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From The Minister of State

CT/3594/84

5 December 1984

Dear Mr Butler

REPORT BY HMI ON THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE ON
EDUCATION IN WALES 1983/84

I am writing to let you know that my Secretary of State will be publishing on Friday a paper by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in Wales entitled "The Effects on the Education Service in Wales of Recent Local Authority Expenditure Policies: An Assessment by HM Inspectorate". I enclose two copies of the report and accompanying press notice for your information.

Publication will be announced in a Written Reply following which the report will be made available generally, and copies will be sent to the news media, all Welsh MPs, local authorities, teacher organisations and other bodies in Wales.

/ Copies of this letter go to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, Employment, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and the Secretary to the Cabinet.

Yours
sincerely

Nike Chown

M D CHOWN
Private Secretary

Robin Butler Esq
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THE EFFECTS ON THE EDUCATION SERVICE IN WALES OF RECENT LOCAL AUTHORITY
EXPENDITURE POLICIES : AN ASSESSMENT BY HM INSPECTORATE

Previous reports by HM Inspectors have covered the calendar year prior to that in which the report has issued. This report covers the school/college year 1983/84.

SCHOOLS

The findings of this section of the report are based upon the assessments of HMI resulting from inspection visits to primary and secondary schools during 1983/84. No schools have been visited solely for the purpose of assessing the effects of LEA expenditure policies. It is the task of HMI to assess the nature and quality of pupils' work and their judgements on the effects of expenditure policies derive from that function. The quality of provision encountered in classrooms by HMI is affected partly by the nature of the teaching, including the use of resources, partly by the curricular and organisational policies of the school and partly by the educational and financial policies of the LEA. When these 3 major influences are in alignment, then the best use is likely to be made of the resources available. Should they not be so aligned, it is likely that, in a time of pressure on resources, provision will be adversely affected.

During the period of review the fall in rolls has continued, though the effects have been felt differently in different areas. Some schools have experienced either a period of static rolls or even a slight increase. The expenditure policies of LEAs take changes in rolls into account, but in many cases the adjustments in expenditure consequent upon falling rolls and those occasioned by pressure on resources are combined in such a way as to make distinctions between them very difficult.

Staffing

There have been only marginal changes in the teacher/pupil ratio over the period of the report. Most LEAs and most schools are coping adequately with the reductions in staffing caused by falling rolls and the main body of the curriculum is generally being maintained.

Staffing ratios are strictly applied in all LEAs. At primary level this, combined with the need to redeploy staff, means that some classes may be taught over long periods by a succession of temporary staff. In a number of instances classes have been taught by several teachers within the school year, with evident detrimental effect on the continuity and progression of

pupils' learning. The education of very young children is particularly vulnerable in this respect.

The number of amalgamations of primary schools has continued to increase. As detailed decisions on the staffing, and particularly the headship, of such schools are often postponed until a very late stage and staffing ratios are strictly applied, the transition to what is educationally a significantly different school is not helped thereby.

Although the main body of the curriculum has been maintained in most schools, strict application of ratios, together with the need to redeploy and to adjust staffing to falling rolls, has meant that some secondary schools have failed to maintain small teaching groups in minority subjects or have been obliged to increase the size of groups in major subjects. Constraints on staffing cause difficulties for those schools which are endeavouring to adapt to significant curricular and organisational change and have generally made schools somewhat reluctant to tackle new initiatives, particularly those which in their early stages are likely to require generous staffing so as to allow for readjustments in organisation and the preparation of learning materials. Fewer difficulties are experienced when new initiatives in specific curriculum areas are funded centrally, though in these circumstances any staff reductions resulting from falling rolls may have to be borne by the limited number of subjects which lie outside the scope of the new scheme. Although staffing of bilingual provision has been maintained in most LEAs, supported by specific grant, recently established bilingual schools face particular difficulties in their early stages.

