, when referring to Caseloading he frequently used it as an example of how what he viewed as restrictive practices by lecturers could be overcome. In discussions regarding the established working practices which identified class contact hours and duty days for lecturers, he expressed the view that Caseloading was needed to remove all of this and create increased activity levels and efficiency gains. Although accepting of the team based devolved budget model of Caseloading he acted as if the workload, weighted activity model was the one required to remove what he saw as restrictive limits on lecturer activity.

An additional contradiction arose within Casestudy College, when the Principal, in interviews regarding Caseloading and other occasions,

expressed the view that managers had the authority to make decisions. He stated that he wanted people to feel they could make mistakes, because that was how innovation and development happened. Change can not happen without risk and risk brings mistakes. Caseloading requires managers to take risks and for risk taking to become a way of life for them and the organisation, expecting increased quality and innovation without accepting the risks and potential for failure is bound to create unworkable strain on any devolved budget model (Boyle 1991). However, in operation managers were not allowed to make decisions, and therefore could not create the changes they sometimes wished to. All decisions were referred upwards, and often managers felt that no answer was ever referred back down. As Peters and Waterman (1982) identified, organisations act irrationally. They call for risk taking, but punish even small failures, they design systems which lower an individual's self image.

This clash of espoused culture and real culture created uncertainty and fear within the organisation, stifling innovation. In an environment such as this it is perhaps less surprising that the Caseloading model, with its need to create structural and information changes was not feasible.

As discussed earlier, some of the changes envisaged from Caseloading were being achieved in other ways. As Peeke (1998) points out, changes may occur in areas where it was not originally sought. The changes in the funding regime with the removal of growth funding created a different environment where a major change such as Caseloading did not fit comfortably. As Handy states (1985)

“...many of the ills of organizations stem from imposing an inappropriate structure on a particular culture...” (p185)

It appears that the culture of Casestudy College was not accepting of the drive towards Caseloading, and the management ethos actually mitigated against its implementation. Peeke gives a little comfort here by noting that,

“...changes in college structures and systems contribute to the overall cultural change effort.” (p9)

I would add, and vice versa, small changes in culture, however generated, will have an effect on the structure and systems, perhaps allowing devolved structures to work without the strict Caseloading framework in this case.

Harrison (1982), quoted in Handy (1985), identifies four types of culture; power, role, task and person. Casestudy College can be identified as a role culture, with clear procedures, role definition and separate functions, all co-ordinated by a narrow top layer of senior managers. This type of culture works on the assumption that if everyone does their job the organisation will achieve its objectives, in line with the published plan. This fits with the “professional” culture within Further Education, where individuals are expected, and expect, to conduct themselves appropriately, and to know what to do, and get on with it. Checking, monitoring and observation is resisted generally, as teachers feel this undermines their professionalism. To some extent the managers’ perspective on this is now changing, with increased emphasis on targets and monitoring everyone’s contribution to team targets, rather than allowing autonomous individuals to do their own thing. This has created tension. Harrison (1982) identifies that the role culture works as long as the environment is stable. Further Education over the past six years since Incorporation has been anything but stable. The professional role culture is therefore under threat and organisations are still looking for a new framework. Role cultures are slow to perceive the need to change, and Further Education has been forced to change. The radical change to Caseloading, affecting as it does one of the basic views of the professional, the concept of restricted class contact, can therefore be seen as clashing with the role culture. But at Casestudy College the espoused culture, from the manager’s point of view, would be one more of a task culture, where groups come together to achieve a

specified goal and then disperse. This takes more of a matrix organisational form and allows co-ordination below the senior level.

The structure of Casestudy College retains a centralised focus, although it has reduced the layers of hierarchy to become a flatter structure, decision making and resource allocation remain at the centre. The move to Caseloading would have a major impact on this. In Mintzberg's terms creating a devolved structure such as Caseloading would move the decision making power from a central structure to a decentralised structure. This would have wider consequences than merely a creation of cost centres in curriculum areas, because as Mintzberg (1983) identifies,

“The design parameters form an integrated system in which each is linked to all the others.” (p95)

By creating a transparent model of resource allocation, linked to activity levels, and devolving responsibility and authority for the management of those resources to middle managers and team a fundamental shift would happen, in Davis' (1982) terms, a paradigm shift level of change. The debate regarding efficiency and effectiveness would be likely to shift. As teams become more autonomous and take control of the devolved resources questions regarding central costs and “top-slicing” for administration and management costs would enter the debate. If resources are devolved on a formula based on unit generation the debate is likely to be how much of the unit value received from the funding council is being allocated to the internal unit currency. Leever and Dixon (1999) identify a shift of resources from central administration to student resources as a characteristic of colleges successfully making efficiency gains. When managers are held accountable for their devolved budgets, how much more likely they are to demand “value for money” from the services they purchase from the centre. Johnson and Scholes (1989) cite criticisms that are frequently made of the centralised nature of the decision making and control of many UK public sector organisations, and the tensions this can create in matching accountability with innovation.

