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THESIS

WIDENING PARTICIPATION? AN EXPLORATION OF THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO ENABLE LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED GROUPS TO ACCESS FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the different types of collaboration used by providers to widen participation in further education and training in England, between 2001 and 2003. The first chapter, an introduction, sets a scene for the study, and definitions are offered for the main terminology – collaboration and widening participation. The political, economic and policy contexts for the study are also briefly introduced. A review of relevant literature, pertaining to widening participation and collaboration is carried out in chapters two and three to set a context and establish a rationale for the study. The methodology, which is a case-study approach employing multiple methods of data collection, is adopted and rationalised in chapter four. The case-study sites are described in chapter five. A justification is also offered for the choice of case-study boroughs and institutions in the same chapter. The data are reviewed and described, using interviews, questionnaires, statistical and documentary analysis, in chapter six. The findings from this chapter are used to answer the research questions in the final chapter. Conclusions from analysing the data suggest that collaborative practices can be effectively used to recruit members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed onto further education and training programmes. The evidence is, however, less conclusive regarding the contribution of collaborative approaches to enabling members of these communities to achieve their learning aims. A number of recommendations are made for improving collaborative practices.

DECLARATION AND WORD LENGTH

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT **2**

DECLARATION AND WORD LENGTH **3**

CONTENTS **4**

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION **9**

Context 10

Rationale 11

The study 12

CHAPTER 2 WIDENING PARTICIPATION? - A CONTINUING FOCUS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. **14**

2.1 Introduction **14**

2.2 Context **16**

2.3 Understanding widening participation **19**

2.4 Raison d'etre **26**

CHAPTER 3 COLLABORATION? – INSTRUMENTAL, PRAGMATIC OR INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS? **28**

3.1 Introduction **28**

3.2 Background matters **32**

3.3 Understanding collaboration **34**

3.4 Raison d'etre **43**

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH DESIGN **46**

4.1 Research questions **46**

4.2 Methodology **47**

4.3 Data collection **50**

4.4 Data analysis and reporting **58**

CHAPTER 5 DESCRIPTION OF CASE STUDY SITES. 61

5.1 Acacia College 61

5.2 Ash Adult and Community Education 62

5.3 Palm Adult and Community Education 64

5.4 Oak College 65

CHAPTER 6 DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS FROM THE DATA 68

6.1 Introduction 68

6.2 Review of interview data 69

6.2.1 Engagement in collaborative practices 69

6.2.2 Purposes for collaboration 74

6.2.3 Why institutions engage in collaboration 81

6.2.4 Effects of collaboration on participation by learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed 83

6.2.5 Effects of collaborative practices on retention, progression and achievement of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds 85

6.2.6 Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration 89

6.3 Review of questionnaire data. 92

6.3.1 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for raising funds 93

6.3.2 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for managing resources 94

6.3.3 Effectiveness of collaboration at meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups 95

6.3.4 Effectiveness of collaboration for recruiting disadvantaged learners onto courses 96

6.3.5 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to complete their courses 97

6.3.6 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims 98

6.3.7 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling progression for disadvantaged groups 99

6.4 Review of statistical data. 100

6.4.1 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for recruiting learners from ethnic minority communities 100

6.4.2 Effectiveness of collaborative practices at enabling ethnic minority groups to complete courses 110

6.4.3 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities to achieve their learning aims 113

6.4.4 Conclusions 116

CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM THE DATA. 119

7.1 What types of collaborative approaches do sector colleges and EIs currently employ to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training? 119

7.2 How effective are these collaborative approaches (with specific reference to B1 and B2) at enabling the above groups to achieve their learning aims? 124

7.2.1 How effective are collaborative approaches in enabling the target groups to participate in further education and training? 125

7.2.2 How effective are collaborative practices in enabling members of these groups to complete their programmes and achieve their learning aims? 129

7.3 What features of collaborative practices determine effectiveness in terms of widening participation? 132

7.4 Conclusions 137

7.5 Final matters 140

REFERENCES 145

APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 169

APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE 170

GLOSSARY 171

FIGURES

Figure 1	Pedagogic purpose and practice	30
Figure 2	Research questions	46
Figure 3	Matrix of methods used to answer research questions	55
Figure 4	Typology of collaboration	75
Figure 5	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for raising funds	93
Figure 6	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for raising funds (Chart)	93
Figure 7	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for managing resources	94
Figure 8	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for managing resources (Chart)	94
Figure 9	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups	95
Figure 10	Effectiveness of collaborative practices for meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups Chart)	95
Figure 11	Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at recruiting ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed onto courses	96
Figure 12	Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at recruiting ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed onto courses (Chart)	96
Figure 13	Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to complete courses	97
Figure 14	Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to complete courses (Chart)	97
Figure 15	Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims	98

Figure 16 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims (Chart) 98

Figure 17 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling progression for disadvantaged groups 99

Figure 18 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling progression for disadvantaged groups (Chart) 99

Figure 19 Acacia College – Starts, retention and completion data 101

Figure 20 Acacia College – Number of starts 102

Figure 21 Ash Adult and Community Education - Number of starts 104

Figure 22 Ash Adult and Community Education Starts, retention and achievement data 105

Figure 23 Palm Adult and Community Education - Number of starts 106

Figure 24 Palm Adult and Community Education Starts, retention and achievement data 107

Figure 25 Oak College – Number of starts 108

Figure 26 Oak College – Starts, retention and achievement data 109

Figure 27 Acacia College – Retention rates 110

Figure 28 Ash Adult and Community Education - Retention rates 111

Figure 29 Palm Adult and Community Education Retention rates 112

Figure 30 Oak College – Retention rates 112

Figure 31 Acacia College – Success (achievement) rates 113

Figure 32 Ash Adult and Community Education Success (achievement) rates 114

Figure 33 Palm Adult and Community Education Success (achievement) rates 115

Figure 34 Oak College - Success (achievement) rates 115

Figure 35 Location of case-study institutions on Tett et al's model 123

WIDENING PARTICIPATION? AN EXPLORATION OF THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO ENABLE LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED GROUPS TO ACCESS FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine the types of collaborative approaches used by providers in post-compulsory education and training to widen participation and to explore the effectiveness of these partnership models in enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to access further education and training and achieve their learning aims. The thesis relates only to England and focuses on the period 2001 to 2003.

Since the inception of the Labour government in 1997, widening participation, defined as increasing access to learning and providing chances to a wider cross section of the population than is current (Kennedy 1997), has become an underpinning aim for the provision of post-compulsory education in England. Various policy documents published during the period of this study, starting with the Green Paper, *the Learning Age* (1998), The White Paper, *Learning To Succeed* (1999), *Success For All* (DfES, 2002) and *21st Century Skills* (DfES, 2003) support this view. The inception of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2001, combining the roles of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), with a remit to increase access to further education and training for non-participants adults (DfES 2001, Hodgson *et al* 2005) consolidated the Labour Government's agenda to widen participation.

Collaborative approaches have become increasingly prevalent in the delivery of post-compulsory education and training and have been seen by the government as a means of moving beyond the marketised approaches to delivery of post-compulsory education and training, used in the 1980s and 1990s (Jones, 2002). Collaborative approaches within education are defined as the establishment of links between providers and networking within the community to meet the needs of learners in a particular area. Often these arrangements are informed by a needs analysis of education and training requirements (McGivney 1991).

Context

The policy framework for the study derives from the Labour Government's agenda to extend education and training to non-participant adults (Hillage, 2000). The basis for this agenda was highlighted in the Green Paper *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998), which set out the Government's intention to reform the Welfare State and regenerate the economy (Hillage 2000). The promotion of widening participation, as a vehicle for economic regeneration (Kennedy, 1997) and a means to foster social inclusion is discussed in detail in chapter two. The political framework flows from New Labour education policy premised on Third Way politics (Giddens 1998 Hodgson and Spours 1999, Hyland 2002).

The basis for promoting collaboration as a model for widening participation has been what Abrahamson *et al* (1996) have described as two-pronged, initially emanating from government induced funding pressures (Kennedy 1997, Fryer 1997, Doyle 2000), but later due to the realisation by institutions that pooling resources may enable them to achieve what may not be achievable individually. This issue is discussed in detail in chapter three.

Rationale

The literature on widening participation in the further education sector has largely been concerned with the role of the big sector colleges (Bailey and Ainley 2000, Leney et al 1998, Perry 2000, Stuart 2002). This thesis goes beyond this focus to examine the role played by institutional collaboration. Detailed analysis of widening participation and collaboration is carried out in chapters two and three through a review of relevant literature. These chapters provide the space for an in-depth discussion of these concepts and set out a rationale for the exploration of the use of collaborative approaches to enable members of disadvantaged groups to access further education and training.