In some schools, the fall in rolls has not only been substantial in itself but has also brought the size of the school down within a range where general diseconomies of scale begin to apply. Thus a secondary school which is reduced in roll from 1700 to 1300 may continue to cope reasonably well, despite pressure on resources, whereas a comparable reduction in the roll of a school of 1200 brings general diseconomies of scale which render it more vulnerable to any pressure on resources. In a somewhat similar way primary schools may suffer, through the loss of very few pupils, a disproportionately adverse reduction in staffing. This can happen when reductions in roll and strict application of ratios lead to the formation of mixed age classes or where small schools, for example, three-teacher schools, make the educationally significant transition to two-teacher status or two-teacher status with part-time assistance.

All LEAs apply strict rules in providing supply cover for teacher absence. The rules can be waived in special circumstances and they must be seen in the light of the relief provided in some LEAs for headteachers who have full-time charge of a class. Nonetheless, schools are increasingly being expected to use their own resources to effect cover. At secondary level supply cover may not be provided on a one for one basis. At primary level the threshold in terms of numbers on roll at which a head takes full-time charge of a class may be lowered or the head may be expected to assume full-time charge of a class for a specified period, for example, during maternity leave.

Staffing for special educational needs has remained largely unaffected by expenditure constraints. A few LEAs have established more stringent criteria for the allocation of remedial teaching resources and have reduced the time spent on this work. Many LEAs have made generous allocations of ancillary support to enable handicapped pupils to attend ordinary classes and such support can sometimes be used, without detriment to the handicapped pupil, to the general good of the school. However, LEAs have generally failed to provide additional staffing designed to facilitate implementation of the requirements of the 1981 Education Act relating to special educational needs in the ordinary school.

Some LEAs have begun to relate staffing policy in secondary schools to the maintenance of a balanced curriculum. When vacancies occur in these LEAs they are filled as far as possible by redeployment but, if necessary, are subsequently advertised. The relationship between staffing and curriculum is less clear in other LEAs and cuts in staffing required by falling rolls tend to occur in a random fashion which makes it difficult to maintain curriculum balance.

One LEA has effected improvements in staffing ratios designed to meet the challenge of underachievement in the later secondary years and to allow the development of new courses for the less able. Another LEA has attempted to take account of bilingual needs in its staffing. The success of some of these pleasing initiatives has been somewhat vitiated by subsequent decisions to reduce staffing which have followed hard upon the original improvements. This highlights the increasing uncertainty which affects the process of making decisions in many LEAs. As staff costs are by far the longest item in LEA budgets, staffing is peculiarly susceptible to change at a time of pressure on resources. The effect of such uncertainty is to undermine schools' confidence that they can carry to a successful conclusion

any new venture which they undertake. Decisions on staffing may now be taken by LEAs at very short notice, thus adding further uncertainty. In one LEA, visiting teachers at primary level (Welsh and remedial) were temporarily diverted to supply work, with adverse effects on the continuity of their work. The redeployment of teachers (a significant element in staffing when, as in one LEA, 100 secondary teachers are identified as eligible) can take a considerable time to complete. If places cannot be found for some of these teachers, they remain at their schools, but no formal timetable can be planned for them in advance and their lack of a clearly defined role adds to the general uncertainty over staffing.

In-Service Education and Training

There is considerable disparity across Wales in this aspect of the education service and while no manifest deterioration has been observed in the period of review, provision remains limited in some LEAs. The support given by the specific grants for Welsh and INSET has helped LEAs to maintain, and in some cases bring about improvement in, existing provision. In one LEA, INSET provision has in effect doubled and in others a small number of long-planned additional teachers' centres have opened. Secondment to long courses has been maintained in some LEAs, increased in others and substantially reduced in others. Cover for seconded teachers is now sometimes restricted to the actual period of secondment where that does not extend over the whole school year. Attendance at local courses is supported by most LEAs, though in 2 LEAs decisions to support attendance at other courses have been reversed within the school year as a result of emergency financial reviews. This contributes further to uncertainty in the schools and adversely affects morale and motivation. A further disincentive to course attendance is the strict application of rules regarding supply cover which, though taking account of special circumstances (for example, very small schools), rarely allow cover until several days have elapsed. Nonetheless, many teachers make laudable efforts to attend courses, sometimes at their own expense.