The move towards a decentralised system of finance across the whole UK education system is highlighted by Davis (1994), who comments on the changes in all sectors of education, including Further Education towards national funding bodies, devolving budgets to single institutions. Within Further Education this is being reflected inside the organisation by devolving budgets from central control to cost centres, or as they are sometimes termed, responsibility centres. The reasons given by Davis (1994) for this decentralisation include; increased flexibility responsiveness to customer need, innovation and increased morale, through motivation of staff. They also assert that the national decentralisation of resource allocation should be replicated within organisations.

“To make decentralization effective within organizations, and therefore to provide the framework that will enable organizations to react to the very rapidly changing environment, in which they find themselves, the decentralization of fiscal structures to smaller sub-groups seems essential.” (p356)

West-Burnham (1992) suggests that resource decisions should be by teams of staff with devolved responsibility and suggests a model that mirrors the devolved budget Caseloading model. This gives effective resource control to smaller groups within the organisations. These groups also need to be given information in order to be able to make effective decisions. This was lacking at Casestudy College due to the inadequate management information systems, and from personal observation, I would say it is lacking in most Further Education colleges.

The rationale for creating a decentralised structure such as a Caseloading model, is based on involving more people and more expertise in decision making. This locates the decision making much closer to the activity and therefore connects it to the needs of the customer and the direct effects decisions will have. This kind of decentralisation also speeds up the decision making process as information does not have to be passed up

the organisation and a decision awaited before action can be taken. The amount of information each decision centre is faced with is also reduced by decentralisation. Because areas only receive information relating to their section, and make decisions for their section they can cope easily with the decision and information load.

Channelling all information to a centre and expecting decisions is likely to create overload for the centre as it attempts to establish priorities and decide what to conclude from the wealth of information delivered on a wide range of topics. Creating autonomous cost-centres (as Caseloading would do) also makes the teams aware of the real cost of delivering the service and focuses them on achievement of targets. As Cole (1990) states, each organisation must decide how much and in what areas authority is going to be delegated from the centre. As organisations become more complex the specialisms required to function effectively cannot reside completely at the centre. Managers throughout the organisation develop expertise. To utilise this expertise effectively some kind of delegation and power exchange must be created. This dispersal of authority is responsibility for the deployment of the organisation's resources.

Decentralisation would therefore be one consequence of Caseloading, and this may be seen as something that would work against the established culture of most Further Education colleges, where power is maintained centrally. In addition management thinking in the late 1990s as opposed to early 1990s is beginning to turn away from the idea of decentralisation, and propose returning control of functions to centralised expert areas. These are termed "shared services" rather than functional units, giving a feeling of service and investment and control by the dispersed areas. The effect however is to return control and discretion to the centre. Arkin (1999) quotes a survey of UK organisations which identifies 85% of respondents as changing management methods to provide more leadership direction from the centre. One third are quoted as removing decision making away from decentralised units. The reasons cited for this include increased competitive pressure, serious pressure to improve



financial performance and creating closer customer relationships. This may be seen as the latest management fad, reversing the accepted wisdom of the previous decade in an attempt to solve the same old problems, or it may be a reflection of the view that dispersed authority dilutes effectiveness.

#### **5.4 Empowering Individuals and Teams**

Caseloading, along the devolved budget model, has been identified as an empowering model. The Casestudy College model was designed to be so, to managers and curriculum delivery staff. This empowerment may be seen as political power within the organisation, the power to allocate resources and shape the curriculum through these resources. The empowerment relates to organisational power and the authority to make decisions regarding organisational operations, rather than the personal empowerment through concepts of justice and voice as outlined by Griffiths (1998). Empowering managers within the organisation brings together the authority and the responsibility for decision making, and closes the decision loop. All too often managers are given the responsibility for target achievement and efficiency gains, without the authority to make changes which will affect operations and effect the changes. Caseloading, in the devolved authority model, will generate empowerment for managers and teams and add the third perspective of accountability, by removing any other interference in target achievement.

