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ABSTRACT

This document describes one model for supporting learning. It introduces the idea of essential entitlements and variants and places the support needs of students with disabilities or learning difficulties alongside the particular arrangements made for every student's learning. Introductory sections propose the idea of technical college inclusiveness, which in turn assumes the equal value of all learners and implies that further education college organization facilitates access and participation. A model is described that sets further education in a context of external pressures from sources with which the college must have reciprocal relationships. These major objectives of further and continuing education are discussed: increased participation, improved standards, and preparation of youth and adults for an effective working life. A description follows of the dynamic model in which the borders between three aspects of provision are seen as flexible. The three aspects (essential entitlements, common necessary variants, and specific necessary variants) are discussed and examples are provided. Use of the model is described as a 10-stage process: college role, consultation, deciding on elements, quality of elements to be delivered, relationship between elements and resources, specialism as a resource, initiating and managing change, staff development, delivery, and evaluation. Final sections discuss entitlement and standards and contain comments on the model. (YLB)

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ED 354396

SUPPORTING LEARNING

Promoting equity and participation

Part 1. A model for colleges

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CE 063 138

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The model described in this document was developed during a series of senior staff seminars held jointly by the Further Education Unit (FEU) and the Institute of Education at London University, in summer 1990 and spring 1991. The intention was to demonstrate how the support needs of people with disabilities or learning difficulties should be placed alongside the needs of other learners. It is suggested that this is best done by colleges identifying and meeting the individual needs of all learners through a college-wide approach to supporting learning. The document identifies the essential elements of provision for **all learners** and then describes how variations on these can be either common to many learners, or specific to a few. The important message is that the broader the essential elements, the smaller the number of specific support arrangements needed. The college will then be able to gear itself to accommodating the needs of a wide variety of learners. This is good news for students with disabilities, but also for those many other learners who, at some time during their college life, will need additional support, perhaps through using a crèche, or by access to second language teaching.

The paper dispels the myth of the 'norm', the 'average' student, who uses an 'average' amount of resources and learns in an 'average' way. Students with disabilities or learning difficulties are considered 'expensive'; they are often taught in small groups, or they may need additional equipment, base rooms, building adaptations or personal care attendants. Their ways of learning are seen to be different, and not like the supposedly uniform approaches of other students; they need special programmes or special techniques. But with whom is this comparison made? With the student on a construction course in a specially adapted workshop, full of specialist equipment and materials? With the 'A' level Physics student, taught in a small group in an expensively equipped laboratory serviced by a team of laboratory technicians? Or with someone following a business programme, again using expensive equipment in a specially built teaching environment? Each of these learners is being taught by specialists, using particular techniques and programmes, and each student brings an individual approach to their learning.

Once we see the particular needs of people with disabilities or learning difficulties in this context, they are no longer special, or expensive, but simply part of the variety of arrangements that a college makes for all its learners. The more inclusive these arrangements are, the less call there will be for anything additional. People with disabilities take their rightful place alongside all the other learners who do not learn in the average way, in an average environment, with average materials and equipment.

The second paper, based on the seminar series, will offer practical guidance on the management of learning support. In the meantime, on pages vii–viii you will find suggestions on how this present discussion paper might be used.

Pat Hood
Principal Officer
Further Education Unit

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ORIGINS

A series of seminars was held for senior staff in further education during autumn 1990 and spring 1991. A group of experienced practitioners working with young people and adults with disabilities and learning difficulties came together over a period of several months. The group included individuals working in higher education, in local education authority advisory services and as senior practitioners in colleges and adult education services.

The aim of the programme was to develop a rationale for the future provision of further and continuing education opportunities for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. It became apparent that provision and services for them could not be considered in isolation from the work of colleges as a whole. Arrangements for such students could not be 'added on' as an afterthought to college planning.

A major objective of the seminars was to include responses to individual and group needs, to variations in pace and style of learning, to disabilities and learning difficulties within a single conceptual framework appropriate for the further and continuing education of all students. This framework should also take into account new education, social services and employment legislation.

When the seminars were being held increased participation was one of the themes which needed to be addressed by further and continuing education. It seemed natural to include meeting needs arising from disabilities and learning difficulties within a framework of improved access to colleges. Provision for these, and for other particular education and training needs, should be an integral part of a college development plan. Encouraging increased participation and responsiveness to minority needs led to the concept of an 'inclusive' college. This is the basis for the model set out in this discussion paper.

It is accepted that the model springs from a field of special interest and that the evidence base for it is limited. Nevertheless, discussion with others in the further and continuing field suggests that it provides a useful basis on which to discuss the practical implementation of college values, plans and priorities.

This document is intended as a discussion document. It aims to:

- describe one model for supporting learning;
- introduce the idea of essential entitlements and variants;
- place the support needs of students with disabilities or learning difficulties alongside the particular arrangements made for every student's learning.

This document could be used by managers:

- to support discussion of the college's long-term priorities by the senior management team;
- to promote discussion between college governors and members of the management team on the college's role in its local community;
- to aid management thinking on the college's 'shadow structure';
- to initiate management discussion on the feasibility and resource implications of the model;
- to support an audit of the college's existing learning support;
- to serve as a catalyst for exploring issues surrounding learning support with staff.

And by learning support staff:

- to test out their own thinking about learning support;
- to promote the concept of learning support more widely in the college, perhaps through staff development sessions;
- to identify key areas, for example, assessment, for more concentrated work;
- to test out the idea of essential entitlements and variants;
- to think about the role of the special needs co-ordinator and team in supporting learning;
- to audit what the college already has in place;
- to guide forward planning.

And by special needs co-ordinators:

- to review the place of 'special needs', and their role as specialists in the college;
- to review the role of the specialist team in relation to learning support;
- to create links between learning support staff and themselves;
- to promote discussion with managers about learning support, and their role in offering it;
- to focus on one aspect of the document and discuss the contribution that the specialist team can make;
- to discuss with students how learning support would be most effective;
- to act as a training focus for work with governors;
- to act as a focus for staff development work that examines some of the implications of the model for the college.

These suggestions are not exhaustive. Colleges will be at different stages in their thinking about learning support. For some, this document may serve to introduce the idea; other colleges may want to use it to check out their existing plans and systems. No single college will have in place **all** the elements suggested in this document. A developmental approach is best, and keeps everyone sane.

In future, colleges of further education will function independently. Although detailed arrangements will take some time to work out, governors and senior management teams will be expected to administer colleges on sound commercial lines. They will be competing with other colleges, private providers and training agencies for funds from central government, for training contracts and for students and trainees.

All businesses and organisations have value systems. Although they are not always made explicit, they have implications for customers. Educational establishments also have implicit and explicit values, often perceived in different ways by learners and teachers. Values may have been evident in local education authority policies and practices but colleges will not be operating within that framework. In future, colleges, with other trainers and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), will be responsible for post-school educational values. They will need to define the ethics of their educational businesses.

In order to deal with pressures from commerce, industry and the local community, as well as those from a variety of other groups, colleges will need to develop a conceptual framework and value system. These may, or may not, be reflected in a college's mission statement or its development plans and practices. For example, an explicit policy statement about equal opportunities may not be implicit in the everyday practices of the college.

This paper sets out and discusses one model for such a conceptual framework. It will be followed by a second paper which will explore the practical implementation of the model. The paper concentrates on the **college of further education** but colleges are part of a complex post-school network of provision made by TECs, commercial trainers, the youth service and adult education. It is therefore a discussion paper which needs to be considered in conjunction with the policies and practices of these other contributors to the post-16 field of education and training.

A FREE OR MANAGED MARKET?

The existence of a local education authority (LEA) strategic plan for further education which includes provision to meet the needs of those with disabilities and learning difficulties has, up to now, provided a framework for college development. Such plans will become increasingly less important and will cease to exist by 1993. A number of important decisions will need to be made about what, if anything, should replace the LEA plan.