Advisory Services

Complement has been increased in one LEA, has been reduced considerably in another and has either remained constant or has deteriorated slightly in the rest. Posts that become vacant through natural wastage are often left unfilled, at least for a period. Where major curriculum areas are thus left unassigned, responsibility for them may be added to other advisers. Some such posts may be filled after a considerable interval, with consequent effects on continuity. Decisions to appoint advisers are subject to the

same uncertainty that affects other posts. In one case a decision to appoint was reversed at a very late stage in the appointment procedure. The piecemeal loss of posts hampers systematic advisory coverage and is particularly unhelpful in those LEAs where advisory provision is for historical reasons unbalanced. A considerable amount of advisory time in all LEAs is perforce devoted to the consequences of other constraints on expenditure, and especially to the redeployment and early retirement of teachers. The reduction in the number of advisers has been partially balanced in some LEAs by the appointment, on fixed term contracts, of advisory teachers for specific aspects of provision such as micro-computers, health education and educational technology.

Non-Teaching Staff

There is great variety. In one LEA there have been additions to the school psychological service and a substantial increase in ancillary service in the wake of the 1981 Education Act. In another LEA clerical and technical support is generally less than adequate and the deployment of personnel is arbitrary and uneven: in some secondary schools technicians in specialist areas are sometimes used more generally for office and reprographic work, thus reducing their commitment to their major role. In the remaining LEAs there has been less significant change, though in all LEAs the hours worked by non-teaching staff and the scope of their duties have been subject to strict review. In some cases this has led to a reduction in hours and a broadening of the range of tasks. Few schools have sufficient non-teaching staff to enable them to respond fully to new initiatives and to maintain initial developments.

Premises

As in previous years this continues to be a cause of considerable concern in a majority of LEAs. Essential emergency repairs are carried out promptly in all LEAs. However, routine maintenance and the repairs of non-urgent defects frequently suffer considerable delay and tend increasingly to be carried out piecemeal. The result is that there may be significant differences in the upkeep of different areas of the same school. Repairs also tend to be effected in stages so that they may not be completed for a considerable time. The interval between redecoration is lengthening in all LEAs and in some cases already exceeds 10 years. The net effect is a slow but persistent decline in the quality of the learning environment. In the period of this review some LEAs have allocated resources for the repair of some of the worst defects in schools, but a substantial backlog of work has built up which in some LEAs can only be carried out at substantial

cost. In one LEA there has been an increase in the incidence of emergency repairs, some of which have been caused by poor maintenance. In this LEA resources allocated to maintenance were reduced substantially during 1983/84. In the same LEA the need to allocate substantial sums to individual building projects in areas of population growth and to eliminate split sites has meant that other schools have been relatively neglected.

The replacement of damaged and broken furniture is unsatisfactory in many schools; there are few resources devoted to this. Marginal improvements are sometimes effected when primary schools are closed or amalgamated as a result of trading between schools. Some modern furniture was not designed to be used for as long as, in practice, it has been. Replacement tends to be piecemeal and in small quantities. The effect is further deterioration in pupils' general learning environment.

An increasing number of schools are involved in self-help projects which include, in addition to decoration, the building of garages for school buses, conversion of cloakrooms and relocation of internal doors.

Capitation

In a small number of LEAs capitation has been cut in 1983/84 (in one case shortly after a previous increase). In one LEA the cut was substantial and followed upon a period of some months during which all capitation had been suspended. In other LEAs capitation has either been maintained at the previous year's levels or increased slightly, though in a few cases the range of items to be purchased out of capitation has also been increased. In general, levels of capitation have not kept pace with the increased cost of books and materials. Systematic acquisition and use of resources is difficult in some LEAs because of decisions made at short notice either to cut or suspend capitation, or, occasionally, to increase it through the use of contingency funds.