Mintzberg (1983) Cole (1990) and Davis (1994) see one of the benefits of a decentralised structure as motivational. By giving people the power to make decisions individuals are motivated and use their initiative and innovate, to the good of the organisation. Giving limited decision making power to middle managers also develops their decision making skills and helps equip them for the next level post. It may also be seen as removing power from senior managers, and they may be reluctant to do this. They wish to retain control over activities and resource allocation. Reluctance to give up power is one reason for the lack of widespread use of

Caseloading given by McGavin (1993). He quotes the Brunel College experience, which has adopted Caseloading as an empowering tool, giving staff more opportunities. West-Burnham (1992) also identifies that relinquishing the power that comes with resource control is a challenging aspect of a devolved budget model because it threatens the traditional power base. Austin (1994) also highlights the empowering role of Caseloading for teaching staff,

“All in all, Caseloading presents a chance for an intelligent and mature approach to the key personnel issue of contracts. Caseloading both requires and offers a degree of flexibility which is quite impossible to achieve on Silver Book conditions, but the real gains for the teachers in being able to exercise their professional judgement in the core business of education are enormous, and self-evidently attractive”.

Sallis (1996) identifies the quality management link with empowerment and devolved budget control, for him, the Total Quality Management model, cannot work without an appropriate and empowering budget system (p88). Teams cannot be empowered to take control of quality assurance and quality control if they do not have the resources to put their ideas into practice.

“Unless the institution's own resource allocation mechanisms parallel the devolution of responsibilities to teams explicit in TQM programmes, in reality that devolution will be little more than a cosmetic exercise, and empowerment will be no more than a slogan. Real delegation of authority, which is the essence of empowerment, requires a real and effective control over resources.”  
(Sallis 1996 p89)

During the research at Casestudy College the question of the managers' role and how they would feel about the responsibilities that Caseloading placed upon them was discussed. A mixed response was given, even

from individuals who welcomed the authority and flexibility that the Caseloading model would give them as managers. At the same time the level of responsibility appeared to some, very daunting. Clutterbuck (1994) points out that what an organisation considers to be empowering, an individual may see as having to accept more responsibility, for less or the same reward, or that the organisation may become so empowered, they do not require so many managers. During an informal discussion of Caseloading the view was expressed by one middle manager that although she saw many benefits to the proposals she felt that the managers did not have the requisite skills to deal with a devolved budget. She felt that they lacked the time to become deeply involved with the management decision process and controls that would be a requirement of the devolved budget model. The lack of accurate and accessible information on student numbers, income and expenditure were also cited as reasons against the introduction of a devolved budget.

As an empowerment tool for managers the Caseloading proposals are therefore a double edged sword. On the one side it offers autonomy, on the other it offers liability and risk, without the confidence to make the risk worthwhile. The temptation to work as parochial units under the Caseloading system was also raised. If each curriculum delivery area is working as an independent cost centre, with targets to achieve on student recruitment, retention and achievement, plus additional income generation, then co-ordination of activities across the curriculum and consistency of practice and sharing of resources, staff and practice would be mitigated against. This is in direct conflict with the aims of Caseloading and delegated budgets, which aim to improve flexibility, quality, responsiveness and efficiency, through devolution. Splitting one large bureaucracy into a number of small bureaucracies could perhaps just increase the levels of bureaucracy and lose any economies of scale that may have been achieved. Cole (1990) quotes an Aston University study that concluded that large size leads to more specialisation and decentralisation, accompanied by more rules and more procedures.

Clutterbuck (1994) identifies three elements to empowerment within organisations, it helps people to,

“take more control over their jobs and working environment

enhance the contribution they make as individuals and members of a team

seize opportunities for personal growth and self-fulfilment” (p8)

Under this framework Caseloading, and other management tools and techniques, can contribute towards empowerment but will not be the whole answer. The organisational culture and circumstances will affect how empowerment is perceived and approached. Using Caseloading as an empowerment method was never likely to achieve success on its own, Caseloading could contribute to a sense of empowerment, but does not have the cross organisational nature and scope that full empowerment within the organisation would require. The political nature of some of the motives behind Caseloading act against the prerequisites for success in empowerment outlined by Clutterbuck (1994) as,

having a clear concept of what you mean by empowerment, and articulating it clearly...

being totally honest about the reasons for investing time and resources into the cultural change

being realistic about the time and effort it will require

genuinely wanting empowerment to come about.

Bowen and Lawler (1992) identify three levels of empowerment, the second level of job involvement fits with the Caseloading model in that,

Jobs are redesigned so that employees use a variety of skills. Employees believe their tasks are significant, they have considerable freedom in deciding how to do the work, they get more feedback and they each handle a whole, identifiable piece of work.