Higher education students are expected to seek appropriate courses all over the United Kingdom. There has been no tradition of a locally based appropriate* range of opportunities in each region. Further education colleges, on the other hand, have been used to a degree of autonomy within which courses have been sanctioned by regional and local bodies. Apart from the allocation of resources by a central body, the degree to which conflicting priorities will be managed has not yet been agreed.

A totally free market may lead to an over supply of provision for current, common and profitable needs and an under supply for relatively small group needs which may be seen to be of less economic importance. How will students be assured an adequate* range of opportunities locally? For example, what provision will be made, and by whom, to ensure reasonable* access to an appropriate range of further education and training opportunities in rural areas?

*The terms 'appropriate', 'adequate' and 'reasonable' have been used throughout this paper. Their meanings can vary according to circumstances. The perspective of an employer may be different from that of a student. It is assumed that more exact definitions will be determined by resources and will be negotiated at different levels. Contributors to these negotiations will include the government, local government departments, colleges, employers, other agencies and students. It is important that the definitions are agreed, made known and easily understood by all concerned. Moreover, standards of appropriateness and adequacy must be independently monitored.

The history of colleges of further education has been one of responding to vocational training needs. Their work is based on a number of assumptions about the educational process which are currently being challenged. The more independent colleges become the more important it is for them to be clear about their purpose. Among the questions all colleges will have to consider are:

- What value systems are implied by the existence of a college of further education?
- Is a college simply an administrative convenience through which to deliver courses and training programmes?
- Is it an economic way to deliver the modules common to a wide range of education and training needs?
- What responsibilities should a college assume for its students?
- Should they include promoting personal development as well as the acquisition of employment-related competences?
- Is it important that the college provides opportunities for social interaction and shared learning?

The model set out in this paper assumes that the main purpose of the college is education, exemplified by a lively concern for curriculum development and the process and quality of learning.

In seeking to provide education of quality the college is not only concerned with the nature of the learning but also with the social context in which it takes place.

Responsibility for its students includes providing counselling, guidance and personal support as well as a wide range of support for individual learning.

THE NATURE OF THE MODEL

The model assumes that the college:

- has a value system;
- has defined its purpose;
- has conducted an educational audit and that the data is readily available;
- has a mission statement and business plan;
- has strategic and tactical development plans and that such plans embody clear statements about equal opportunities.

The planning process is set out in Diagram 1.

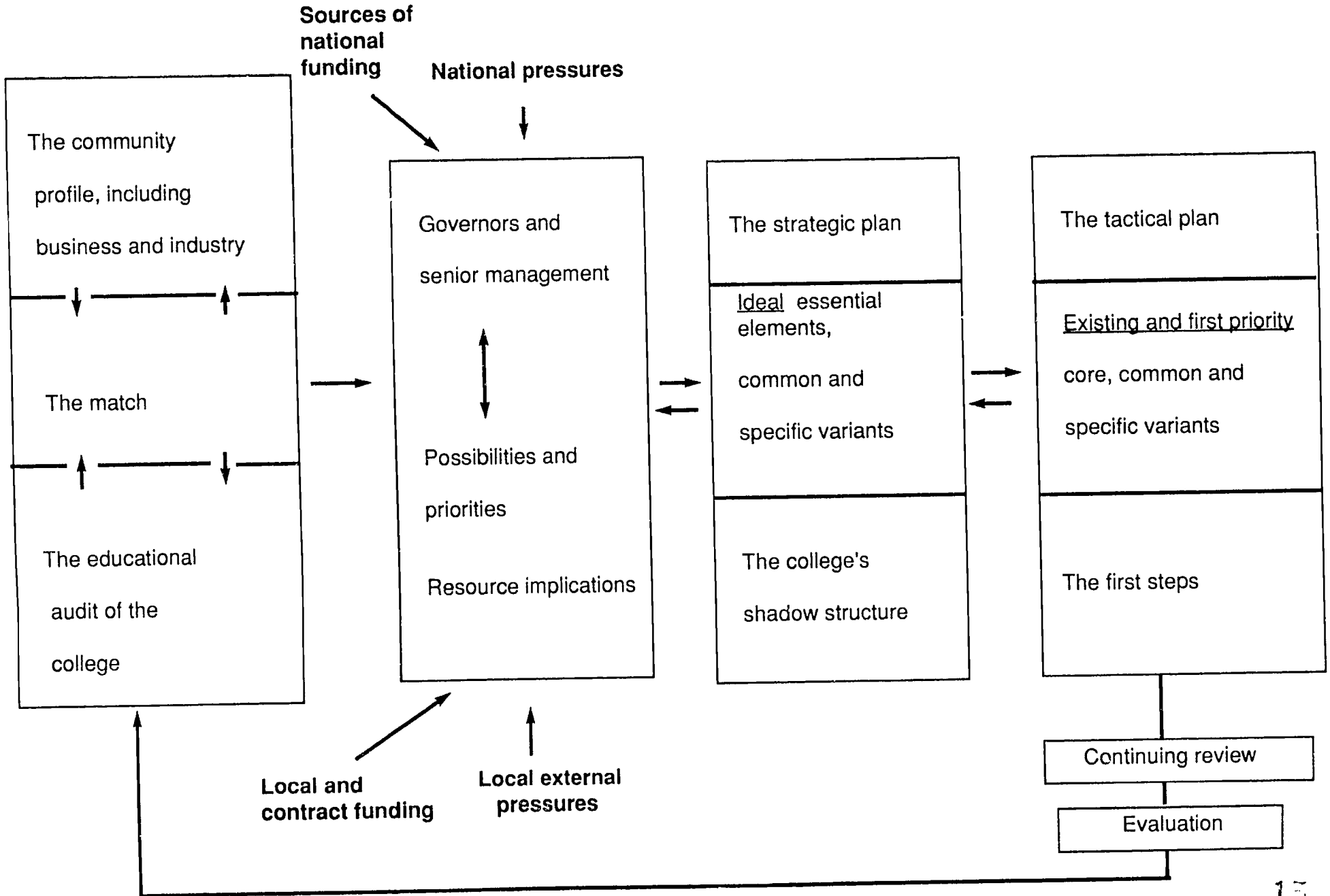
Much will depend on the nature and time-scale of funding. Short-term funding will make coherent and effective planning for the best use of resources very difficult.

The model envisages a move from separate departmental and course responsibilities to shared responsibilities for individual learners, partly as a result of the accreditation of prior learning and partly because of the development of individual learning programmes. Cross-college provision, such as central libraries, open learning centres and learning support centres, is expected to increase in importance. It also takes into account the national curriculum in schools, the development of national vocational qualifications (NVQs), the drive to improve standards and the increasing emphasis on competence.

Although the model is college based, the principles involved and the approach may be equally applicable to other education institutions and training agencies. It envisages strong central management with all departments and elements in the organisation contributing to an agreed plan and collaborating to deliver it effectively.

Diagram 1

The Planning Process



MAJOR OBJECTIVES

The current major objectives of further and continuing education are to increase participation, improve standards and prepare young people and adults for an effective working life. Educators are having to achieve these objectives in a context of major legislative changes in education, employment, social services and social security, and in competition with schools and other training agencies for severely limited resources.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION

Increased participation is fundamentally a matter of being sensitive to the education and training needs of commerce, industry, public services and the community served by the college. This requires a marketing strategy, the first elements of which are a needs analysis in each sector and an educational audit of the college population. Does the pattern of education needs in the community being served match the profile of students attending the college?

It also includes a careful analysis of the differences between the wants and needs of potential sponsors/clients and students. This strategy and approach should not only permeate all aspects of contact with local concerns and groups in the community but also all aspects of the work of the college. The marketing strategy, based on the implementation of an effective equal opportunities policy, should attract not only more, but a wider range, of students.