McGivney (2000, 2001, 2003), and Callaghan (2001) among others, have done research on the outreach work of external institutions – a technical term for Adult and Community Learning providers. A review of the literature, however, suggests that no extensive research work has been carried out on partnerships between sector colleges and external institutions (EIs) to widen participation. The basic rationale for this thesis is therefore an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature, by examining the extent to which sector colleges and EIs use collaborative approaches to widen participation.

The study

This study reviews the types of collaborative approaches used by further education providers to widen participation and examines the effectiveness of these approaches to enable disadvantaged groups to participate in further education and training and achieve their learning aims. The methodological approach used to answer the research questions is discussed in chapter four. The research strategy used for the study is the case study approach, using multiple methods of data collection - interviews, questionnaires, documents and statistical data to provide a variety of perspective on a complex contemporary phenomenon – (Merriam 1988, Yin 1994, Robson 2000, 2002).

The case study sites are described in chapter five together with a justification for the choice of the case study boroughs and institutions. As chapter five points out the main reasons for choosing these sites is that both boroughs have large populations of ethnic minority communities (the largest concentration of these communities in England) and higher than average unemployed residents, both of whom form the subject of this study.

A review of the data using each method employed in the study, interviews, questionnaires, documents and statistics, is carried out in chapter six. Findings from an examination of the data suggest that collaborative practices can help with the recruitment of learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed. However, the evidence is less conclusive regarding the effectiveness of using collaborative approaches to support members of these communities to achieve their learning aims. General conclusions from the thesis are presented in chapter seven and the professional and policy implications of the study, possible shortcomings as well as dissemination of the findings is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2. WIDENING PARTICIPATION: A CONTINUING FOCUS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY.

2.1 Introduction

"Widening participation means increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression to a much wider cross-section of the population than now" (Kennedy 1997, p. 13). Whilst taking this as a starting point, I will define widening participation more specifically here as enabling learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (meaning here members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed) to access further education and training and to achieve their learning aims. According to McGivney (2000), an OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) report in 1997 found that the above groups were the most mentioned when describing disadvantaged groups. These groups also fall within the definition of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) widening participation funding formula (the so-called 'uplift' funding is allocated according to indices that include unemployment, post codes from deprived areas and receipt of income support) used to compensate post-16 providers for catering for learners from deprived backgrounds.

Burke (2002) argues that current discourse on widening participation is embedded in neo-liberal logic that serves to reproduce social, cultural and economic inequalities, while claiming to be against social exclusion. She maintains that this discourse places standards and standardisation at the core of provision and effectively inhibits aspects of pedagogy that are vital to engendering inclusive learning programmes. In my view, Burke's critique is flawed, as I do not regard the measurement of success (particularly success in terms of retention, achievement and progression), which encompasses standardisation, as required by the current post-16 education framework, to be incompatible with conditions for creating inclusive learning. Widening participation, as defined by Kennedy (1997), is not just about access, but also about achievement and progression. Nevertheless, measurement of achievement, in terms of qualifications (particularly QCA – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority – accredited qualifications), is perceived to be problematic by a sizeable number of practitioners in further education. For this reason I examine this issue in greater depth in chapter six.

This study focuses on the experiences of providers employing collaborative approaches to widening participation in two London Boroughs, termed B1 and B2 for anonymity. I have chosen these boroughs, because official statistics show that they both have large populations from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, the most recent, published, census data (2001) show that B1 and B2 have the largest ethnic minority communities in the UK (over 50% in each case). Both boroughs also have significant numbers of post codes that qualify for the LSC widening participation uplift.

Within each borough, I will examine the contribution made to widening participation, through collaboration between a sector college and a former external institution (EI) (now known as ACL – Adult and Community Learning providers). EIs were established, from non traditional providers, by the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). These institutions became eligible (though outside the traditional college sector) for funding under section 5 of the Act. EIs make up a small but significant segment of the further education sector, accounting for 4 per cent of all further education funded training and education in England, which equates to 341,823 students. 8.9 per cent of all students in further education and 11.3 per cent of part-time students attend EIs (FEFC, 1999). The rationale for examining EIs is premised on Kennedy's (1997) assertion that lifelong learning also occurs in settings other than sector colleges and as emphasised by Fryer (FEFC 1999, p. 1) *"external institutions are an essential part to tackling social exclusion and creating a learning society"*.

In the following sections, I establish a contextual framework for the study and then proceed to review the relevant literature. Finally, a rationale is established for carrying out the research regarding widening participation.

2.2 Context

The policy context for this chapter flows from the Labour government's agenda to prioritise extending education to non-participant adults (Hillage 2000), first signalled in the Green Paper, *The Learning Age* (DFEE 1998). This document heralded the government's intention to reform post-16 education and training and to use it to help regenerate the national economy. Burke (2002 p. 4) notes that this *"neo-liberal view of politics as expounded by New Labour"* has gained ascendancy since the party came to power in 1997.

The promotion of widening participation as a vehicle for economic regeneration and social inclusion has been analysed, promoted and supported by various policy documents, the main ones starting from the Kennedy Report (1997), followed by *The*

Learning Age (1998), The White Paper, *Learning To Succeed* (DfEE 1999), followed by *Success For All* (DfES, 2002) and more recently *21st Century Skills* (DfES, 2003). Kennedy (1997 p. 5) provided the platform for the current focus of widening participation when she noted that *"education must be at the heart of any inspired project for regeneration in Britain"*. She also argued for a move away from the prevailing concept, prior to 1997, of the purely economic rationale for growth in education towards one that recognised widening participation as a means of promoting social inclusion. Kennedy's rationale was the importance of fostering social cohesion in a society that was increasingly becoming polarised between the haves and the have nots. She recommended that participation must be widened and not simply increased. To support this recommendation she stated that *"developing the capacity of everyone to benefit from economic, personal, social and cultural dimensions of their lives is central to achieving the whole range of goals we set ourselves as a nation"* Kennedy (1997, p. 22).

The establishment of the LSC in 2001 - following the publication of The White Paper *Learning To Succeed* (1999) and the *Learning and Skills Act* (2000) – combining the functions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) - was the first concrete manifestation of the government's determination to shift the focus of delivery of lifelong learning to conform with the direction specified in the policy documents. Burke (2002) notes that the White Paper explicitly linked the agenda of widening participation to the government's Welfare to Work programmes, and maintains that it left intact, policies designed by the previous Conservative government to prevent the unemployed and unpaid workers accessing higher education. She cited among other examples, the fact that people claiming

Jobseekers allowance (JSA) could only study for a maximum of 16 hours per week to buttress her argument. Burke may have a point, however, I consider that it is important to note that the White Paper and The Act make a clear commitment to widening participation. One of the key objectives laid for the LSC is to ensure targeted support for the socially disadavantaged – by ensuring that additional funding is made available in respect of excluded and disadvantaged learners. Indeed, Hodgson and Spours (1999, p. 196) whilst arguing for a stronger framework approach to the Labour Government's post-16 education strategy, noted that the approach regarding exclusion was *"less weak...because it seeks to use joined-up government to target resources and opportunities on those who need them most"*. More recent policy documents, including *Successful Participation for All, Widening Adult Participation* (LSC 2003) and *21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential* (DFES, July 2003) have also reinforced the LSC's remit to widen participation. The last document also signalled the government's intention to seek new support measures and incentives to promote widening, as opposed to merely increasing, participation.

The political framework for this chapter is the New Labour education policy which most commentators, including Hodgson and Spours (1999) and Hyland (2002) have attributed to third way politics. Hyland notes that Giddens (1998) maintains that third way politics looks for a relationship between the individual and the community, a redefinition of rights and obligations. The ultimate aim of the programme being the *"social investment state which defines equality as inclusion and inequality as exclusion"* (Giddens, 1998 p. 66, 102).

Burke (2002) argues that Giddens' analysis fails to recognise the fact that barriers such as racism and "classism" are an integral part of British society and that this renders problematic the core tenet – meritocracy – of Giddens' prescription for reforming the Welfare State. Other writers, including Bird (1992) and Taylor- Goby (1999) have expressed views regarding barriers to participation that conform to Burkes' critique. Bird (1992), for example, has identified lack of participation in education and training by black people and attributed this to a lack of opportunity in the labour market. The issue of inclusion and exclusion as analysed by Whitty (2000) will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

2.3 Understanding widening participation

Genesis

Hillage *et al* (2000) note that widespread adult education in England came about in response to a popular demand for democracy brought about by the industrial revolution in the 1800s, which was characterised by the establishment of organisations such as the Mechanics Institutes and the Workers' Education Association. A series of measures put in place after the Second World War to encourage further participation, failed to attract those with the least initial education. Commentators including McGivney (1993, 1999 and 2000), and Kennedy (1997) have since identified barriers, including lack of support in student services, such as childcare and inadequate learning support, that militate against participation by disadvantaged groups. The origins of widening participation in its current form can be traced back to the 1970s and 80s when developments to improve access for under-represented groups in education, began to gather pace. At this time, a number of radical educators working in places such as Liverpool pioneered a model of learner-centred community-based programmes for working class adults designed to facilitate the process of social change (Hillage et al 2000). At the same time, the Russell Report (1973) inspired education authorities, most notably in Sheffield and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) to take practical steps to tackle under-representation of adult learners in further education (Brooks 1999).