However, despite the heightened level of empowerment that it brings, the job involvement model does not change higher level strategic decisions concerning organisation structure, power and the allocation of resources. As a concept Caseloading did not evolve as a method of empowering staff, but was a side effect of the attempts to create change in working practices. Some people may have pursued this element more vigorously than others, but it remains a secondary driver, despite its political correctness. The drive for efficiency gains through curriculum delivery change, and therefore staff activity change, continues as the major impetus behind Caseloading. Empowerment of individuals and teams is a valuable compensation for the organisation, but even that is not universally welcomed. The additional pressure, workload and accountability, as outlined above, create additional responsibility which not all managers or teams welcome.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the implementation of a Caseloading project within one Further Education college. It was intended to track the pilot project and assess its success by gathering data on the recruitment, retention and achievement levels within the pilot areas, plus the costs of delivery. This was to be complemented by details of Caseloading models being used in other colleges and their estimates of success. In the event the pilot Caseloading project was not implemented, and the study became one of exploration of the reasons for this failure and the environmental aspects which promote a Caseloading type model.

Pressures to change working practices within Further Education have been hard to resist since 1993. They have come in the form of funding methodologies, which direct effort and rewards in specific directions, curriculum changes, legislative changes, and re-drafting of the remit for governors. New initiatives have been introduced which require new ways of working and colleges have been expected to rise to the challenge. Caseloading was designed as one way of responding to these pressures. It has a dual objective; the first is of devolving authority, responsibility and control to delivery teams, locating the decision making process closer to the client base. This fits in with latest management theories on motivation through empowerment and professional control of tasks. It also hits the spot politically as accountability in public life becomes increasingly emphasised. Public organisations must account for how they spend their money. They must also be seen to spend it wisely. Organisations are being held accountable, and they in turn are holding individual managers accountable. Devolution (itself a buzzword of the late 90s) makes managers accountable for their actions and the budgets they manage. They receive devolved blame as well as power. Hopefully they receive devolved praise and credit too.

The second objective for the introduction of a Caseloading model is to reduce costs, create flexible deployment of staff and remove what have been seen as restrictive working practices. Since 1993 employers have worked to change teacher contracts, this has to a large extent been achieved, although many feel there are yet more changes required. Nationally the emphasis on re-instating the national employment framework has officially gone and local negotiations are seen as the best response to local situations.

This report has discussed the pressures and measures undertaken to change working methods and how Caseloading fits into that movement. In the main changes have been achieved without the use of Caseloading. Certainly at the Casestudy College this has been the case. Major changes to working practices have been achieved, specifically with the introduction of teaching support roles in curriculum delivery. These posts are on different terms and conditions to teaching staff, and often present a more cost-effective way of delivering standard programmes. Kedney and Scribbins (1995) did the initial work on the introduction of Caseloading in Further Education and their reports have been discussed earlier. A circular published in June 1999 by the AoC sheds more light on this aspect of the changes. Bob Kedney was commissioned to compile details of the use of such teaching support staff in 1998, and this circular gives outline details. The report identifies that in the 112 colleges reviewed 2,178 full time equivalent teaching support posts were being used compared with 854 in 1996. This almost three fold increase highlights the changes in curriculum delivery that have occurred within the sector. The majority of these posts are on Business Support contracts; not teaching contracts and are in practical rather than “academic” curriculum areas. This mirrors the changes at Casestudy College where Trainers, Assessors and Advisers are now used widely across practical, commercial and workshop based areas. The survey results identify the intention to increase the use of such posts in the future. A parallel trend is identified in the growing use of fractional posts. Again this is happening at Casestudy College, with sessional lecturer posts being converted to fractional lecturer or trainer

posts. This is largely in response to the change in employment legislation, which removes the flexibility of contracting for sessional staff and increases the employment costs. Changes to working methods have therefore been achieved in many instances without the use of Caseloading. The secondary motives of devolution of budgets to create team empowerment and motivation also seems to be being side-tracked. As Leever and Dixon (1999) identify few colleges who are achieving reduced costs of delivery as well as high quality provision are using devolved budgets. Centralisation of resources allows for greater control and monitoring and may reduce bureaucracy and costs by removing repetitious systems. It also reduces the need for sophisticated management information systems to generate cost centre data. Ideally this data would be available and used whatever budget system is in place, but as the Director of Finance at the Casestudy College said during his interview, perhaps we are trying to be too sophisticated.

A lack of a common framework and a confusion over the terminology about Caseloading has clouded the issue I feel and detracted from moves to introduce it. The common conception of the system as being one of weighted workload measurement creates resistance from managers and suspicion from teachers. This system, although used in a number of colleges, creates a large administrative burden, purely in the establishment of the weightings, managing their implementation and tracking the staff utilisation. This model is unlikely to create costs savings without radical changes in the staff profile and the introduction of a major element of teaching support, to remove the dependence on lecturers. Creating weightings for activities may produce equity of workload, but it is likely to increase costs, as who is going to accept an increase in workload? All weightings will start from the lowest common denominator base, and additional weighting be granted to all other work. An increase in delivery costs is therefore the most likely outcome of this type of model.