This wider range should include people not previously well catered for, for example, young people who have underachieved in school, under-represented adult groups, women returners and young people and adults with disabilities and learning difficulties. Adults with literacy and numeracy needs, although often seen as a separate group, also fall broadly within the general population from which increased participation should be encouraged. All these potential students may require special arrangements for their access to, and learning support during education.

Increased participation should be a concern of the whole college. All departments should seek to increase the number and range of students they serve in their work at all levels. All can make a significant contribution by facilitating access to what they have to offer and supporting the students' learning. Increased participation is not simply a matter of providing for more separate specialist groups.

PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY

To increase participation it is necessary to identify potential students and develop profiles of their education and training needs. But unless this is accompanied by the provision of appropriate and high quality education, potential students may not attend the college. Thus increased participation and quality are closely linked.

As already discussed by FEU (*Quality Matters*, 1991) it is necessary to clarify what the term 'quality' means. Quality has two dimensions. One dimension refers to the nature of something, e.g. flexibility may be 'a quality' of elastic. The second carries a value judgement, e.g. notwithstanding the flexibility that characterises elastic, the elastic may be of high or low quality, especially in terms of its durability or the degree to which it will stretch without breaking.

In this paper, the term 'element' is used to describe a characteristic or a feature of the educational service or its delivery, and the term 'quality' is used to describe the standard or degree of effectiveness of any feature of that service or its delivery.

College managers therefore have to do three things in their pursuit of quality. They must:

- identify the elements which they and others (e.g. staff, community) consider essential to an appropriate educational offering;
- determine criteria for measuring the quality of the elements to be offered;
- manage staff, the curriculum and resources in order to enable the criteria to be met.

ASSESSING QUALITY

Elements can be assessed by different people with different perspectives. The quality of provision and its delivery may be assessed by:

- college staff – individually and collectively;
- customers, i.e. learners;
- sponsors, e.g. parents, businesses;
- professional external evaluators, e.g. HMI, LEA officials, moderators.

Outcomes of the educational and training process can be described and assessed in quantitative and qualitative terms. The number of people achieving a qualification is a quantitative measure of quality. The achievement itself, whether certificated or not, relative to any achievement that a learner began with (i.e. value-added or distance travelled) is a qualitative measure, as is an assessment of the process that enabled the achievement.

This concern with process, distance travelled and with potential for further achievement is what distinguishes an educational organisation from other training agencies.

The perspective from which an element is assessed may influence the judgement of quality. Such judgements will involve the significance of numerical data such as the number of examination passes achieved by a group, and of other data such as the logic, clarity and content of written work, or the display of effortless technical competence.

In both instances the perspective from which that judgement is made will be important. For example, it may be important to know whether the assessor is familiar with only one college or whether she/he knows the work of other colleges in different parts of the country.

Clients or sponsors of training may have a different perspective from college managers which, in turn, may be different from that of students. If the student does not agree with the views of the sponsor or college management about the quality of the setting or the education and training provided, effective learning is unlikely to take place.

Agreeing a common understanding of quality, at national and local levels, and for professional and lay use, has yet to be achieved. Many attempts to arrive at a common degree of quality or standard have merely resulted in describing the lowest common denominator. The solution might lie in attempting to specify commonly agreed and recognised fundamental elements or features of an educational provision and delivery, which could be assessed and described in terms that make sense to both professional and lay people. It would then be necessary to establish and publicise assessment criteria or measurements that could be applied nationally and locally for professional purposes, which would allow for short, medium and long-term plans for continued improvement. The results of this assessment should be made available. At the individual's level, it would be essential for the teacher and student to agree learning needs and expectations, and the criteria that enables needs and expectations to be met.

INCLUSIVENESS AND POTENTIAL

The idea that any business plan has inherent values has already been introduced. The college also operates within an ethical framework. The mission statement, procedures for staff employment and dismissal, and procedures for student admission, suspension and dismissal all include explicit and implicit codes of behaviour and thus the values which inform the work of the college. Among those values will be a college's approach to inclusiveness and its concept of student potential.

Both values are concerned with academic standards and the ways in which progress and outcomes are valued. For example, a college may attempt to achieve high academic standards by covert selection procedures or an overtly elitist approach. Students in that college may make little actual progress but their achievements may be better than students in another college, starting from lower levels of attainment who make considerable progress.

Exclusiveness does not always result in high standards or inclusiveness in lower ones. Although the level from which you start may be significant, it is the progress made by students which is the real indicator of quality. It is important to recognise progress, the 'value-added' aspect of education.

The model in this paper is based on a philosophy of inclusiveness. It assumes that, within their staffing and resources limits, colleges will attempt to provide for the education needs of as wide a cross-section of the local adult population as possible. As well as being responsive to TEC priorities and to the needs of commerce and industry, they will seek to contribute to professional training for local health and social services, and to the personal and skill development needs of adults of all levels of ability, in different phases of their lives.

Inclusiveness is much harder to achieve if admission to programmes is based on levels of achievement which exclude large sectors of the community, or if the learner is required to produce evidence of achievements not easily acquired by some individuals and groups. If further education is narrowly conceived every new additional group is seen as creating precedents and potentially disruptive of the status quo.

The wider the population basis on which the college programme is initially planned, the easier it will be to accommodate individual demands, learning styles and rates of learning. This will be because the college takes a broad approach to the assessment of prior learning and has in place flexible systems for managing and supporting learning.

A second major assumption in the model is that colleges are dynamic organisations with potential to change. They are dynamic because they move through phases of growth, decline and development as student and staff populations change. The ability of a college to respond to changing circumstances, its inclusiveness and its exploitation of its potential for development are important indicators of its effectiveness.

THE BASIS OF THE MODEL

One of the major aims of the model is to integrate individual needs into a framework of entitlements and quality standards which should apply to the education and vocational preparation of all students and trainees.

The model can be used in two complementary ways:

- from the point of view of the college;
- from the point of view of the individual student.

The elements of what is on offer, outlined in the model, have to be considered from both points of view.

Governors and senior managers will have to decide what the college should be aiming to provide, conduct an audit of college resources and determine the level of funding the college can expect in the next budget period. On this basis they have to set out what the college can provide. The model may be a useful way to describe elements in that provision.

Individuals wishing to become students will also want to know what they can expect and, if they are using vouchers, what they are paying for. Other agencies and sponsors, purchasing training for others, will want this information. The model provides a language to describe elements in training packages and in individual programmes.

The model assumes that the college, through its governing board and its senior management team, is attempting to provide learning opportunities within a context of demands and conditions made by many different departments, agencies, interest groups and individuals. (See Diagram 2).

The wide range of demands and conditions together with the pressures exerted by clients (e.g. individual workers) or customers (e.g. companies) can only be met by developing reciprocal relationships with all concerned. For example, the college may be analysing the training needs of a company which, in turn, is helping the college to update the equipment necessary for training. Training packages need to be negotiated. These negotiations together with legal responsibilities, finance and training requirements help to determine priorities and policies.

Seeking to increase participation requires the college to be active in identifying the educational needs of the community. Marketing informed by local demands together with accurate information about what is on offer should attract students. Sensitive counselling, guidance and admission procedures should then encourage students to enrol and welcome them into the college. The college must not simply react to demands.