Foskett (2002) attributes the growth and emergence of widening participation in recent times to the publication of the European Commision (EC) White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* published in 1994. Widening participation was viewed in this document as being essential to tackling global economic competition, as well as to fostering ideas for dealing with social exclusion. Foskett notes that this view was bolstered by the publication of the OECD report – *Lifelong Learning for All* in 1996. This document in turn led to and informed the European Union (EU) White Paper, *Teaching and Learning Towards A Learning Society* (1996), which according to Foskett (2002) shaped the policy of widening participation in Europe and led to the adoption of this concept in several European countries, including Britain in 1997.

English policy

Parnham (2002) notes that the Labour Government signalled its intention to create a learning society and widen participation with the publication of the Green Paper, *The Learning Age* (DFEE 1998). As mentioned in section 2, the proposals in the Green

Paper were confirmed in the White Paper, *Learning to Succeed* (DFEE, 1999) which heralded the inception of the LSC in 2001, and were followed more recently by *Success for All* (2002) and *21st Century Skills* (DfES, 2003).

Parnham (2002) citing Raffe (2001) points out that widening participation in the UK context has a double aim – to increase the number of under-represented groups participating in education and training and to diminish the correlation between non-participation and social and economic disadvantage. The dual aim of the Labour Government's agenda, with regards to post-16 education conforms to the above view. In the forward to *Learning to Succeed* (2002), Charles Clarke, the Secretary of state for Education and Skills, notes that the LSC is *"pivotal to our overiding objective to strengthen Britain on the dual and inextricably linked foundations of social justice and economic success"*.

The Prime Minister confirmed the view that the Labour Project is based on Giddens' (1998) exposition when in proposing a third way, he maintained that Labour's policy was about *"modernising"* the Welfare System in order to a create a society of *"responsible citizens"* (Burke, 2002, p. 27). I suggest that Burke has a point when she observes that the shift in focus from concern with human emancipation to an interest in emancipating human talent, as advocated by the third way, focuses solely on a specific model of work – waged labour. The implication is that the drive to increase participation is predicated mainly on the need to increase the trained workforce to enhance the country's competitive edge in the global market. Nevertheless, her blanket rejection of the government's approach to widening participation, because *"neo-liberal discourse is privileged"* (Burke 2002, p.26), ignores the merits, inspite of some acknowledged flaws, that have been attributed to the current policy by commentators such as Parnharm (2002). Parnham notes that the Labour Government has directed considerable resources at embedding the concept of lifelong learning and widening participation since the publication of the *The Learning Age*. Indeed Burke herself, acknowledges that *Learning to Succeed* (DFEE 1999) addresses the issue of access to FE (albeit not access to HE, which is her area of concern). Foskett (2002) points out that the inception of the LSC moved the focus of FE provision (emphasised by its funding methodology) from mere expansion of student numbers, which characterised the post-incorporation years, to promoting widening participation. This trend conforms to the model advocated by Kennedy (1997).

The current funding methodology for the learning and skills sector, inherited from the FEFC, includes a number of measures, such as the widening participation (WP) factor uplift and the Learner Support Fund (LSF) – which include assistance with travel and childcare - designed to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate. My observations in the field, as a senior practitioner, suggest that these measures do aid widening participation. For example, income derived from the WP factor uplift allows providers to enhance support for learners in areas such as *"comprehensive arrangements for initial assessments, which involve part-time and community- based students as well as full-time students"* (FEFC 2000, p. 9). Similarly the LSF, which includes assistance for childcare and assistance with travel, enables disadvantaged students to participate in further education and training. McGivney (2000), for example, has identified travel distance (even as little as a mile) as one of the key barriers that prevents learners from disadvantaged communities from participating in education and training.

The introduction of Plan-Led Funding in 2003 (LSC Circular 03/15) guarantees three-year funding to providers (except those judged to have serious weaknesses) who have approved Three-Year Development Plans (LSC Circular 03/09). In my view, this development, which provides stability of funding, could have the positive benefit of allowing for better planning by providers to cater for the needs of participants from disadvantaged groups.

Despite the above, however, flaws still exist in the funding of further education, which militate against effectively widening participation. For example, Fryer (1999) identified that most EIs have to contribute up to 45% of additional resources to the full cost of providing for disadvantaged groups. Providers have to bid competitively for funds such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the European Social Fund (ESF). In my experience, sector colleges with the superior resources at their disposal, are better able to access these sources of funding than are smaller providers such as adult and community learning providers. This has meant that EIs on their own find it increasingly difficult to access additional funding, which is necessary for recruiting, retaining and allowing learners from disadvantaged communities to achieve their learning aims. Introduction of Co-financing for the ESF in 2002 means that funding is now disbursed via the local LSCs as well as other strategic bodies, including the Association of London Government (ALG). It also means a shift in focus towards collaborative bidding and, in my view, this may prove to be a useful way forward. The role of collaboration in widening participation is discussed in the next chapter.

Foskett (2002) poses a very important question when he enquires whether the financial levers put in place to ensure widening participation might not prove to be the sole motivating factor for FE to engage in this agenda, or whether there exists a genuine will in the sector to involve non-participants. This is a very pertinent issue – McGivney (1999), for example, has pointed out that sector colleges are still viewed with suspicion in disadvantaged communities and that efforts by these colleges are viewed as an attempt to “put bums on seats”.

I concur with Foskett, when he concludes that widening participation needs a commitment to values that embrace inclusion and a willingness to extend provision to non-participants as well as the adaptation of a marketing culture not based on selling but grounded in responsiveness to learner needs. This is a strategy akin to that termed ‘demand-side outreach’ by McGivney (2002). McGivney (page 9) citing Kevin Ward (Replan Review, 1986) defines demand side outreach as a *“process whereby people who would not normally use education are contacted in non-institutional settings and become involved in attending and eventually in jointly planning and controlling activities, schemes and courses relevant to their circumstances and needs”.*

Strategies for promoting widening participation

Foskett (2002) acknowledges that some positive benefits (due to a combination of the growth and achievement targets) did accrue to the FE sector in the post-incorporation period. Some of these benefits included improvements in student services and learning support. Other improvements and benefits included careers guidance and a comprehensive tutorials and counselling service (Kennedy 1999). On the other hand, incorporation also led to the damaging competition, which in some instances resulted in turf wars. This trend brought about methods such as institutions offering financial inducements to poach students from neighbouring colleges in order to meet their funding targets (Kennedy 1997).

Leney et al (1998) and other commentators, however, also highlighted some positive aspects of competition, including imaginative bids to enhance provision, put forward by providers in competitive bids, as well as successful initiatives built on partnerships. Foskett (2002) notes that the value of competition as well as collaboration is recognised in *The Learning Age* (DFEE, 1998) and the document *Colleges for Excellence and Innovation* (2000). Collaboration for widening participation will be reviewed in the next chapter.

2.4 Raison d'etre

Until recently, most of the literature dealing with increased participation by disadvantaged groups in further education including Leney et al (1998), Perry (1999), Bailey and Ainley (2000) and Stuart (2002) - has focused exclusively on the contribution made by sector colleges. Recently, however, some publications including Cullen (2000), Callaghan (2001) and McGivney (2000 and 2001) have reviewed adult and community learning, which has, some relevance for an understanding of the contribution made by EIs to widening participation. However, a general review of the literature has shown that little or no research has been carried out into the linkages that are known to exist (specifically) between EIs and sector colleges and the potential benefits of these partnerships for widening participation. My observations over four and half years (to March 2003) as chair of B1TN (an organisation that facilitated partnership work between EIs and other providers, including the local sector college), suggest that sector colleges and EIs do work together to reach disadvantaged groups. A review of the literature has shown that a gap exists in studies of this area of work and, this provides a rationale for this study.

Most of the literature regarding outreach to widen participation in the further education sector focuses on sector colleges' attempts to engage the community by expanding their activities to areas with high populations of hard-to-reach learners. I suggest that partnerships between sector colleges (with the resources at their disposal) and EIs (given their expertise at reaching out to disadvantaged groups) might provide a useful model for effectively widening participation and this type of collaboration is thus worth exploring.

Foskett (2002) argues that traditional methods of reaching out by sector colleges are doomed to failure because widening participation is inherently a challenge to internal cultures that will require colleges to alter their *modus operandi*. Foskett points out that from 1992/93 to 1996/97, the push in the FE sector was purely for growth in student numbers (which went up by 28%). He maintains that, as colleges strove to meet their recruitment and financial targets, during this period most funding allocated went to support students from traditional groups who were seen as a safer bet, in marketing terms, than non-traditional students.