The discussion within this report has concentrated on the devolved budget model of Caseloading. Haythornewaite (1996) identifies a number of



organisational factors that must be available to make devolved budget models such as Caseloading work. These include leadership on principles and practices to be used; on the skills and techniques of team and budget management. Central management must be committed to the objectives underlying the devolution and communicate a clear understanding of these objectives. Middle managers, who will be managing the budgets must be involved and the understanding of the objectives must be promoted. Continuing training in management techniques and the provision of adequate manuals and information underpin success. On the opposite side, sanctions against budget holders who do not manage their budgets, or achieve their targets must be negotiated and agreed. At Casestudy College these conditions were not met, the Principal gave no leadership to the Caseloading project or concept. Although the Academic Board agreed the model he continued to see Caseloading as a method for reducing costs and removing the negotiated lecturer working practices. The devolved budget aspects required investment of time, money and resources into the management information systems. As the Principal said in his interview, if these are important we will find the necessary resources. Serious difficulties were identified with the information systems and investment made in new software systems and hardware. Both the Director of Finance and the College Accountant said in their interviews that they were confident that real cost centre analysis could be achieved using the new systems. In the event the new register, timetabling, payroll and finance systems do not function effectively and certainly do not create an integrated management information system which managers can trust to provide data with which to manage devolved budgets. The investment in monetary terms was made, but the organisational backing to make the systems work was not. Other priorities took precedence and the systems were expected to function. As stated earlier, because the plan said new systems would be in place there was an expectation that the change would happen without additional commitment or development involving the senior management team.

Simkins (1989) identifies some of the internal political pressures that affect budgeting processes and the authority within the subgroups of an organisation. He also stresses the strategic leadership aspects of the system and the central role that organisational leaders play in establishing the budgetary style. Within Casestudy College this commitment to the project from the Principal was not apparent. No common understanding of the model was communicated by him, or endorsed and supported. The cultural change and the organisational resources necessary to create the change were not acknowledged. Because of this the project was not supported by integrated strategic planning or resources. The organisation's strategic plan contained a commitment to Caseloading, but did not contain a commitment to development of the concept or the framework to introduce such a model. Differing views on Caseloading and what it could and should achieve blocked the successful introduction of the model. Organisational changes in contracts, terms and conditions as well as curriculum delivery made some of the looked for changes unnecessary, or achieved them in other ways. The aims of the project were therefore unclear and the change process founded on the classic management issues of lack of commitment, communication, involvement and resources.

As a concept the devolved Caseloading model can work to create empowered teams. With the right level of information and organisational support I feel that the model has many strengths. Not least of these is the authority that it gives to teams and managers over the deployment of resources, including their own time. With the right level of involvement at all levels in target setting, transparent systems for allocating resources linked to activity, regular and accurate information on costs, expenditure and outputs, a devolved system can empower, enthuse and motivate teams. A culture of innovation and development can be fostered and resources utilised in a way, which best meet client needs. Organisational commitment in terms of investment in systems, training and support for implementation is vital. Real belief in the system must be exhibited from the top, and trust built up that the devolved control will not be arbitrarily removed when circumstances change.

The case study has highlighted that to achieve real cultural change requires continuing commitment from the most senior managers as well as systematic planning, communication, resource allocation and follow up. The initiative suffered from all the classic change management pitfalls and was unlikely to succeed from the outset. Some of the objectives of the project, namely changing working practices and reducing curriculum delivery costs, were achieved, through other routes. This once again serves to highlight the lack of co-ordination in planning and implementation of the strategic planning process.

To answer the question as to whether Caseloading can provide a more effective management model, I feel that it can, but not without clear and detailed management commitment. As to whether it is the best way of achieving its aims, I feel it is not, as a management model it has been overtaken by events and other more appropriate methods are available to achieve the objectives, responding to the changing environment of Further education.

The exploration of these other methods and their “fit” with the economic, political and curriculum pressures facing Further Education could be usefully followed up in further research, building upon this case study.

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## Appendix a Caseloading guidelines at Casestudy College





## LECTURER CASELOADING

The College is committed to moving towards a Caseloading system, as specified in the Strategic Plan, 5.4.7.

This paper outlines the initial proposals for a Caseloading pilot system, within programme areas.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To create a flexible curriculum delivery, based on programme teams.
2. To develop a flexible budgetary model, which reflects funding allocations.
3. To empower curriculum delivery teams to design and develop curriculum delivery models which meet the needs of diverse client groups.
4. To reflect the changing nature of curriculum delivery.
5. To create equity of workload.
6. To develop multi-skilled and multi-role programme teams.
7. To aid student retention and achievement.