Diagram 2

The College Context

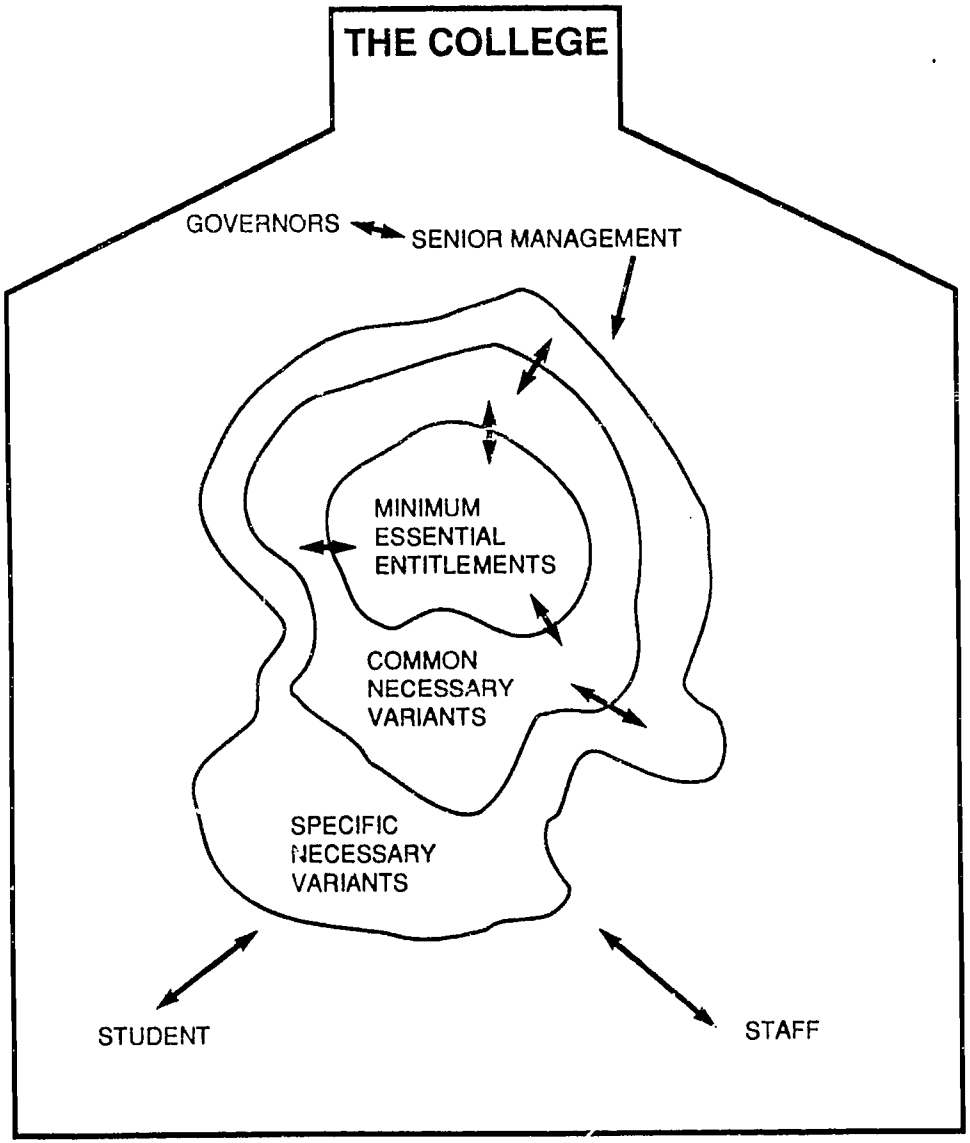
Local and Contract Funding

COMMUNITY and VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS and ASSOCIATIONS

STAFF and OTHER UNIONS

EXAMINATION BOARDS

VALIDATION BODIES



Central Funding

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS:

- Department of Education and Science (DES)
- Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED)
- Department of Health
- Department of Employment
- Department of Social Security (DSS)

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

SCHOOLS

PARENTS

TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS (TECs)

DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The broader and better the essential entitlements the less need there is for common and specific variants.

The model is based on the assumption that there are three aspects of the provision made by colleges. They are one way to describe what is being offered to potential students. Looked at another way, they are the elements of provision which a student enrolled in the college is entitled to expect.

The three aspects are as follows:

(1) The minimum ESSENTIAL ENTITLEMENTS or ELEMENTS are institutional facilities and services to which all students receiving the education and training on offer are entitled.

(2) The COMMON NECESSARY VARIANTS are elements, facilities and services which reflect the nature of the population served and provide for common variations in course requirements and facilities.

(3) SPECIFIC NECESSARY VARIANTS are elements, specific facilities and services which support the education and training of certain individuals and particular groups.

It should be noted that the words 'essential entitlements' or 'essential elements' are used to describe the heart of the educational offer and should not be confused with the 'core curriculum'.

The model is seen as a dynamic one in which the borders between the essential entitlements, common necessary variants and specific necessary variants are flexible. The direction of positive movement is from specific variants, through common variants, towards the essential entitlements. The larger the essential entitlement the more flexible the offer to all students. For example, the better the cross-college facilities, such as an open learning centre, the easier the provision of support to students in all parts of the college.

The model should be applicable to a review and definition of the nature of college provision. It should be equally applicable to a discussion of individual learning needs and the development of individual student programmes.

The existence of elements in any of the three aspects of provision does not imply their quality. A college, for example, could provide all the essential elements but they might be of poor quality. To assess the quality of what is on offer requires each element to be judged according to appropriate criteria.

THE ESSENTIAL ENTITLEMENTS

The essential entitlements or elements are those which the college is prepared to provide for all students. It is a basic entitlement. The list is not exhaustive and its extent will be influenced by the nature and level of resourcing. Individual assessment of needs is at the heart of the model. (See Diagram 3.)

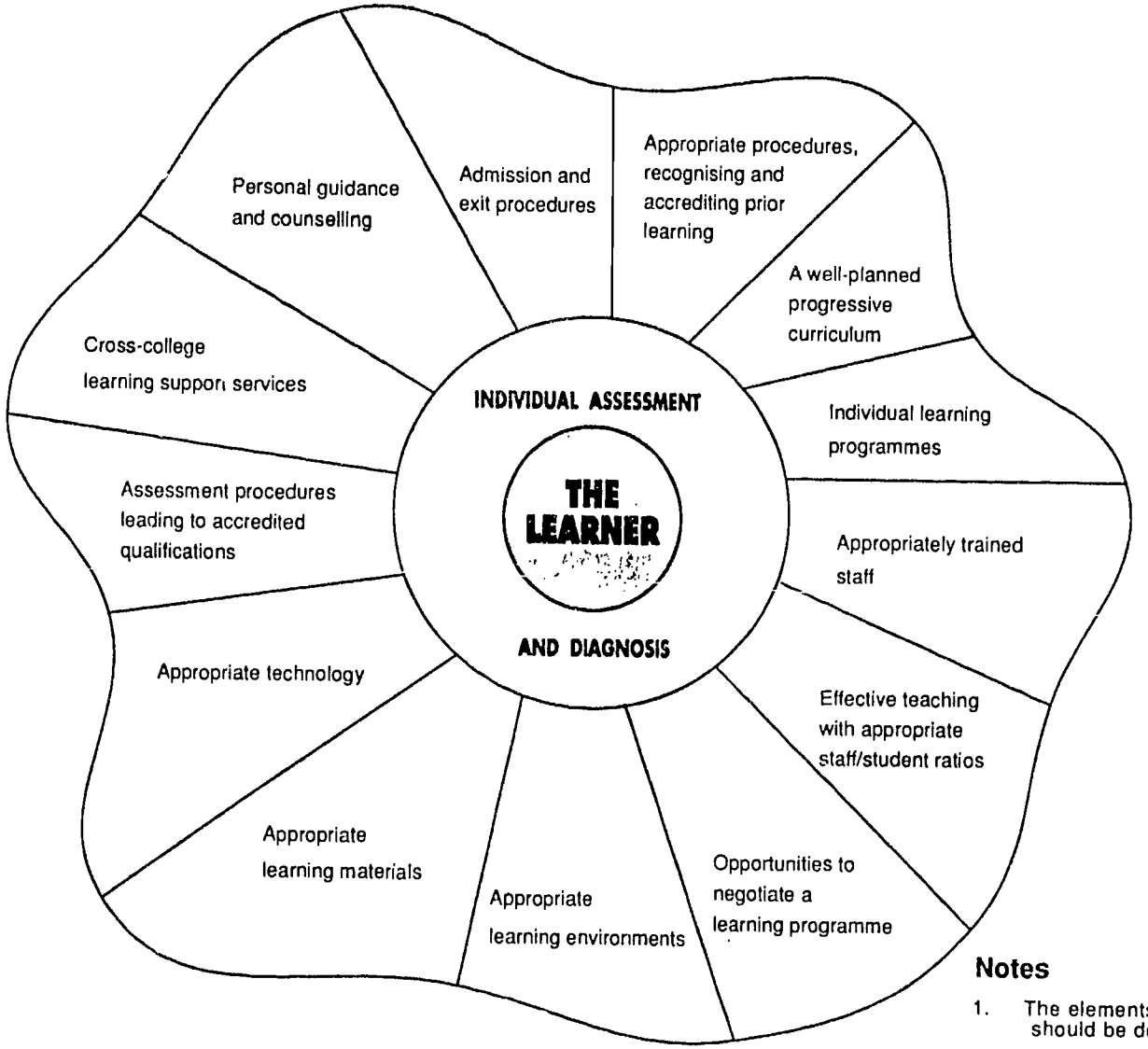
Essential elements must be broadly conceived if they are to encourage increased participation. For example, information for potential students may need to be provided in a number of languages or on tape for those with language and literacy difficulties or visual disabilities.