Foskett concludes that widening participation needs a commitment to values that embrace inclusion and a willingness to extend provision to non-participants. Also, as mentioned earlier, there is a need to adopt a marketing culture not based on selling, but grounded in responsiveness to learner needs. I suggest linkages between sector colleges and EIs, with their well-established roots within the target communities (I have discussed EIs ability to reach disadvantaged groups in my Institution Focused Study, Giwa 2003), might help with above suggestion. This conclusion, coupled with the (specified) shift in emphasis of further education provision outlined in the preeceding sections, provides a useful rationale for investigating links between further education sector colleges and EIs and for exploring the degree of effectiveness of these links for widening participation. The study might also suggest hitherto unreported paradigms that have been effectively deployed to widen participation.

CHAPTER 3. COLLABORATION - INSTRUMENTAL, PRAGMATIC OR INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENTS?

3.1 Introduction

The main thrust of this chapter, is to define collaboration and to identify as well as to examine the various collaborative approaches that have been deployed to widen participation. Following the development of a conceptual framework, I will review relevant literature in order to establish a rationale for carrying out this empirical study.

Collaborative approaches within education are defined as the establishment of links between providers and networking within the community as well as carrying out a needs analysis of educational and training requirements to inform the development of relevant provision (McGivney 1991). Collaboration has also been defined as an approach for collecting and sharing information amongst providers in order to plan provision (Kennedy 1997). Jones (2002) notes that collaboration offers a means of moving beyond competitive marketised approaches to college-initiated provision. Two models of collaboration (Brown 2001 and Tett *et al* 2001) are presented below.

Brown (2001) identifies four approaches to collaboration, which might be seen as models that move along a spectrum from loose to tight namely:

- *Ad hoc partnerships* – these are loose arrangements (with each institution maintaining its own identity) to deliver a specific project. Examples include the validation or accreditation by a partner institution of another's provision or joint teaching. Brown notes that this is the most common form of collaboration.

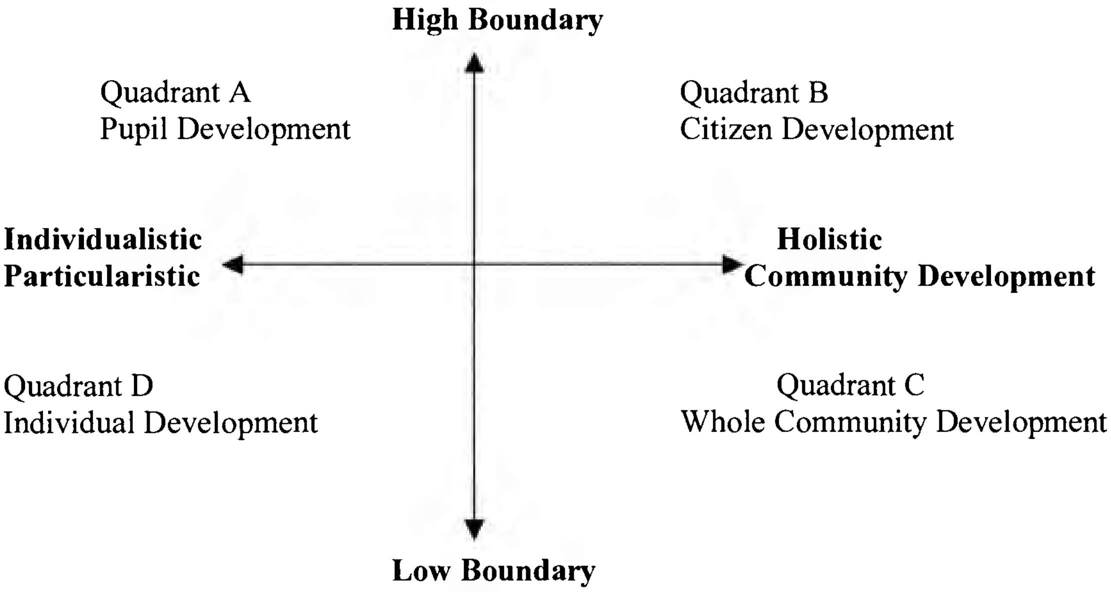
- *Strategic alliances* – these exist where two institutions pool resources to explore particular aspects of delivery, such as the development of a new curriculum, or share the costs of common resources. As in the ad hoc partnership approach, collaboration does not impact on institutional autonomy, but some commitment is required to collaborate on a wider and more regular basis.

- *Strategic planning* – this involves two or more institutions agreeing to have their future development possibilities constrained by an agreed planning and resource allocation framework. In this instance, two institutions will engage in joint provision in a number of areas from which other partnership organisations will be excluded. A system of administration is established to monitor progress and distribute resources between the institutions. Brown (2001) cites the Milwaukee and Madison example as the most frequently mentioned in this instance.

- *Mergers* – this approach is based on that of corporate mergers and usually takes place when a stronger institution subsumes a (usually weaker) neighbouring organisation.

Tett *et al* (2001), in their paper on collaboration between schools and community education agencies, formulated the following model (figure 1 page 30), which I suggest helps with an understanding of the imperatives that drive various forms of collaboration.

Figure 1. **Pedagogic purpose and practice**


High Boundary
Quadrant A
Pupil Development
Quadrant B
Citizen Development
Individualistic
Particularistic
Holistic
Community Development
Quadrant D
Individual Development
Quadrant C
Whole Community Development
Low Boundary

Taken from Tett *et al* (2001, p. 15)

Tett *et al* note that because each profession distinguishes itself from others in terms of specialist skills and knowledge, it is important to acknowledge the existence of professional boundaries and to assess their impact when attempting to understand different collaborative approaches. They observe that the orientation of practitioners may be particularistic, focusing on the development of educational needs of individuals. On the other hand, *"it may be holistic, with a focus on the development of the community as a whole and a vision of learning as having a dual purpose in the individual development of both the individual and the community"* (p. 14). Services of various institutions within an area may also be organised in such a way that boundaries arise between different providers. More often, there may be no strategic plan to bring rival institutions together. A combination of these factors may result in *high boundaries where "institutions define roles and rules in ways, which create a boundary"* (Tett *et al*, p.14) between professionals from different types of institutions.

Low boundaries occur when *institutions "recognize the importance of community development as well as lifelong learning"* (p. 15*)* and thus form collaborative alliances aimed at widening participation.

Quadrant A – Individualistic perspective/high institutional boundaries (student centred) focuses on measures to address factors that hinder pupil development and progress. Institutions define roles and rules that create a boundary between them and other sectors in the community.

Quadrant B – Holistic perspective/high boundaries (citizen development). Here the education system recognises the challenges of social and economic regeneration. Institutions are involved in providing lifelong learning and widening participation, but professional and institutional traditions can frustrate collaborative working.

Quadrant C – Holistic perspective/low institutional boundaries (whole community development) in this case all stakeholders recognise the need for, and form, collaborative partnerships to ensure effective provision of education to all members of the community.

Quadrant D – Individualistic perspective/low institutional boundaries (individual development). Here education seeks to support the learning needs of the whole community – pupils, young people and adults. To support these needs institutions strive to become responsive to the expressed needs of the community and establish collaborative patterns of working with organisations and agencies to this end.

Tett *et a*l found that Quadrant A (figure 1, page 30) was the most common approach for partnerships in the schools studied. They noted that this might have been due to the fact that schools prioritise pupils' achievement (particularly examination results). They suggest that this is because of the government's emphasis on examination results as denoted by, for example, league tables and the attendant benefits, such as improved funding for high performing schools. They found that Quadrant C was the most difficult to achieve for schools. As we shall see later a different scenario emerges for further education given the emphasis on widening participation, and the prevalent mission of whole community development in the sector and also the fact that league tables are less important here. This point will be examined further in chapter seven.

3.2 Background matters

The contextual framework for this chapter as indicated earlier is the Labour Government's agenda of extending education to non-participating adults (Hillage 2000) through collaboration in the form of Local Learning Partnerships, Widening Participation Partnerships, Regeneration Partnerships and Learning City Partnerships (Stuart 2002). The political framework is the same as for chapter two conforming to the Third Way Political approach as propounded by Anthony Giddens (1998).

Abrahamson *et al* (1996) in a study about further and higher education partnerships, argue that the initial rationale for promoting collaboration among the institutions in their study was to allow further and higher education providers to cope with government funding structures and demands for an increase in participation. Later, however, institutions realised that the intrinsic value of participation resides in being able to pool resources to achieve what they cannot do individually. Institutions thus saw collaboration as a tool for widening participation to non-traditional participants.

Following recommendations from various reports, including Kennedy (1997), Fryer (1997) and DFEE (1999), the Government's intention to put collaboration at the core of post-compulsory provision was spelt out in the White Paper *Learning To Succeed* (2001). The document states, *"partnership and collaboration are essential to achieving the Government's goal for economic prosperity and social cohesion through regeneration, capacity building and community development"* (LSC 2001 p. 17).