### PROPOSED MODEL

Following discussions with the Director of Finance, Director of Educational Services, Curriculum Managers and CIS, it is proposed to introduce a team based Caseloading model, centred on the programme area team. The team would be delegated the full internal tariff units generated by the programmes in their area. From this budget they would meet the following costs:

- Full time staffing
- Part time teaching staff
- Teaching support staff (technicians, assessors, learning advisers etc)
- Consumables
- Learning resource materials

The team would receive tariff units for:

Entry  
On-programme  
Achievement  
Additional Support Units

This total sum would include the General Allowance for the area. Capital spend would remain as currently, negotiated with the Director of Resources. Programme areas would however be free to use some of their budget to purchase equipment, if they felt it appropriate, and within their budget constraints.

The team would be able to vire across budget headings, as long as the fixed staffing costs were met. Fixed staffing costs will relate to the actual costs of staff within the programme area, programme area weightings would be used to ensure that areas were not penalised for staff experience and length of service. A “nominal” staff cost model for servicing and cross charging will be implemented so that high staff cost areas would not be penalised. The team would also be able to determine the level of part time teaching and teaching support staff required by the programme area. The actual costs of these staff would be charged to the programme area. Discretion as to the type of teaching support staff required would also be delegated to the programme area. This would allow for the employment of administrative or technical staff rather than teaching staff if they felt it was appropriate. Teams would also be free to purchase learning resource materials to increase the directed self study elements of a programme if this was appropriate.

The devolved budget would be monitored by the Curriculum Area Manager, in conjunction with the Programme Area Leader. The Curriculum Manager would also have responsibility for monitoring recruitment, retention, achievement and area efficiency targets, to ensure that the team targets were achieved. Funding would be directly linked to student numbers, within the constraints of the agreed planning document. Deviation from the planned target in recruitment, retention or achievement would have an effect on the funding available to the programme area. The budget allocation will be reconciled monthly to reflect minimis figures. Within current budget constraints and restricted FEFC funding targets, over recruitment into the programme area would be penalised, with no additional units being allocated. Under recruitment would result in a shortfall of tariff unit allocation or a removal of allocation if retention or achievement failure to meet targets. First call on all budget allocations would obviously be fixed staffing costs within the area.

Commercial work, delivered through “Skilldrive” creates an opportunity to generate additional income for the programme area. The price for services provided to “Skilldrive” and any relating equipment and development costs will be negotiated by the Programme Teams and the Curriculum Manager. Surpluses generated through this activity will be retained by the programme team.

The concept of equity of workload is central to the “Working Practices” established each year for professional academic staff. This concept would continue, and indeed be strengthened by the Caseloading model. The team would be able to allocate teaching, tutorial and development roles for members. This would allow for greater flexibility and negotiation within teams. It has been recognised that different types of programme carry varying teaching administrative and tutorial workloads and the

College, through this model, seeks to remove any inequity. The introduction of teaching support staff within teams will also facilitate a balance of workload, and promote the facility for teaching staff to focus on the central teaching and tutorial processes.

The balance of workload within a team will be negotiated by the Programme Area Leader with the team members. In the case of any dispute the Curriculum Manager will arbitrate. If the dispute is not settled satisfactorily at the Curriculum Area level the Director of Educational Services will work with all parties to find an acceptable model. It is intended that the Caseloading model will promote co-operation and equity, by removing imposed restrictions on duties, rather than creating areas of conflict concerning workloading.

## PILOT AREAS

As this is a new model of budgetary management it is proposed to pilot the system in a limited number of areas to ensure that the MIS is available to support the system, and to allow for in-depth staff development for Programme Area Leaders and teams.

A number of areas have expressed an interest in piloting the system during 1997/98. These are areas of GNVQ/NVQ delivery, which offers maximum flexibility for delivery methods and staff development.

Detailed staff development on budget controls and target setting will be available for all Programme Area Leaders and Curriculum Managers, not just those involved in Caseloading.

Weekly printouts, with network versions, of Planning Document and budget information will be available for Curriculum Managers and Programme Area Leaders involved in the Caseloading, to ensure that appropriate controls and measures can be maintained.



## **CASE STUDY COLLEGE CASELOADING GUIDELINES**

Discussion has been continuing within the College regarding a Caseloading system for Programme Areas over the past two years. A model was proposed for use in pilot areas from September 1997. This model was agreed with NATFHE, Academic Board and Planning Group. Discussions were also held with Curriculum Managers and Programme Managers regarding implementation. Pilot Programme Areas were identified to use the Caseloading model and assess its benefit for wider use.

During the Autumn term of 1997/98 it became apparent that the cost centre structure and reporting mechanisms were not sufficiently developed to allow for the sophisticated level of budget devolvement contained within the agreed model.