In most schools resources are adequate but in many the replacement of worn and outdated stock is being postponed. As a result there is added pressure on the available stock of materials and equipment, some of which is coming to the end of its useful life. This is particularly true of pieces of expensive technical apparatus in use in the science and craft departments of secondary schools. As these items wear out schools find difficulty in replacing them and pupils' learning experiences are impoverished as a result. In these

circumstances modes of teaching and learning are directly affected in that there is necessarily more teacher demonstration and less practical involvement on the part of pupils. As textbooks wear out there is increasing dependence on worksheets, some of them of poor quality but nonetheless expensive to reproduce. This pressure on resources is acutely felt in some of the larger departments, such as English, where teaching groups are large throughout the main school.

Where schools are attempting new courses (except those funded nationally), for example, for older less able pupils or in recently established bilingual schools, there is some difficulty in responding fully to needs. In one LEA a school undertook a large amount of preparatory work in designing an integrated science course but ultimately had to abandon its plans because of insufficient money to resource it; in another school a new science course for less able pupils had to be abandoned because of the loss of a science teacher. A school which had instituted a City and Guilds course could not fund the expenses involved in the work experience programme; another school paid for expenses involved in a link course out of school funds. The allocation of capitation takes less account than formerly of the special circumstances under which some schools work. In one LEA, for example, special allocations related to educational disadvantage have been withdrawn.

Parents continue to make a substantial contribution through school funds to the purchase of a wide range of equipment and materials. In only a minority of schools are parental contributions any longer restricted to the purchase of additional rather than essential items. In some schools the sums contributed are very large, in many cases they are equivalent to a substantial proportion of the schools' capitation and they actually exceed it in some cases. In addition to parents, local businesses often make a contribution to the materials required by schools. While such help is gratefully received, the materials are not always of the quality required for educational purposes.

General

An attempt is made in this section to assess the effects of LEA expenditure policies over the 3/4 year period since the publication of the first report in this series.

In general the schools are coping with their problems and the position is not yet critical in any school or LEA. There is no doubt that in a period of pressure on resources both schools and LEAs have become more aware of the importance of good resource management. As a result they have carefully scrutinised former practices and have attempted, successfully on the whole, to eliminate waste. They have also been obliged to examine their educational priorities carefully and to decide where developments should be supported and where they must temporarily be postponed.

However, a price has been paid for these efforts. It is clear that both schools and LEAs are devoting increasing time and energy to resource management at the expense of other tasks. The redeployment of teachers (an important aspect of resource management) is a necessary consequence of falling rolls, but the pressure on resources has allowed LEAs and schools little flexibility and what under any circumstances would have been temporarily difficult adjustments have lacked the cushioning that would have been possible in more favourable circumstances. Hiatuses in the staffing of schools and unsatisfactory match of teacher to task have had adverse effects on pupils' learning in some schools.

There is no doubt that maintenance and decoration of premises have been carried out less often and less effectively over recent years. The problems are worse in some LEAs than in others. In general the LEAs (rural or urban) with the greatest proportion of old buildings have suffered most. Wales has a large stock of such buildings, many of them dating back to the last century. Although it is rare to encounter school premises which are at serious risk, the drab appearance of many buildings does little to enhance the learning of pupils in schools where pressure on resources has already led to some impoverishment of experience.

Pressure on resources has produced few major discernible adverse effects on the curriculum and on pupils' learning. Schools generally are coping and the quality of work in a majority of schools is certainly no less than satisfactory. However, the nature and character of pupils' learning are being gradually affected as the narrowing of the range of resources and of teaching and learning methods continues, and the increasing demands made upon teaching staff in the absence of adequate non-teaching support staff create further problems. Schools find it less easy to take on new tasks and to ensure the provision of rich and stimulating learning experiences across a broad, balanced, relevant and appropriately differentiated curriculum.

ADVANCED AND NON ADVANCED FURTHER EDUCATION

During the review period there have been inspections of single FE institutions and a variety of surveys, for example, of non-advanced part-time courses for students released from work by their employers, YTS course provision, engineering courses, and of a small range of bilingual FE courses. NAFE and AFE classes cover a wide range of technical and vocational subjects at a variety of levels. This is especially noticeable in the part-time classes which often contain students who vary considerably in terms of age, industrial background and experience. Matching teaching approaches to the employment needs and situations of these working students makes particular demands, especially on NAFE teaching staff. There is wide variation in the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in both NAFE and AFE classes. The benefit to staff of professional updating and of industrial experience and contact are generally little recognised by LEAs and by some college managements.