The existence of a broad core of essential elements, each of high quality, in a sense defines the quality of the college. In an inclusive approach to further education, essential elements set basic requirements for effective provision. The absence of any one essential element may seriously affect the quality of what is offered to students.

All students, for example, are entitled to a well-planned curriculum. The lack of such a curriculum will affect teaching, assessment, performance criteria and the provision of technology and materials. Similarly, a lack of quality in curriculum planning will affect the quality of teaching and learning.

Diagram 3

The Essential Entitlements



Notes

1. The elements in the essential entitlements are not fixed a should be determined by the college after consultation.
2. The existence of an element does not guarantee its qualit the quality of the essential entitlements.
3. The learner's individual assessment and dagnosis are at t heart of the model.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Essential elements will include:

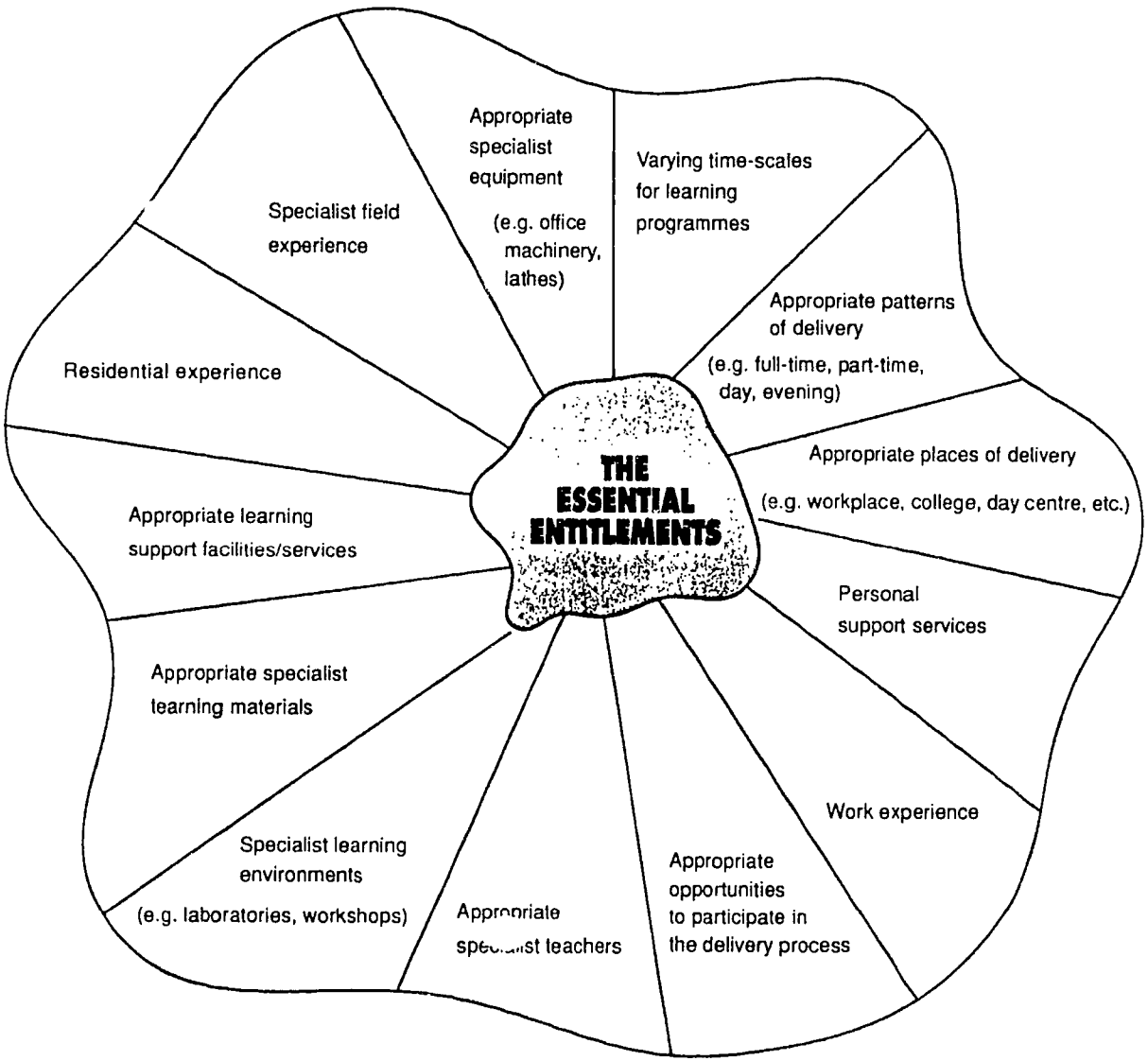
- adequate information about admission and exit procedures;
- effective individual assessment procedures;
- procedures recognising and accrediting prior learning;
- well-planned progressive curricula;
- individual learning programmes;
- appropriately qualified staff;
- appropriate staff/student ratios for effective teaching;
- appropriate technology and materials;
- appropriate learning environments;
- cross-college learning support services;
- regular reviews and appropriate records of achievement;
- personal counselling and guidance;
- assessment procedures leading to accredited qualifications.

COMMON NECESSARY VARIANTS

These variants are common because an appropriate range of educational experiences cannot be offered without them. They may include cross-college facilities such as libraries and the provision of information technology, or other facilities like laboratories, workshops and studios without which a broad range of curriculum options cannot be offered.

Diagram 4

Common Necessary Variants



Common necessary variants should include:

- appropriate patterns of delivery (e.g. full-time, part-time, day, evening, etc.);
- appropriate places of delivery (e.g. workplace, college, community centre, etc.);
- specialist learning environments (e.g. laboratories, studios, workshops, etc.);
- varying time-scales for learning programmes;
- personal support services;
- appropriate specialist learning materials and equipment;
- learning support facilities and services;
- specialist field experience;
- relevant work experience;
- residential experience;
- appropriate opportunities for learners to take part in the delivery process;
- appropriate specialist teachers.

These variants are not concerned with individual needs. They reflect variations in environment, methodology, materials and experiences which are integral to a reasonable range of curricula and qualifications. Everybody taking a science or computer studies course will require a specialised environment. Anybody, on any course, might require personal or learning support to different degrees.