During the year considerable progress has been made in creating a practical cost centre structure and the financial reporting systems to support it. In addition the use of new payroll software systems has allowed for detailed breakdown of staffing costs by cost centre. This can be integrated with staff timetabling information from Registry to create a flexible reporting system at programme level on staff costs and utilisation. The whole cost centre structure will be fully operational from the beginning of the 1998/99 financial year.

Based upon the improved management reporting mechanism a revised system of Caseloading will be introduced from September 1998. In the first phase this model is not as ambitious as the original model in attempting to allocate all costs and income to Programme Areas. The revised model initially allocates consumables and staff costs to Programme Areas, in line with income generated by activity within the area.

It is intended to continue to develop and refine the Caseloading model utilising data from monitoring of the curriculum and financial outcomes in each Programme Area.

Feedback from all staff involved in the process is welcomed by the Director of Staff Services.

Caseloading Guidelines for implementation and development of Caseloading are attached.



## CASELOADING GUIDE

### 1. Explanation of Caseloading

Team based  
Output related  
Targets for RRA  
All activity covered:

FEFC  
TEC  
HE  
Full cost

### 2. Teams Include

Teachers  
Teaching Support  
Direct Administration

### 3. Outcomes

Negotiated by Curriculum Manager/Programme Area Leader with Director of Educational Services.  
Based on Planning Document.

### 4. Resources

GA allocated  
Fixed staff allocated  
Sessional staff budget allocated in £

→ could be:  
Teaching  
Teaching support  
Direct Administration

Resource allocation will be varied in line with income generation.  
Initial allocations will be based on planned numbers and outcomes. Variations will be reflected in allocations during the following period.

Student numbers and income levels will be monitored at the triannual census points. Budget allocations will be adjusted accordingly following the census

point. Any major changes will be discussed with Curriculum Manager by Director of Staff Services and Director of Learning Resources.

## **5. Management**

Director of Learning Resources allocates GA based on planned activity levels.  
Director of Staff Services allocates staff budget on planned activity levels.  
Monitored monthly through:

- a) Financial returns from Finance Office
- b) Staff utilisation and registry data

## **6. Training**

Given to Curriculum Managers/Programme Managers by Accountant, CIS Manager and Director of Staff Services to provide skills on system, reports and data handling.

## **7. Working Practices**

Agreement reached with NATFHE that within a Caseloading environment variations to established Working Practices may be agreed by the team. Teaching staff working with Caseloading teams will agree individual workloads and duties within the agreed Caseloading model. The whole Programme team will be involved in this process and duties will be distributed on an equitable basis.

In practice this may mean that by agreement individuals within a team may vary their level of teaching commitment, other duties and duty days.

The timetabled hours for students on an individual and group basis will be set by the team, as will the timetable commitments for individual members of staff.

Variations to established timetable arrangements may only be made within the staffing resources available. Variations should be designed to assist the achievement of outcome RRA targets.

Curriculum and staff development activities, including Teaching Work Placements should be scheduled into the team working arrangement to create the most effective use of staff resources.

## **8. Review**

The Caseloading model and implementation will be reviewed each term by the Director of Staff Services in consultation with Curriculum Managers and Programme Managers.

Extension of the model to include allocation of all income and expenditure to cost centres will be considered following an end of year review in August 1999.

## Appendix b Planned Internal Interview Schedule



## **CASELOADING INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **INTERNAL INTERVIEWS**

#### **Principal**

#### **Director of Finance**

##### **Objectives**

To establish views on Caseloading, models and use within the College.

Caseloading has been an aspect of the College Strategic Plan for two years, what do they think that objective means and what do they hope to gain.

#### **Curriculum Managers**

##### **Objectives**

To establish views on Caseloading

How will it affect their role, budget control and staff management issues?

#### **Programme Area Leaders**

##### **Objectives**

Why did they volunteer to be involved, what do they think will be the benefits, what hopes and fears do they have regarding Caseloading.

## **STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

Appointments made with individuals, notice of questions given in advance, with a request to make a written response which will form the basis of the interview discussion. This will allow for consideration by the participants and exploration of the issues by the interviewer.

The relatively small number of respondents makes it feasible, and preferable to a questionnaire or restricted interview.

### **PRINCIPAL**

Implementing Caseloading has been a strategic objective for the past few years,

What do you think Caseloading is?

Why is it of value to the College?

What are the benefits you would envisage being achieved?

How important do you think this initiative is to the College?

What timescale do you envisage for full implementation of Caseloading?

How will you judge if the pilot project is successful and whether it should be extended?

If the full project is implemented, how would you measure its success?

Do you think that the College has the MIS to support Caseloading at present?