Provision of Courses

The overall balance of course provision continues to change. Enrolments in part-time release courses, especially in engineering, manufacturing and craft studies, are still declining as a result of the economic situation and recruitment practices in industry and a number of courses have been terminated for lack of support. There is increasing evidence of at least one LEA's readiness to cut out some courses when enrolment numbers do not reach acceptable "Pilkington" levels. By contrast, enrolments into full-time vocationally oriented courses continue to increase, and there is continuing evidence in several LEAs of appropriately qualified applicants being turned away from colleges when certain full-time courses are full - for example, preliminary social work and caring courses, business studies, catering services and beauty culture courses, computing and some applied science and technician-level courses. In some LEAs, colleges are tending to favour the establishment of MSC courses rather than starting or extending conventional FE courses designed to lead to vocational or professional qualifications. The continuing impact of MSC programmes has affected the courses, the resources and staffing of colleges in a number of ways and more especially by:

- (i) making unaccustomed demands on college management and in some cases disrupting planning by requiring short-term decisions;
- (ii) introducing an unfamiliar range of students and demands (including external contacts and negotiations);

- (iii) providing additional income to LEAs, some of which has been channelled back into the colleges, but with considerable variations in the conditions attached to its use.

LEAs may thus have benefited from the resources and finance provided by MSC, but the colleges have tended to experience additional difficulties as a consequence of the above features in terms of staffing and staff development. There is evidence of dependence in some LEAs on the appointment of temporary full-time staff to meet new needs (including some with little or no experience), and in some colleges to an inordinate degree on overtime on the part of full-time staff. In some colleges nearly 40% of the teaching is undertaken by either part-time staff or full-time staff on overtime.

Overall, therefore, the matching of course provision to need and demand is limited, and in some cases inadequate, though there are also instances of colleges having made considerable efforts to provide additional capacity and to enlarge intakes into existing courses.

The geographical availability of part-time advanced courses has been generally maintained in spite of reductions in enrolments, though a small number of courses in rural areas have been lost. However, in NAFE the spread of course provision is not always well coordinated and there is in some cases unfulfilled demand. At the same time the phasing out of redundant capacity in some engineering craft courses has been slow.

Short term adjustment of provision to demand has been a feature of YTS work in many colleges. This has been achieved in a number of cases by channelling back the YTS fees into payments for materials and equipment and by colleges' use of staff overtime, part-time tutors and temporary full-time appointments. In some colleges these devices are used to give flexibility of resourcing where otherwise little, if any, would exist.

Course developments under the various external bodies (BTEC, GCLI etc) have remained largely unaffected by general expenditure controls or policies on the part of LEAs, but provision of non-teaching time and clerical support to allow for development work varies greatly between LEAs. Although the introduction of new technology options in established courses has been delayed, in four authorities money has been provided for information technology AFE provision, and for extending and updating equipment in NAFE.

Accommodation and Teaching Resources

Capital expenditure programmes in NAFE on the part of the LEAs (in combination with the MSC's system of specific capital grants) have resulted in a number of college extensions and conversions during the period of review. About 1 in 3 of those colleges largely involved in NAFE have recently built accommodation in use or are in process of building. Some of the MSC-funded extensions are short-term projects and take the form of large groups of temporary hutments on certain college sites. This does not necessarily lead to poor learning, but may constrain teaching approaches. There has been continued use (and sometimes well designed development) of external annexes. Some switching of NAFE courses out of colleges to provide a greater proportion of AFE to NAFE work has effectively extended the capacity available to AFE provision. One college has had an expansion of computer teaching capacity as a result.