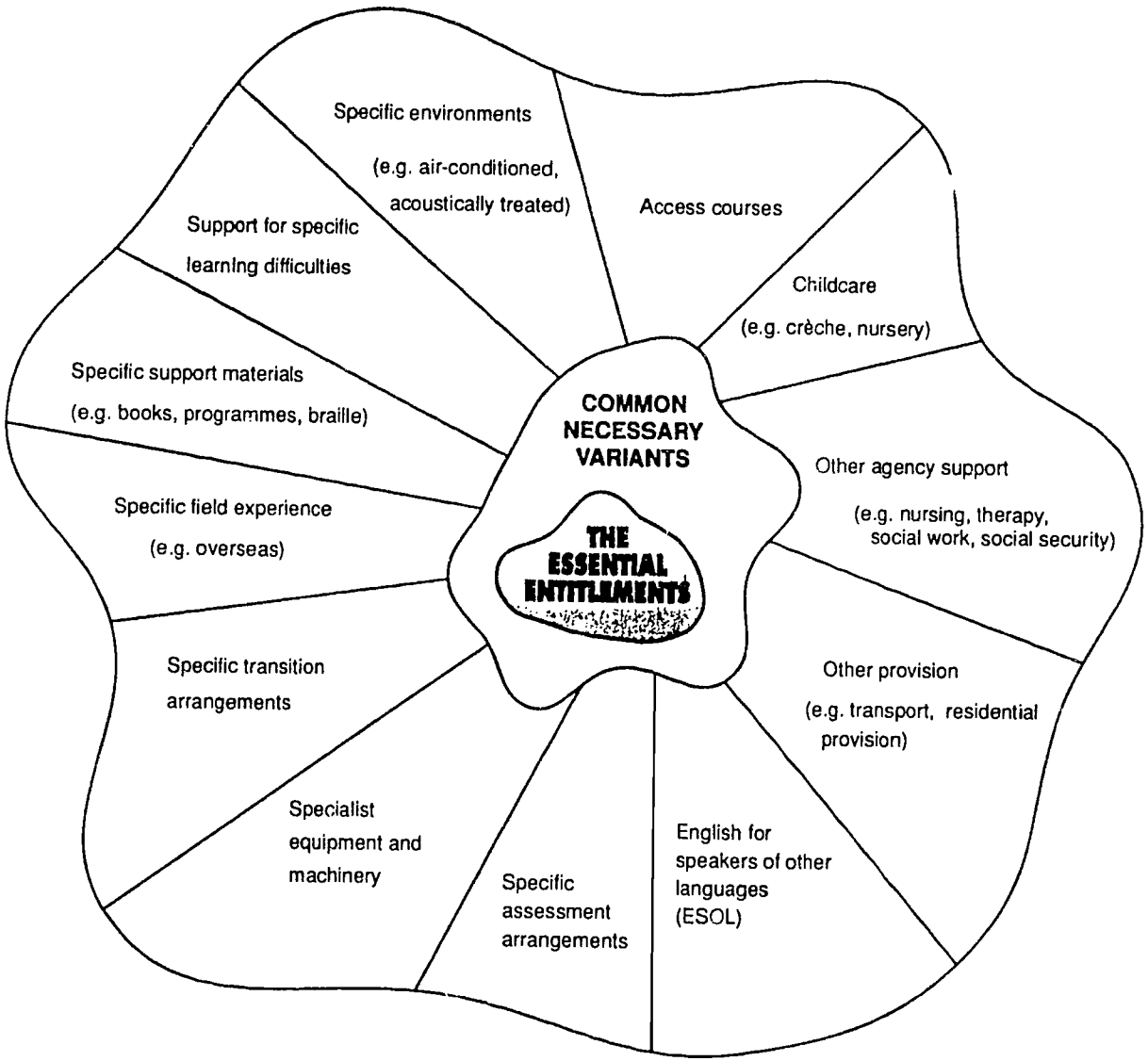
SPECIFIC NECESSARY VARIANTS

These elements are necessary if participation is to be facilitated. Individuals may need particular forms of provision or support if they are to benefit from the available educational opportunities. For example, childcare facilities or personal support for a physical disability may be required if a student is to follow a particular programme.

This support need not be individual. It can often be shared. It can take the form of a facility such as a crèche, or a service, for example, a personal support team. It can also be an element in particular qualifications like overseas field experience. It is reasonable to expect that a well-managed college should meet these kinds of needs.

Diagram 5

Specific Necessary Variants



These are examples of the specific variants which enable individuals or small groups to have access to college facilities and courses. They equalise opportunities.

Specific necessary variants might include:

- special environments (air-conditioned, acoustically treated);
- access courses;
- childcare assistance, crèche, etc;
- overseas field experience;
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL);
- specific assessment and examination arrangements;
- special support materials (books, tapes, braille, etc.);
- specially modified equipment and machinery;
- social work advice and support;
- nursing supervision;
- support for specific learning difficulties;
- specific transition arrangements.

The examples given come from many aspects of college work. They envisage a parity of esteem for individual learners rather than using a differential valuation of their work, based on academic hierarchy or fashion. They imply that meeting some needs of individuals with disabilities is no different from, for example, meeting the requirements of very specialised courses.

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It may be helpful to outline the way in which the model might be used. This is seen as a ten-stage process.

Stage 1: The role of the college

A first step will be for the governors together with the senior management team to determine the role the college is to fulfil in the community it serves. The questions raised in the section 'What are colleges for?'(page 3) will need to be answered and a clear sense of purpose and direction identified and made known. It will be necessary to make an audit of the college in order to answer the questions.

Stage 2: Consultation

This stage involves the college in discussions with the different potential sponsors and students in the community it serves. Education and training needs have to be identified and matched against the role of the college.

Stages 1 and 2 are closely related and there should be interaction as the role of the college is developed in the light of consultation.

Stage 3: Deciding on the elements

Governors, the principal and senior managers have to decide which elements of college activities will be included in the essential entitlements, which will be common necessary variants and which specific necessary variants. These decisions must be taken in the light of the college's mission statement, its strategic and tactical development plan, its available resources and the demands being made on them.

The following questions need to be answered:

- What demands are being made on the college?
- What resources are available to the college?
- What are the main priorities in the college plan?
- What can the college afford to have as its essential entitlements?
- Within college priorities what resources can be found to make the essential entitlements as broad as possible?

Stages 4 and 5 are closely related to Stage 3 and are part of the same decision-making process.

Stage 4: The quality of the elements to be delivered

This is the stage where the decision to provide an element has to be linked to the minimum desired quality of its delivery. This also implies that quality criteria will be determined by which quality is to be assessed. The quality of existing facilities and the results of the current educational audit will be the basis for future quality criteria.

For example:

- Are staffing levels, staff qualifications and facilities for business studies of an adequate standard to provide for the level of training required?
- What changes are necessary to achieve higher standards? At this stage the college standards are being set as targets.

Stage 5: The relationship between elements and resources

The central feature of this stage is resource management. As already noted, this depends on an effective audit of the college's resources and activities. This cannot be left to departments. An objective overview from senior management, governors and, if necessary, external assessors is required. The negotiation of training contracts will also be an occasion when resources are assessed in relation to defined training requirements. If the college is clear about its resources and the elements it can offer, such negotiations will be a normal part of that process.

Questions to be asked include:

- What are the standards and costs of existing elements in the college programme?
- Are existing human and other resources adequate to deliver elements to the required standards?
- What re-allocation of resources, or additional resources, is necessary to extend the work and raise its quality to the desired standards?

Stage 6: Specialism as a resource

There are several important areas of specialist knowledge and skill which cut across departmental and faculty structures. These may include information technology, counselling and guidance, adult learning, meeting the needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and specialist advice on gender and race issues. Staff and curriculum development are other specialisms to be considered.

Cross-curricular specialisms need to be identified and decisions need to be taken about:

- how to develop awareness of their contribution;
- how to deliver them;
- how to provide other staff with some knowledge and skills of these specialisms;
- what the roles and functions of co-ordinators should be for these specialisms;
- what the role of senior managers should be in relation to these specialisms and their co-ordinators.

Stages 1 to 6 are necessary preliminaries to setting standards and identifying entitlements, and to the initiation and management of change.