Kennedy (1997) claims that whilst competition had brought about an increase in participation *"mainly in providing opportunities for those who have already achieved to continue to do so"* (p. 15) it had also *"inhibited"* the collaboration needed to widen access to disadvantaged learners. She concluded that collaborative approaches (strategic and operational) were needed to identify and meet the unexpressed needs of non-traditional learners.

Doyle (2000) asserts that policy and funding initiatives have increased pressures and incentives to collaborate. Fryer (1997) and Kennedy (1997) have also pointed out that lifelong learning, social inclusion, the skills deficit and flexibility of the labour market have reinforced the drive to local collaboration.

The *Success For All* (DfES 2002) strategy for the provision of post-compulsory education also places collaboration at the core of LSC policy for widening participation - *"new planning, funding and accountability arrangements based on partnership and trust are at the core of the new framework"* (LSC circular 03/09 p. iv). The Strategic Area Reviews (StAR) that have just been undertaken by all local LSCs as part of the *Success For All* strategy emphasise the need for collaboration between providers and with employers. For example, on the directive of the LSC, the institution I manage is currently developing a strategic collaborative model with two other former EIs, so that joint funding and monitoring arrangements can come into force for the three institutions in the academic year 2005/06. Whilst many benefits may accrue from the proposed arrangements, such as joint marketing and curriculum development initiatives, the driving reason for this arrangement – a reduction in the LSC's management personnel (potential partners were informed that the LSC's new Chief Executive had asked for a 15% reduction in the Council's staffing levels nationally) – might throw up some other disadvantages. As Brown (2001 p. 96) notes, *"if those involved are already struggling to manage existing institutions or operations, why should they be better able to manage more complex ones?"*

3.3 Understanding collaboration

Genesis

Stuart (2002) citing Ablaster (1996) and Winston (1994) suggests that collaboration has its roots in social care and health provision in the 1980s. Stuart (p. 42) observes: *"it seems that Government and policy makers have used many ideas from health and* *social welfare reforms of the 1980s and 1990s to formulate their plan for lifelong learning and widening participation".* Abramson et al (1996) have argued that collaboration emerged from *"a blend of commercial and academic imperialism from the United States"* (Woodrow 1993 p. 208). Collaboration in England appears to have followed a pattern that is a hybrid between commercial franchising and the community college movement, in the United States of America, of the 1970s (Abramson et al 1996).

It is thought that the push for collaboration in this country began in the 1990s in response to what has been described as "massification". Stuart (2002) notes that student numbers in further education expanded from one in five of the population in the 1960s to one in three in the 1990s, even though the proportion of students from poorer backgrounds actually dropped. This conforms to Kennedy's (1997) observation, which has contributed to the Labour government's current policy of employing collaboration as a strategy for widening participation.

The agenda for most of the 1990s was premised on the Thatcherite programme of driving post-compulsory education along, what Abramson (1996) has termed, leaner, more competitive and more entrepreneurial pathways, but *"which was not anathema to the strategic missions of further education colleges"* (Abramson 1996, p. 8). Observers, including Kennedy (1997), have noted that this period saw structural changes fuelled by government funding dictates (Abramson 1996) that were highly favourable to collaborative initiatives. These structural changes were complemented by curriculum developments – modularised programmes – which made education more flexible and portable and thus more amenable to seamless delivery and collaboration amongst further and higher education institutions – the most typical example being the connection between Higher National Certificate/Higher National Diploma (HNC/HND) and degree courses. It seems that competition and collaboration complemented each other in this period. This suggests that the prevailing argument that these two paradigms for the delivery of education are opposites may be flawed. Doyle (2002) suggests that the move to increase participation rates in further education and higher education, signalled by the Conservative Government's White Paper, *Higher Education A New Framework* (1991), increased links between further and higher education. During this period, widening and deepening collaboration came to be seen as a means of achieving strategic growth. The LINCS (Local Integrated Colleges Scheme) network is an early example of this trend. The network was formed with the explicit aim of attracting non-traditional participants into further and higher education (Bird et al 1995).

The formulation of current government policy and the formal adoption of collaboration as a strategic approach for widening participation are based on recommendations from officially commissioned reports, such as Kennedy (1997) and Dearing (1997), and the DfEE's own Green Paper (1998*).* The policy was confirmed in the LSC Corporate Plan (2001). The publication of Success For All (DFES 2002), a key document for the further education sector, has further underlined the Government's professed commitment to the use of collaboration strategies for widening participation. For example, the executive summary of the document states: *"we also want to replace the destructive competition which exists between providers with appropriate competition in a better planned and more collaborative environment"* (p. 5).

Some factors that drive collaboration

Brown (2001) identifies two key pressures that drive collaboration in education. The push-side, which usually results from the deteriorating financial health of the sector in general; and the pull-side pressure, with the potential benefits in terms of pooling resources and sharing risks, and enabling institutions to compete more effectively. Griffiths (2000) notes that factors that drive collaboration are likely to be largely pragmatic, as in funding, achieving results, and gate keeping. These factors are evident in the current collaborative partnership instigated by the LSC covering one of the case study boroughs and being developed by three EIs in B1 (see contextual section of this chapter). However commentators, including Huxham et al (2004) have argued that participants often have little say in determining their partners. Partners are often imposed, for example by government policy dictates or as cited by Huxham et al (p. 194), *"the pragmatics of the situation dictate that partners are needed where trust is weak: you may have to jump into bed with someone you don't like in order to prevent a competitor coming into the market".* Stuart (2002) argues that collaboration is desirable, because it allows for a joint approach to solutions and adds value to delivery. He comments, however, that collaboration can also denote working with the enemy, particularly when the process emanates from push-side pressures – where partners find themselves working together unwillingly or without trust.

Jones (2002) has offered a number of reasons for adopting collaborative practices to widen participation. He contends that collaboration offers a means of moving beyond competitive, marketised approaches to college-initiated provision. He also states that widening participation projects need to be underpinned by and based on methodological practices that are cooperative, interactive and equitable - in short, they should occur via 'bottom up' processes in close collaboration with the communities they serve. Huxham *et al's* (2004) analysis of the concepts of "collaborative advantage" and "collaborative inertia" approaches the concept of partnerships from a different perspective. According to Huxham *et al*, collaborative advantage underlines the synergy argument – that to gain real advantage, all collaborating partners must achieve something. Collaborative inertia is where the output from collaboration is negligible, the rate of output is extremely slow, or stories of pain and hard grind are integral to successes achieved. Huxham *et al* (2004, p.191) have pointed out that there is clearly a tension between advantage and inertia. The question they pose is that if most partnerships are set up to benefit from collaborative advantage, why is *"collaborative inertia so often the outcome?"* They suggest that factors such as misunderstandings and conflicting organisational aims might contribute to this phenomenon - these issues are further considered in chapter six.

Social Capital

It can be argued that collaborative practices to tackle social issues are rooted in the concept of social capital. Putnam (1995) notes that by analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital – tools and training that enhance productivity – social capital refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Others including Schuller (2000) and Coleman (2001) have offered similar definitions for social capital. A criticism often levelled against the concept of social capital is that the middle classes use networks to extend maintenance of their power beyond financial wealth into other forms of capital such as cultural knowledge (Stuart 2002).

Delamont (2001, p. 12) maintains *"social capital has become a term of key importance in Third Way social policies, promising a means of humanising global capitalism and offering solutions to the problems of disadvantaged people which bypass the need for radical economic distribution".* Putnam (2000) asserts that social capital is not compatible with high levels of inequality and that networks facilitate coordination and communication and allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. He maintains, *"When economic and political negotiation is embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentive for opportunism is reduced"* (p. 67).

Field (2000) suggests that social capital approaches could bring about 'bridging ties' that enable inequalities to be overcome and disadvantaged groups to access resources hitherto not available to them. Kennedy (1997) appears to concur with Field's analysis when she concludes that the way to avoid destructive competition in the public sector is to bring people together around a clear and urgent common purpose. According to Kennedy (1997, p. 4), *"a process of continuous discussion creates alignments and collaboration as a sensible answer to the challenge of widening participation".*

Social Exclusion

Jones (1999) notes that the drive to increase participation after the incorporation of further education colleges brought about the legitimisation of aggressive managerialism, which resulted in a 40 per cent growth in the sector between 1993 and 1996 on less funding than in 1992. As mentioned previously, this growth, however, mainly favoured the middle classes and the number of non-traditional learners actually decreased during this period (Kennedy 1997). This phenomenon may best be understood in the context of the theory of social exclusion. Alexiadou (2002) quoting Room (1993, p. 4) defines social exclusion as denial of *"social rights of citizenship to a basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and occupational opportunities in society".* Whitty (2001, p. 293), citing Sir Donald Archerson's independent inquiry into inequalities in health, suggests *"social disadvantage impacts directly and indirectly on education".*

The Labour government made social exclusion a policy priority through the establishment of the social exclusion unit (SEU) in the cabinet office in 1997. The SEU in 2000 defined social exclusion as a shorthand for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills and low income. For New Labour, education is seen as a policy priority, as the main means for delivering economic competitiveness and in doing so, combating social exclusion (Lister 1998). According to Lister the strong economic drive behind the social exclusion policies and the recent education reforms, with their emphasis on individual responsibility, suggest that both these approaches draw heavily on an individualistic, liberal paradigm. At the same time, the references to 'communities, 'networks', 'stakeholders' and a cohesive society through inclusive employment patterns, supplement the liberal model with elements of communication and solidarity approaches that delineate the appropriate links between individuals and society and draw on the concept of social capital.