In a time of budget restrictions, how feasible is the devolution of budgets?

## **DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

What do you think Caseloading is?

Why is it of value to the College?

What are the benefits you would envisage being achieved?

How important do you think this initiative is to the College?

What timescale do you envisage for full implementation of Caseloading?

How will you judge if the pilot project is successful and whether it should be extended?

If the full project is implemented, how would you measure its success?

Do you think that the College has the MIS to support Caseloading at present?

In a time of budget restrictions, how feasible is the devolution of budgets?

## **Curriculum Managers**

### *Objectives*

*To establish views on Caseloading*

*How will it affect their role, budget control and staff management issues*

What do you understand the Caseloading model to be?

Do you think it could benefit your area?

If yes, in what way?

If no, why not?

How would Caseloading affect your management role?

How would it affect the role of the PALs?

Is it likely to have an effect on how the curriculum is delivered?

Is it likely to have an effect on the role of the lecturer?

What changes can you envisage to the ways that individuals and the team operate under Caseloading?

What other effects do you think it might have on the team?

## **Programme Area Leaders**

### *Objectives*

*Why did they volunteer to be involved, what do they think will be the benefits, what hopes and fears do they have regarding Caseloading.*

Why did you want to be involved in the Caseloading pilot?

How do you think it could benefit your area?

Do you see any potential drawbacks with Caseloading?

What effect do you think it will have on your role?  
and that of your Curriculum Manager?

How do you think it could affect the curriculum delivery team?

Is it likely to make the team as a whole feel more in control?

Is it likely to have an effect on how the curriculum is delivered?

Is it likely to have an effect in the longer term on the role of the lecturer?

What changes can you envisage to the ways that individuals and teams operate under Caseloading?

Gill Scott

November 1997

## Appendix c External survey

20 December 1997

Dear Colleague

I am currently conducting research on the use of Caseloading in FE, as part of my Education Doctorate programme at Nottingham Trent University.

I am aware that the term 'Caseloading' is used to describe a variety of models across the FE sector. As part of my research I am interested in the spread of Caseloading and the models being adopted. I would therefore be grateful if you could spare a little time to complete the enclosed questionnaire, for use in my research.

On receipt of the completed questionnaire I intend to collate the information and follow up some responses with a more detailed enquiry, if that is convenient for the Colleges concerned.

I appreciate that this is a very busy time for everyone in FE (actually, it always seems to be a busy time these days), but if you could take the time to complete the questionnaire it would be invaluable for my research.

If you would like more information on the research, or a copy of the findings please indicate on the questionnaire. If you have any queries regarding the questionnaire, or the research please contact me at

Yours faithfully

*Gill Scott*

GILL SCOTT  
Director of Staff Services



## CASELOADING QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to establish the spread of Caseloading staffing and budget models within the FE sector in England. I would be grateful if you would spare a little time to complete the survey and return your answers to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your co-operation

*College label*

1. Does your College use a Caseloading model Y / N

if yes please go to question 3, over the page

if no, have you/are you considering using a Caseloading model

please ✓

2. a. have not considered it  
b. considered it and discounted it  
c. are considering it  
d. are planning a Caseloading model, that is  
    a. a devolved budget model  
    b. a weighted workload model  
    c. a combination of the two  
    d. other, (please give details)


.....  
.....

Thank you for your co-operation, please return the survey in the envelope provided.

If you wish to make any general comments on your experience of Caseloading please do so in the space at the end of the questions.



3. If you are using Caseloading, is it

please ✓

- a. a devolved budget model
- b. a weighted workload model
- c. a combination of the two
- d. other, please give details


.....  
.....

4. When did you introduce Caseloading?

Date.....

please ✓

5. What categories of staff does it cover?

- a. Teaching
- b. Teaching Support
- c. Technicians
- d. Student Support
- e. Student Services
- f. Admin.
- g. Managers
- h. All
- i. Other (please specify)


.....  
.....

6. Is it being used in,

please ✓

- a. All areas
- b. Selected areas
- c. Volunteer areas
- d. Other (please specify)


.....  
.....

7. What were the main reasons for introducing Caseloading?  
(please indicate all that apply)

please ✓

- a. financial savings
- b. increased efficiency
- c. increased effectiveness of resource use
- d. financial control
- e. relating resources to income
- f. create equity of workload
- g. resolve workload issues
- h. recognise different levels of teaching
- i. recognise non-teaching elements
- j. devolution of budgets
- k. other (please specify


.....  
.....

7. Do you consider Caseloading to have been a success?

please ✓

- Completely
- Partially
- No
- Too early to tell


8. What for you are the major strengths of Caseloading?.....  
.....  
.....

9. What for you are the major weaknesses of Caseloading?.....  
.....  
.....