Stage 7: Initiating and managing change

Having analysed the data and decided on a direction for the development of the college, the next step will be to consult inside and outside the college and produce a strategic and a tactical plan. Much will depend on the time-scale and requirements of funding mechanisms. Various concerns and public services have different planning cycles. The college will need to be aware of them. Short-term and *ad hoc* funding will make it very difficult for colleges to carry through a strategic plan.

The strategic plan should set out the objectives for the long-term development of the college, the long-term 'shadow structure' that is envisaged and being worked towards, and the standards it aims to achieve. The tactical plan will set out the short-term objectives and the next steps to be taken. Both plans will need to be widely communicated and discussed within the institution, and revised from time to time in the light of comment and events. Having reached decisions about the way forward the next two stages are initiated.

Stages 8 and 9 are again inter-related and need to be considered in parallel.

Stage 8: Staff development

Staff development will be a continuous process which should include three elements:

(1) the development of staff proficiency in terms of general skills such as the management of learning and curricular planning;

(2) the development of staff proficiency in terms of specific knowledge and skills related to different fields of work;

(3) the specific development of individuals for particular changes envisaged in the college plans or for changes in their fields of work.

Stage 9: Delivery

At this stage the following questions need to be answered:

- What is to be delivered?
- To whom is it to be delivered?
- Where is it to be delivered?
- How is it to be delivered?
- What is the standard of delivery to be?
- What are the expected standards of the outcomes?

Stage 10: Evaluation

Evaluation is a continuing process. It is also a final stage which should, paradoxically, be determined at the outset of strategic and tactical planning. How do you know what you have achieved unless you set objectives and decide how to evaluate them? Evaluation will involve assessing the standards of facilities, support services, teaching effectiveness, student performance, and of the outcomes of the work of staff and students.

An evaluation must involve both quantitative and qualitative data. It must be based on clear criteria which can be understood not only by staff but also by students and their sponsors. There are three inter-related elements:

(1) the performance of the college;

(2) the competence of members of staff;

(3) the performance of students.

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The evaluation of the college performance will determine standards for the delivery of education and training. The appraisal of staff will be a significant element in college performance. The progress made by students and the competences they acquire will also be an important indicator of college effectiveness. Indeed the 'value-added' element of student performance will be one of the most potent indicators of quality. The review of the whole process will be continuous but may, at certain times, lead to a shift of perspective and a return to Stage 1 - the role of the college in its community.

The learner's perspective

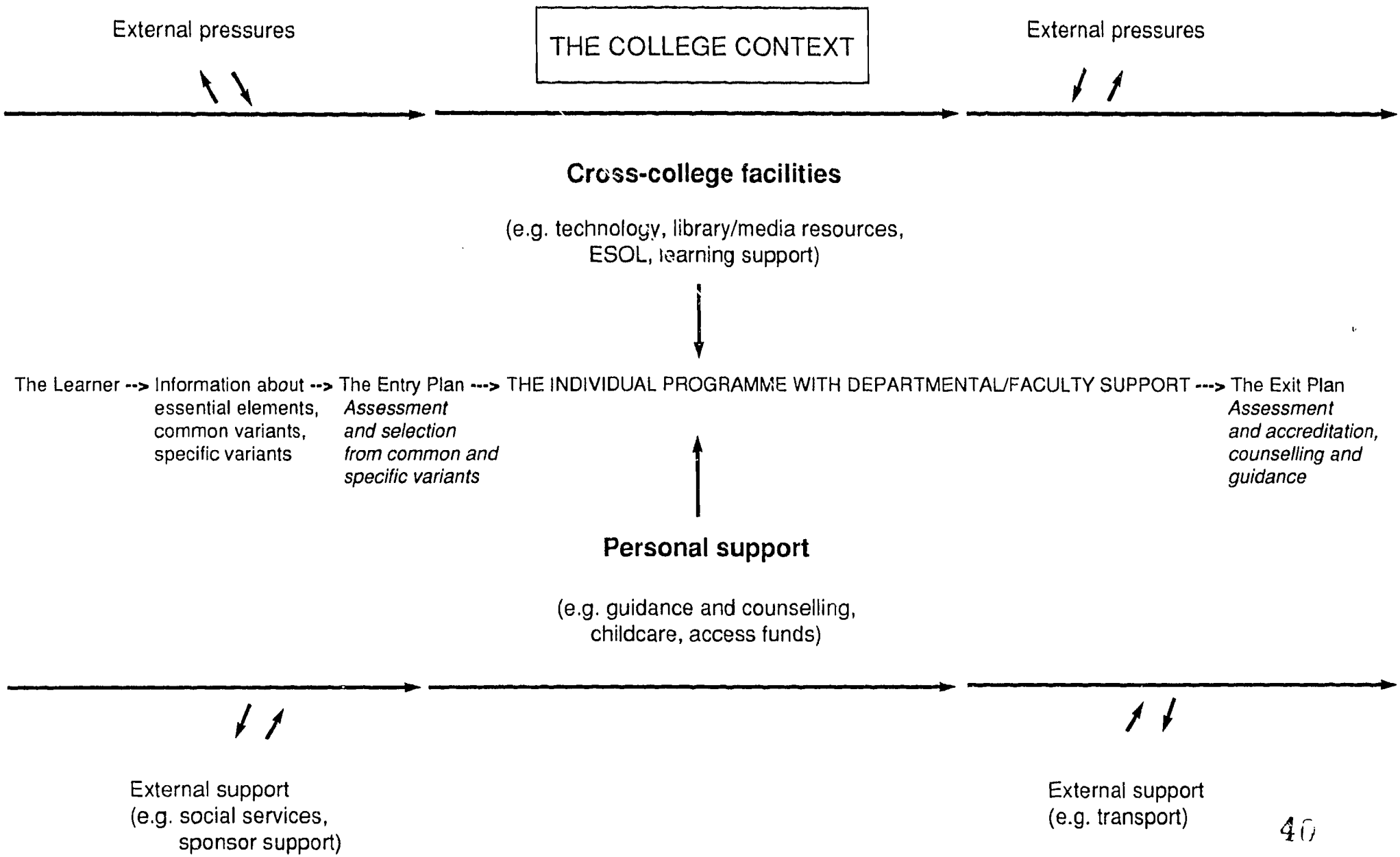
The model can also be viewed from a student perspective. Diagram 6 shows the path an individual student might follow.

The diagram is self-explanatory and emphasises the linear aspect of further education as a central feature of transition from school to employment. However, as we know, learners may move in and out of further education throughout their adult lives, as they retrain, return to work, update existing skills or pursue individual interests. The diagram starts from the assumption that the potential learner and, where relevant, his or her sponsor, will have appropriate information about what the college has to offer. This will include advice and counselling arrangements, admission procedures and the essential entitlements and variants available to the individual.

During the admission phase an individual programme will be planned, based on assessment of the potential student's needs. When the student starts at the college this programme will be kept under regular review by staff, sponsors and the student. Whatever the outcomes of the programme, which it is hoped will result in the achievement of the planned competences, the student will need an exit plan. If the student is in work this should involve the employer; if not, the careers service as well as college staff and students will be involved.

Diagram 6

The Learner's Perspective



The nature of standards has already been discussed briefly. The relationship between standards and entitlements must now be made clear.

Standards are set by institutions and by accrediting bodies and are achieved in two ways:

(1) in terms of the quality of what the institution sets out to provide by way of facilities, equipment, curricula and the delivery of education;

(2) in terms of student outcomes; namely what the institution expects of students both in general behaviour and in performance at the end of their programmes.

Entitlement is related to the individual and describes what a potential student has a right to expect on acceptance into the educational institution.

Entitlement also has two aspects:

(1) the existence of a particular element in the institution, for example, information about the college;

(2) the quality of that element, for example, the appropriateness of the information provided.

Entitlement can be broken down into different elements which will be determined by individual colleges. These elements may vary from one college to another and be sub-divided, for example, into an environmental entitlement, a curriculum entitlement and a learning support entitlement.