It could be argued that the Labour government's perspective ignores the fundamental issues of power and competing interests among different groups and in so doing neutralises the effects of inequalities (Byrne 1999, Jordan 1996). I concur with those such as Whitty (2001) who argue that educational initiatives that do not address the wider economic issues of inequality (which Giddens 1998, at least until recently accepted had to be tackled) will have limited success at widening participation. Collaboration is regarded as being essential to achieving the Labour government's goal of economic prosperity and social cohesion through regeneration and capacity building and community development (DFEE 1999, LSC 2001). Other compelling reasons that have been proffered for adopting collaborative approaches for widening participation, include better progression (such as Access and HNC/HND leading to seamless progression onto degree courses) improved retention, enhanced institutional status, ensuring equality of opportunity, and compatibility with the institutional mission of further education to serve the needs of the local community (McConnell 1994, Bird 1996, Abramson 1996). For example, Abramson notes that analysis of LINCS data showed an improvement in retention for non-traditional learners studying at evening classes. It was found that LINCS also allowed many students to successfully graduate. Bird (1996), however, notes that whilst LINCS worked successfully in the case of women returners to the labour market, it was not so successful for ethnic minority and older students.

Summary

The related concepts of social capital and social exclusion, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, appear to be premised on the belief that networks and partnerships could generate trust and activities that promote mutual benefit and thus will enhance opportunities for disadvantaged communities. These concepts provide an insight into the rationale for the current government policy of using collaboration as the means for delivering education and training to widen participation, which is the focus of this study. I return to the issue of trust in my conclusion.

Factors that contribute to effective collaboration

Stuart (2002) has identified mutual sense of purpose, joint agreement of future action, fit for purpose designs and trust as some of the most important factors for effective collaboration. Griffiths (2000) agrees with the above and offers three tenets to buttress his point of view. For the first tenet, he cites Herman *et al* (1996, p. 8) who suggest that *"solid foundations for collaboration are built on an equal distribution of power and authority among collaborators – this relationship is sometimes expressed as reciprocity".* The second tenet is premised on openness and honesty – there being a general emphasis on the importance of striving to be open, explicit and public. The third tenet is identified as collaboration based on a rationally agreed action plan. Flude and Cathles (1992) have suggested that for collaboration to be effective, sufficient time must be given to planning and establishing and putting in place management structures and systems, which will ensure both quality and continuity. Abramson *et al* (1996) citing HEQC (1995) note that unless institutions can apply at least the same degree of rigour to the quality assurance of their collaborative provision as they apply to their internal provision, for which they have sole responsibility, then there will be a risk that collaborative provision in all its forms will come to be seen as second best.

Management structures, designed to ensure quality and continuity as noted by Flude and Cathles are essential to effective collaboration. According to Doyle (2002), the ‘Big Bang’ approach to management (a concept devised by Carrigan *et al* 1995), which signified a shift of culture from benign liberal paternalism to one of ‘homogeneous masculinity’– brought about a rational task oriented, instrumental and competitive paradigm of management in further education. This model of management resulted in a significant rise in participation in the early 1990s (post-incorporation) but pointedly failed to widen participation.

Stuart (2002) suggests a partnership approach to management that is more conducive to the usage of collaborative approaches to widen participation. He observes that leadership is a component of the management process and leaders are important to ‘getting things done’ but so are activists who do what is required. Leadership is about vision, motivation and direction, or enabling things to get done. Using a partnership approach to management facilitates good leadership as Bass (1981, p. 45) points out, *“the real test of leadership lies not in personality or behaviour of leaders, but in the performance of the groups they lead. Defining management as a partnership suggests that all workers in an organisation contribute to the process of management and change, no matter how marginal they are”*.

3.4 Raison d'etre

Parnharm (2001) among others has done some work on the use of collaborative approaches to widen participation in further education. Parnham citing McGivney (1991) considered that "outreach", which involves institutions creating links and networking within the community, allows colleges to assess the needs of individuals, organisations and employers and makes them better placed to develop tailored provision and flexible approaches and structures to learning that are attractive to non-traditional learners. Jones (2002) argues very strongly that widening participation must be underpinned by collaboration. He maintains that shareholders in a locality can best provide possible information for building up a comprehensive and sound picture for establishing and meeting educational needs. He further argues that this would be the best way to avoid destructive competition. However, the collaborative community-based project proffered by Jones to buttress his argument collapsed after its first year of operation, due to lack of continuous funding. This suggests that mere collaboration to establish programmes or to take advantage of a particular funding regime would be insufficient to support effective widening participation. In my view, issues of sustainability and long-term commitment to widening participation have to be considered as well. Doyle (2002) appears to concur with this view, when he notes that whilst partnerships exist between the HE and FE sectors (and whilst funding policy might reinforce this), evidence of effectiveness is limited. Doyle (2002, p. 15) further notes that the *"impetus provided by the incentive of pump priming is not necessarily sustainable"*. I suggest the above point justifies the need for investigation into sustainable collaborative practices that might be effectively used to widen participation in education and training. Most of the literature on collaboration in the further education sector focuses on the attempt of sector colleges to engage the community by expanding their activities to areas with high populations of hard-to-reach learners. I suggest that partnerships between sector colleges and EIs might provide a useful model for effectively widening participation and this model is thus worth exploring empirically, both to examine its outcomes for learners and to explore issues of sustainability.

The experience of B1 Training Network suggests that when a sector college and EIs (B1TN, 1999, 2000, 2001) pool their resources they can be potentially more effective at reaching out to disadvantaged groups. Other research findings (see for example, Moreland and Lovett, 1997) have shown that collaborative strategies can be used effectively to widen participation. The overall rationale for this study is to examine this view and if valid, to determine the extent to which collaborative approaches can be deployed by providers to enable non-traditional learners to access further education, and thereby contribute to the government's agenda of widening participation. The paper will also consider factors that make for effective and sustainable partnerships.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH DESIGN.

4.1 Research questions

The review of relevant literature in the previous two chapters shows that some evidence exists to suggest that collaborative approaches can be used to enable further education providers to effectively widen participation (Jones 2002, Parnham 2001). Others, including Doyle (2002) argue that only limited evidence exists to support the effectiveness of collaboration. The research questions in this study are aimed at a critical examination of the effectiveness of using collaborative approaches to enable learners from disadvantaged groups to access further education and training and to attain their learning aims.

Figure 2 Research questions

i) What types of collaborative approaches do sector colleges and EIs currently employ to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training?

ii) How effective are these collaborative approaches (with specific reference to the two case study boroughs B1 and B2) at enabling the above groups to achieve their learning aims?

iii) What features of collaborative arrangements (with specific reference to areas B1 and B2) help to determine effectiveness in terms of widening participation?

4.2. Methodology

The approach I have chosen for this research is the case study. Yin (1994) defines case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundary between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. Important points to note about the case study are that it is a strategy, a stance or an approach, rather than a method, such as interview or observation (Yin 1994, Merriam 1988, Robson 2002). A case study is also *"empirical in the sense that it relies on the collection of data about what is going on"* (Robson 2002, p. 179).

Robson observes that whilst some commentators see case study as being essentially qualitative (e.g. Stake 1995, Merriam 1998), examples exist of case studies employing quantitative data (Yin 1994). Robson also notes that until recently, the case study was commonly considered in methodology texts as a kind of 'soft option', possibly admissible as a precursor to some more 'hardnosed' experiment or survey, or as a complement to such approaches, but of dubious value in itself. Other commentators, including Cook and Campbell (1979) and Yin (1994), however, see case study as a fully legitimate alternative to experimentation in appropriate circumstances. Cook and Campbell (p. 96) point out *"case study as normally practised should not be demeaned by identification with the-group-post-test-only design".* According to Robson (2002, p. 180) *"the central point is that case study is not a flawed experimental design, it is a fundamentally different research strategy with its own design".*

Advantages and criticisms of case study

Denscombe (1998) maintains that the main advantage of using a case study is that the focus on one or a few instances allows the researcher to deal with subtleties and intricacies of complex situations and particularly, that it enables the researcher to examine relationships and social processes in a way that is denied to the survey approach. *"The analysis is holistic rather than based on isolated factors"* (p. 39).