The decline in the standards of maintenance of NAFE premises noted in successive reports on LEA expenditure policies has continued and its cumulative effects are now widespread, obvious and, in some places, serious. While there are many examples of well-developed and well-resourced teaching spaces, there are also cases of poor external and internal conditions, grossly inadequate maintenance and unsuitable teaching/learning environments, including some specialist workshops, studies and laboratories. A few colleges have resorted to covert "self-help" maintenance activities; in one extreme example, all the new permanent buildings and extensions at one college over the last 10 years have been erected by the college itself. Disparities between colleges in terms of standards of accommodation, teaching environment and maintenance are growing.

Provision and maintenance of furnishings and equipment also vary greatly. Generally, standards remain acceptable, though there is little discernible improvement, except in some larger AFE institutions. Most LEAs have attempted to provide the same level of capital and equipment budgets from one year to the next, but there have been 5% or 10% reductions in some, and in one a cut of as much as 25% compared with the previous session. MSC fees and capital/equipment grants have tended to mask the more severe effects of these constraints, and in a minority of colleges have constituted almost the only source of funds for the updating of equipment vital to the proper performance of vocational educational provision.

With the exception of those in one LEA where there were initial difficulties in finding the requisite finance, most colleges in Wales have benefited from the Department of Industry's CNC matched-funding scheme for providing technical equipment, especially in the new technology sectors. Most colleges have enhanced their provision of computing, microcomputer and some CAD/CAM equipment, sometimes using MSC and other external funds. Colleges' planning for developments in CNC, CAD/CAM and other new technology areas varies considerably, depending upon the incentives and matchfunding schemes available, but also on the expenditure constraints imposed. In some college departments which concentrate on AFE provision, technical development in information technology, industrial controls and manufacturing systems (such as robotics), and the associated software developments, are being encouraged by earmarked grants. The gulf between the well resourced, developing colleges and those less well provided and planned for is widening. Possibilities for the development of short courses and services to industry on the part of colleges in these new high technology/information services sectors, and the associated staff contact with industry, depend crucially on the level of support and investment afforded by the LEA, in conjunction with other agencies. In general, and particularly in AFE, the capacities of colleges for development of such services have been enhanced by measures of this kind; but there are exceptions, including where staffing limitations and practices have hindered developments.

Capitation budgets for books and materials are being maintained in some LEAs, but cut in others. One authority, having cut its capitation to colleges by 10% has instructed colleges that they may spend only 75% of it, and keep the other 25% in reserve. Library budgets have been curtailed in some authorities, even when prior library extensions have been undertaken. Some further curtailment of consumable materials purchasing has been imposed in a number of colleges.

Staffing

There is pressure in some authorities for reductions in teaching staff establishments; these may be achieved by cutting the teaching hours on some courses, by cancelling courses which have difficulty in attracting an adequate number of enrolments, or by selectively eliminating units or modules from the option structures of courses. In one authority, delays in the replacement of staff retiring or transferring have been used to achieve marginal cuts in staffing budgets, occasionally at the expense of continuity of teaching of

some subjects in established courses. Other authorities, however, have retained existing staffing levels even where courses have attracted an increased number of enrolments. As a result of changes in demand from industry, especially for part-time courses, there is some overstaffing in engineering and sciences, and here redeployment measures are helping to take up some of the slack. Elsewhere, increased enrolments are being partly met by increasing the size of classes taught.

As noted previously, part-time and temporary full-time staff appointments are increasingly being used to bring colleges' teaching capacities up to the increased levels needed to meet the demand now being experienced, especially in YTS programmes. Because of the uncertainty and the lack of job security in these arrangements, many colleges are increasingly finding that the quality of applicants for such posts has declined. Generally, staffing standards in AFE courses have been maintained, and in qualitative terms enhanced as new courses and extensions of courses in the information technology and microtechnology fields are opened.

Most colleges and LEAs have made some effort to provide for in-service training and staff development needs in relation to new course developments in NAFE. Support for the FE teacher training courses has been on the whole adequately maintained, and there is continuing support also for the in-college/in-LEA workshop-seminar staff development networks sponsored for one year by the MSC. Staff updating activities are supported by most AFE institutions, but less noticeably in NAFE. There remain significant gaps, both geographical and institutional, in staff development provision and its take-up, and there remain problems in many colleges for those who undertake staff development and updating courses in implementing their new ideas and knowledge. New developments in prevocational NAFE imply continued needs in staff development which so far have not been systematically planned and provided. Poor quality performance or outcomes observed in some cases tend to reflect shortcomings of professional analysis and failure to match presentation to students' needs.