Institutions will have implicit or explicit notions of entitlement and of standards. A market approach demands that colleges make student entitlement explicit. They should also make their standards clear as well as the means by which they will be assessed.

Modular or course structures

If learning is to be efficient it must build on prior learning. Although the national curriculum will provide a more coherent basis on which to build further education, it is not practicable to assume that all students will start courses from the same level of achievement. Courses of a finite length, starting from the same level of knowledge and skill and attempting to achieve standard outcomes will not always be an efficient way of using resources. However, they will continue to appear an attractive solution to training needs.

College organisation will have to become more flexible, encourage more joint planning between departments and faculties, and facilitate movement between courses and modules in courses. A system of modules which recognises prior learning, to be put together to form individual learning programmes, would make the best use of staff and student time.

Departments or faculties

A modular approach to courses may entail a move from a departmental to a faculty structure. Even where departments are retained, joint planning will have to increase so that, instead of having sole responsibility for individual students, they will have to 'share' the responsibility where individual programmes include modules chosen from different faculties.

Recording and records of achievement

Younger entrants to colleges may be expected to bring with them records of achievement but the development and delivery of individual programmes also requires that careful records of progress are maintained by staff and students. Monitoring college effectiveness and student progress requires simple and effective recording procedures.

Cross-college facilities and services

There exists already a pattern of cross-college provision, for example, libraries, counselling and support services. Such provision is being extended through open learning centres, learning support centres, childcare and other facilities. These facilities should make up a major part of the college's essential entitlements and variants.

Values

The explicit or implicit value system of a college has already been mentioned. The next two issues, weightings and costs, and contracts and standards have to be seen within that college value system. The issues common to both are what the college stands for and how students are valued.

There has been a tradition of staff and students being valued according to the academic or technical level of the work they produce. A contrary trend has been to accord all students equal value as learners. An effective equal opportunities policy, for example, values the potential of all individuals and invests resources in redressing disadvantages. Economic pressures may now lead to students being valued according to the resources they bring to the college.

The issue of student value has often been fudged and it is important that colleges make their position clear. Answers cannot be clear cut but the essential, necessary and specific variations of the model offer one way to deal with this issue. It is not good practice, or good business, to hide behind immediate pressures and day-to-day expediencies and avoid recognising the value system perceived by the community. The model requires colleges to be aware of their value systems as they are reflected by policies and practices.

Weightings and costs

The idea of essential entitlements and variations may have a useful spin-off in relation to marketing college courses. Some forms of provision will be more resource intensive than others or need more costly environments. A high level of information technology, for example, might be provided for a particular form of training. This can have a useful spin-off effect for the college technology as a whole, and for the improvement of essential provision - an opportunity not to be wasted.

If all students are seen as having essential elements available to them in the form of study facilities, good cafeterias and well-maintained public facilities, then course costings can bear a percentage of the costs. In this way general college standards can be raised or maintained through the marketing of special training arrangements. However, colleges will have to be very clear about the essential entitlements and cross-college facilities they offer and their cost.

Contracts and standards

Problems will arise where colleges are not clear about their standards, or where the general standards are low. There will be a temptation to provide special standards for particular clients with whom contracts have been negotiated. While it will be natural to have some variation in provision, reflected in the notion of common and specific variants, the model assumes that essential entitlements will be the same for all students.

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Although it will be necessary to offer different levels of work, it will be a retrograde step if the essential entitlements are varied according to the customer. This would imply different 'classes' of students. This is not simply a question of parity of esteem for different groups. Curriculum quality is important for all students. Progress and added value do not depend on academic level.

Necessary and specific variations can take account of different levels and needs, and extra quality and costs can be managed under those headings. Costs should reflect not only the variations contracted for, but also the maintenance and improvement of the quality of the essential entitlements. Even where customers pay more they should contribute to maintaining the quality of essential entitlements. The quality of the total environment created in a college is a clear indication of its priorities and standards.

The evidence in support of this approach may be limited at present but if colleges are in close touch with students and sponsors it will be easy to determine the conditions which reduce drop-out rates, improve progress and thus reduce costs.

Learning and learning conditions

Further education has traditionally relied on courses in which groups of individuals follow the same curriculum over the same period of time, starting from the same baseline. Interactive learning and group work have tended to be at best inconsistent and are often an unplanned spin-off from practical work. More recently, the value of different modes and rates of learning has been appreciated. Planned individual study, group work and open learning have all become more common. Increased participation requires that the range of learning opportunities and the means of learning are as wide and varied as practically possible. The most effective use of teacher and learner time requires that substantive prior learning is recognised and used as a starting point for individual programmes.

Social and solitary learning

The recognition of prior learning and the development of individual learning programmes are made possible by a flexible approach facilitated by technology and open learning. This approach should not reduce attention to learning as a social activity. An individual learning programme is not necessarily a recipe for solitary learning. There should be occasions in most individual programmes or courses both for working alone and working with others.

All learners are stimulated by positive group activities. Many adult learners, particularly returners and reluctant young students, need the encouragement, co-operation, mutual support and shared success which accompany interactive learning. The curriculum and its delivery, the settings in which students are taught, and cross-college learning support facilities should encourage the social interaction vital to effective learning.

Self-advocacy

Individuals have always found that their time in further education enables them to grow and mature, and adopt new and different vocational roles. Part of this process is an increasing ability to express opinions, choose courses of action and present one's point of view. An effective educational programme should provide opportunities for developing self-advocacy.

The internal market

A number of the issues raised in this section need to be marketed inside as well as outside the college. All staff must be given opportunities to contribute to and understand the college purpose and value system. Once determined it is important that all accept a common approach to inclusiveness, recruitment, admission, curriculum development and delivery, and assessment. It will be as important for senior management to market values and policies inside the college as outside it.

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This paper has set out to promote discussion about improving the quality of what colleges of further education offer to all learners seeking to develop and update academic and vocational skills. It has assumed that this is always accompanied by social learning whether explicit in the curriculum or implicit in the college ambience.

Colleges must be aware of the value systems they promote. This discussion paper has been based on the idea of college inclusiveness which in turn assumes the equal value of all learners and implies that college organisation facilitates access and participation. It also assumes that college marketing is equally concerned with commercial and community needs.

The model has attempted to set further education in a context of external pressures from sources with which the college must have reciprocal relationships. It provides a framework for plans, priorities and provision which also recognises that all students are entitled to education of quality.

Throughout this paper colleges have been asked to consider a number of questions. Some of them summarise the important aspects of the proposed model or indeed of college development plans.

These questions include:

- What is the purpose of the college?
- What values are explicit or implicit in the college mission statement, development plans and publications?
- Do policies and practices demonstrate these values?
- What conceptual framework informs college policies and practices?
- Has an audit of college resources been carried out?
- What is the match between education and training needs in the area served by the college and the current student population?
- What is the match between demands made on the college and available resources?
- Is there a college development plan?
- What are its priorities?
- Are immediate steps to implement it clearly planned?

The list could be extended and similar questions posed for external agencies, training sponsors and students.

This paper sets out one model and one possible approach to developing the 'inclusive' college. It is hoped that it will prove a useful basis for governors, senior managers and staff to answer these questions which are crucial to the development of future college programmes.

The series of seminars on which this discussion document is based was arranged by FEU and the Institute of Education, London University. It was supported by SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. The document was written by John Fish, with the assistance of a planning group whose members were: Jean McGinty (then Fellow at the Institute and consultant for the series), Lesley Dee, Harry Daniels, Ingrid Lunt and Pat Hood.

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The second paper in this series will offer practical guidance to colleges on the implementation of learning support.

Objectives

The objects for which the Further Education Unit (FEU) is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:

- to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
- to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
- to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of, further education curricula and to contribute and to assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
- to disseminate and publish information, and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information, about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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