Another advantage of the case study approach is that it allows the use of a variety of research methods (Denscombe 1998, Robson 2002, Yin 1994). More than this, it encourages the use of multi methods in order to capture the complex reality under scrutiny. The use of multiple sources of data facilitates its validation through triangulation (Denscombe 1998, Robson 2002, Yin 1994). Yin also points out that the potential problem of construct validity can be addressed by using different sources of data, because multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon.

Robson (2002) suggests that it is useful to separate criticism of the practice of particular case studies from what some have seen as inescapable differences related to the strategy itself. Citing Bromley (1986, p. xiii), he points out *"case studies are sometimes carried out in a corrupt, dishonest way"*. Robson maintains that even with good intentions, biased and selective accounts can undoubtedly emerge, and that similar criticism can be made of any research strategy. The issue is whether or not appropriate checks can be devised to demonstrate what, in experimental design terms, are referred to as the reliability and validity of the findings. As pointed out earlier validity of the findings can be strengthened by using multiple methods of data collection. Reliability can be enhanced, by using case study protocol such as data collection procedures that can be repeated, with the same results (Yin 1994).

The most frequently expressed concern about the case study approach has been its lack of rigour. However, as Yin points out, a differentiation needs to be made between case study teaching and case study research. Whilst in teaching, case study materials may be deliberately altered to demonstrate a particular point more effectively, this would be strictly forbidden in research. He suggests that every case study researcher must endeavour to report the evidence fairly.

What is often forgotten is that bias can enter into the conduct of experiments (see Rosenthal 1966) and the use of other strategies such as designing questionnaires for survey (Studman and Brackburn 1982) or conducting historical research (Gottshalk 1968). The problems are not different, but in case study they may have been more frequently encountered and less frequently overcome (Yin 1994).

Another frequently cited criticism of case studies is that they are too long. Yin, however, contends that case studies do not have to take a long time and the narrative can be summarised and clarified. He maintains that the conception comes from confusing the case study strategy with data collection methods such as ethnography or participant observation. Ethnography usually requires long periods of time in the "field" and emphasises detailed, observational evidence. Participant observation may not require the same length of time but still assumes a hefty investment in field efforts.

In contrast, case studies are a form of enquiry that does not depend solely on ethnographic or participant observer data. Robson (2002) notes that one could even do a valid and high quality case study without leaving the library and the telephone depending upon the topic being studied.

4.3 Data collection

I have employed a methodological perspective that conforms to the pre-structured approach of a case study (Robson 2002) involving the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The rationale for using multiple sources of evidence was primarily to permit triangulation. As Yin (1994) notes, a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. Yin also points out that with triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity can also be addressed because the multiple sources of evidence provide multi measures of the same phenomenon.

An evaluation of case studies carried out by Yin, Bateman and Moore (1983) found that case studies, which employed multiple sources of evidence, were rated more highly in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied only on single sources of information.

In my view, using multiple sources of evidence was also able to yield substantial advantages, such as: the reduction of "inappropriate certainty", which may arise from using a single method (Yin, 1994) and the enhancement of interpretability (Robson, 2002). For example, a qualitative study can be enhanced by the use of quantitative evidence, and conversely, in a primarily quantitative study, the interpretation of statistical analyses may be enhanced by a qualitative narrative account. For example, Robson suggests that usage of a single method may lead researchers to conclude that they have the right answer, whereas using additional methods might yield different answers and thus guard against specious certainties.

Preparation and background activities

I began the data collection process by designing the research instruments, which were an interview schedule and a questionnaire. The rationale for this exercise was to allow for clarity of aim, and also to help with the collection of focused, targeted and relevant information (Robson, 2002). The instruments were piloted in three different boroughs. This allowed for the fine-tuning of the interview schedule and questionnaire and also informed the choice of the most suitable case study locations (boroughs).

Access

Access to the case study sites was negotiated initially by telephone calls and then confirmed in writing (mainly by email). Initial contacts were made via senior staff in each institution; these contacts then suggested other relevant informants within their settings and assisted me with arranging interviews appointments. This style of negotiating access conforms to what is usually referred to as the snowballing effect. A copy of the thesis proposal was emailed to each respondent in advance of the interviews to allow informants to familiarise themselves with the aims of the research project.

Ethical Issues

I obtained ethical approval for an outline of my proposed research from the Institute of Education before embarking on my data collection. Most of the data used were in the public domain hence, in my view, few ethical issues arose. I was open with all informants about the purpose and possible uses of the study and the confidentiality of both individuals and institutions were guaranteed; this was in keeping with BERA's ethical guideline (Leonard 2000). I gave all interviewees an opportunity to comment on transcripts concerning them before being used in my study and anonymity, of respondents, where applicable was also guaranteed. To ensure anonymity, the case study boroughs were classified as B1 and B2 the institutions were termed Acacia College, Ash Adult and Community Education , Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College and respondents were denoted as R1, R2, R3. Thus respondent one from Oak College, for example, would be Oak College.R1.

Collection methods

To answer the research questions outlined earlier, I conducted a case study of EIs and sector colleges in two London Boroughs – termed B1 and B2, using multiple methods – interviews and questionnaires as well as statistical and documentary analysis. The choice of methods was premised on the view that to judge the value of a data source, one might consider whether it contains information or insights relevant to the research questions and whether it can be acquired in a reasonably practical, yet systematic manner (Merriam, 1998).

Interviews were used to identify the types of collaborative approaches employed by the case study institutions to widen participation. Interviews were also used to explore the effectiveness of collaborative strategies in enabling learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to access further education and training and the reasons why such strategies may or may not be effective. The main advantage that I perceived to come from using interviews was that it is particularly relevant for education research (Bird et al 1992). This is because of the flexibility and adaptability afforded – such as being able to investigate underlying motives and the possibility of modifying one's standpoint – by this form of data collection. This method was thus used to allow for flexibility and a speculative interrogation of the data.

The interview questions were designed (see appendix one for the interview schedule) to provide targeted and focused references to the case study and to allow for the provision of perceived and causal references (Yin, 1994). Open-ended questions were used throughout the interviews and respondents were allowed to elaborate and speculate during the course of the interviews. The rationale for using open-ended questions was to allow me to benefit from some of the advantages of this method as outlined by researchers such as Cohen *et al* (2001). Cohen *et al* list some of these advantages, as being flexible and allowing the interviewer to probe so that s/he may go into more depth if s/he chooses, or to clear up misunderstandings. Other examples cited by Cohen include allowing the interviewer to make a true assessment of what the interviewee really believes which can also yield unanticipated answers that may suggest hitherto un-thought of connections. Robson (2002), citing Cohen and Mannion (1989), notes that open- ended questions may also encourage cooperation and rapport and allow the interviewer a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes.

I was always mindful of some of the perceived disadvantages of using open-ended questions, particularly the possibility of the loss of control by the interviewer. I used a semi-structured interview format to compensate for this weakness.

Questionnaires, with similar questions (see appendix two for sample questionnaire) to those for interviews, were used to generalise from responses given by interviewees. Questionnaires were also used to assist with the exploration of the effectiveness of collaborative approaches in facilitating access to further education for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and enabling them to achieve their learning aims.

The main reason for choosing to use statistical data was to allow for a quantitative perspective to the study. Analysis of documentary data, such as inspection and annual reports, was used to allow me to corroborate conclusions from interrogating the statistical data. Other reasons for choosing to use documentary analysis included the fact that these documents are unobtrusive and not created as a result of this study and the view that evidence from this source is precise (Yin 1994). As Denscombe (1998) notes, official documents may provide information that is relatively authoritative, factual and objective. Nevertheless, I was mindful of potential weaknesses, such as biased reporting and selectivity (Yin 1994) that may be inherent in such documents.

Figure 3 (below) depicts a simplified version of the data collection methods and the evidence sources used to answer the research questions one, two and three. Its aim is to facilitate a better understanding of the methodology employed for this research.

Figure 3. Matrix of methods used to answer research questions

METHODS	QUESTIONS ANSWERED			NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED	NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED
	Q1	Q2	Q3			
INTERVIEWS	Yes	Yes	Yes	20	n/a	n/a
QUESTIONNAIRES	No	Yes	Yes	n/a	*120	22
STATISTICAL DATA	No	Yes	No	n/a	n/a	n/a
DOCUMENTS	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a

*120 questionnaires were distributed to teachers and managers (30 per setting) and 22 were returned. 120 questionnaires were also distributed to learners but only thirteen were returned from one setting, these have not been used as they were not representative of all the case study institutions.