Ancillary technician and clerical administrative support remains static or under pressure for reductions despite the growth of demand and enrolments. NAFE is more seriously affected than AFE, but there have been difficulties in maintaining the level of service and support in both sectors. The most damaging shortages, where they occur, are of laboratory and workshop

technicians and library and computer support staffs. Such restrictions noticeably constrain the range and variety of teaching/learning approaches which can be offered.

Course development

There is much variation in the effectiveness of college and LEA administration of FE and HFE. Change and development arising out of YTS and MSC and the work of external professional bodies including BTEC have presented both NAFE and AFE colleges with major problems of adaptation, and the pace of change is not slackening. The general response of departmental and college managements to these challenges is good; but the co-ordination of responses within colleges and LEAs has sometimes been faulty. In some cases a lack of consistency is observable between the policy of the LEA and that of the college, and as a consequence the effectiveness of resourcing has been impaired and teaching approaches have been adversely affected.

In a minority of LEAs, planning for change, in curriculum and course development, and in staff and organisational capacities and resource deployment in NAFE colleges has been adversely affected by the uncertainties and constraints brought about through financial restrictions and short term changes in funding and resourcing policies. Other colleges have been more successful in maintaining both standards of provision and expectations. Continuity of expectations is an important contributory factor in maintaining staff commitment and professional development.

It is difficult to relate levels of achievement to specific factors in resourcing and funding either at LEA or college level, or to expectations and continuity in teaching, administration, organisation or support. However, the indications of over-timetabling and of excessive reliance on a basically teacher-centred, class-teaching approach, owe as much to difficulties in providing adequate resource backing and accommodation as to limitations of professional outlook and unconstructive attitudes to change. A failure to support the development of libraries and resources organisation and provision may well be hindering the development of more appropriate teaching approaches based on the evaluation of students' learning needs, and better suited to the professional needs of employers.

YOUTH AND ADULT

The level of funding for youth and adult education has remained largely unchanged over the past year, often at a very low level in a number of LEAs. Some authorities continue to give priority to special categories, particularly the unemployed and those in need of basic education. One has increased its budget by £100,000 to prolong the opening hours of youth clubs, extend its programme of basic education and pilot a special project aimed at the young unemployed. Most other authorities can record some initiative and have at least succeeded in protecting this sector from further cuts. Where this has not occurred the youth service directly administered by the authority in question is approaching the point of collapse. The differing approaches and priorities of authorities are increasing the disparities that already existed in levels of provision.

The level of fees for adult classes continues to vary between 30 and 75 pence per hour but in most instances they are unchanged from last year. There has been some growth in enrolments overall, but where fees have increased, in one instance by 10%, numbers in classes and fee income have fallen. Fee increases have also resulted in a reduction in the number and range of adult courses. The proportion of students qualifying for reduced fees or total exemption continues to increase. In one authority as many as 40% of students pay less than the standard; this fee and the numbers involved, which have increased from 6400 in 1982/82 to 10,583 in 1983/84, are indicative of increased participation by the unemployed.

The neglect of maintenance and repair continues to give cause for concern. The quality of the learning environment varies widely, but is often at its best in community centres jointly funded by county and district authorities and at its poorest in purpose built, free standing youth clubs.

In only one authority has there been any significant change in staff levels. Although staff training is non-existent in some LEAs and neglected in others, 2 authorities have taken initiatives to improve arrangements.

Following severe cuts in 1979-81 the youth and adult service has been largely spared during the year under review and in some instances has enjoyed additional funds to meet special needs. Authorities tend to find difficulty in catering adequately for young people, but through increasing reliance on self-funding and self-programming courses most offer a relatively better service to adults.

This sector of education is particularly vulnerable to any demand for economies and in many authorities uncertainty over the continuity of funding is constraining forward planning and weakening the response of the system to changing needs.