Interviews

To answer questions one, two and three (see figure 3, page 55) interviews employing semi-structured questions were carried out to allow for an exploration of alternative or complementary perspectives. A purposive sample (using the snowballing approach) of practitioners and stakeholders was interviewed in each setting. At Acacia College, two managers involved in collaboration and partnership activities were interviewed. I also interviewed the Head of Collaboration and Partnership Services (CIPS), the Assistant Director in charge of curriculum and the Director of Business and Professional Studies. At Ash Adult and Community Education, I interviewed four managers involved in collaborative activities, an outreach worker and the Head of Service. At Palm Adult and Community Education, I interviewed the Principal and two Assistant Principals in charge of curriculum and outreach activities. At Oak College, I interviewed the Principal, and two managers in charge of equal opportunities and outreach and curriculum. The variation in the number of interviewees per institution was due to the fact that collaboration is deemed to be a highly specialised area of work and resources allocated to this work were dependent on the size of the institution, and the degree to which the institution was involved in collaborative activities.

Questionnaires

To answer questions two and three (see figure 3, page 55) questionnaires were used to triangulate with the data obtained from the interviews. 60 questionnaires were administered to each setting - half for learners and half for practitioners. Interviewees were given questionnaires and requested that they distribute them to other practitioners and learners. I also asked interviewees to collect the completed questionnaires and return them to me. This method of administering the questionnaires was necessitated by the fact that I did not have access to details of most potential questionnaire respondents at the case study sites.

Statistical data

To answer question two (see figure 3, page 55) which concerned the effectiveness of the usage of collaborative approaches for enabling disadvantaged learners to achieve their learning aims, I carried out a statistical analysis of primary and secondary data. Relevant data were taken from audited annual individual learner returns (ILR) made by the case study institutions to the LSC. This mode of analysis allowed me to assess quantitatively the degree to which providers engaged in collaborative outreach practices to enable learners from disadvantaged groups to access further education and achieve their learning aims.

Documentary Evidence

To answer question one (see figure 3, page 55) - an examination of the types of collaborative approaches currently used by sector colleges and EIs to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training - I analysed various relevant local documents to assist with a description and identification of the types of collaboration that exist in each borough. I used data gathered from publications, such as case-study institutions' annual reports and three-year development plans to explore the rationale for the establishment of partnerships.

To answer questions two and three (see figure 3, page 55) I supplemented the statistical analysis outlined above with an interrogation of literature on widening participation, pertaining to EIs and sector colleges, in order to determine the extent to which EIs and sector colleges engage in collaborative outreach practices that enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in further education and training and achieve their learning aims. Yin (1994), notes that the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

4.4 Data Analysis and Reporting

Analysis

The data collected are described in chapter six and the findings from this chapter were used to answer the questions in chapter seven. I have used an exploratory technique for this study. The aim of using this strategy was to allow for an investigative analysis of the case study data.

Statistical data were analysed, initially, by construction of descriptive statistical tables. Microsoft Excel spreadsheets were then used to construct charts for further interrogation of the data. The categories used for interrogation were: effectiveness of collaborative practices for recruiting learners from ethnic minority communities; effectiveness of collaborative practices at enabling ethnic minority groups to complete courses; effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities to achieve their learning aims. Analysis based on these categories, allowed me to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the employment of collaborative practices by further education and training providers to widen participation.

Data from documents were coded manually and analysed using the same broad categories as for statistical analysis, the main reason for this being to enhance interpretability and to add value to the findings.

To answer questions one, two and three, data from interview transcripts were categorised and coded manually and analysed to allow for an exploration of the effectiveness of collaborative strategies in enabling learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to access further education and training and achieve their learning aims. The categories used were: engagement in collaborative practices; purposes for collaboration; why institutions engaged in collaboration; effects of collaboration on participation by learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed; effects of collaborative practices on retention, progression and achievement of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds; advantages and disadvantages of collaboration.

Seven categories were used to evaluate the questionnaire data. These were the effectiveness of collaborative practices for: 1) raising funds; 2) managing resources; 3) meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups; 4) recruiting disadvantaged learners onto courses; 5) retention rates of disadvantaged groups; 6) achievement rates of disadvantaged groups; 7) progression rates of disadvantaged groups. Questionnaire data were analysed and interrogated, using frequency tables and bar charts, in order to consolidate the findings from the analysis of the interviews.

Reporting

A narrative augmented by graphic and tabular display was used to describe the case (Yin 1994). A draft report was presented to key informants for review and comments. The rationale for this was to allow for corroboration of essential facts and evidence presented in the report in order to increase accuracy and thus strengthen the construct validity of the case study (Yin 1994; Schatzman and Strauss 1973).

The reporting strategy for this study is based on the *"linear analytic structures"* (Yin, 1994, p.138) format. This strategy was chosen because *"the structure is comfortable to most investigators and probably is the most advantageous when.... a thesis committee constitutes the main audience for the case study"*. I started the study by describing the issues being studied, and then proceeded to review the relevant literature in chapters two and three in order to formulate a contextual framework, and establish a rationale for the study. I presented a detailed description of the findings using the data collected in chapter six. I carried out a critical analysis of the findings from chapter six to answer the research questions in chapter seven. The final chapter contains a summary and conclusions of the study. I discussed the potential contribution to professional and academic knowledge of the research in the same chapter. The implications for further study and dissemination of my findings are also considered in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 5. DESCRIPTION OF CASE STUDY SITES.

5.1 Acacia College

Mission

Acacia College describes its mission as being rooted in the needs of its locality, and its commitment to innovative action to address these. Acacia College has a vision to create *"a learning revolution spurring local economic and social regeneration, and full participation by local people"*. The college's mission is *"to expand and improve lifetime learning"* and it aims to achieve this by making open access provision relevant to the needs of the whole local community (Acacia College website).

College description

Acacia College is one of the three highest funded further education colleges by the Learning and Skills Council – its funding was approximately £29,000,000 for 2003/04 (LSC, 2003b). The college is also very successful at attracting funding from other sources, particularly the European Social Fund. The college has a main campus in each of the main town centres of the borough (B1). In addition, the institution has six local learning centres spread across the borough; some located in community schools, secondary schools and youth centres. B1 is located in East London and has a large ethnic minority population, over 60% according to the 2001 census data. The borough's unemployment rate at 12.3% is significantly higher than both the London and national averages (Office for National Statistics 2004). B1 is classified as the second most deprived borough in England. (Acacia College website; DoE Local Conditions Index). The college has four faculties operating from the two main campuses, which are:

- Business Education
- Creative and Cultural Industries
- Technology, Computing and Information Technology
- Access to Learning.

Acacia College has a strategic partnership with Palm Adult and Community Education. Apart from general further education courses, the college provides a number of higher education programmes in association with two post-1992 universities. It also has working relationships with three other post-1992, and a pre-1992, universities (Acacia College website). The college had a total of 28,063 learners in 2002/03 (see figure 19, page 101), with 30 per cent describing themselves as white and 70 per cent from ethnic minority or other communities.

5.2 Ash Adult and Community Education

Mission

Ash Adult and Community Education describes part of its mission as being *"committed to enabling adults to develop and achieve through high quality learning opportunities with appropriate support, thus promoting equal opportunities and widening participation"* (Ash Adult and Community Education, 2003/04, 1.1).

Institution description

Ash Adult and Community Education is funded by the LSC, receiving £2,907,000 from this source in 2003/04, but is a direct service of the local authority, dedicated to providing adult learning in the borough. The institute's focus is to provide a range of part-time (evening and weekend) and full-time courses to adult learners, mainly at the basic level. Some courses are also delivered at level 2, which enables learners to progress onto level 3 and 4 courses at other further education colleges. Ash Adult and Community Education is located in B2. B2 is an outer London Borough with 54.7 per cent of its population from ethnic minority communities. The borough's unemployment rate, at 10 per cent, is significantly higher than that of both the London and national averages (Office for National Statistics 2004).

Courses are delivered mainly from community centres across the borough. The institution is divided into areas 1, 2 and 3. Area one covers south of the borough and contains the headquarters (main centre) of the institution as well as two other centres. Area two has two centres in the north of the borough and area three, in the east of the borough, has two centres with one located in a local school (Ash Adult and Community Education website). The institution offers a wide-ranging curriculum, and courses include Basic Skills - English and Maths - ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), art, design and practical skills, upholstery, book-binding and creative writing. The institution had a total of 6,346 learners in 2002/03 (see figure 22, page 105), with 15 per cent describing themselves as white and 85 per cent describing themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority.

5.3 Palm Adult and Community Education

Mission

Palm Adult and Community Education, an external institution (EI) based in B1, describes its mission as *"being committed to providing learning opportunities for all residents, in order to foster a culture of communities and improving access to employment and community involvement"* (Three Year Development plan 2003 – 06, p. 5).

Institution description

Palm Adult and Community Education is mainly funded by the Learning and Skills Council and received £1,196,000 from this source in 2003/04. Palm Adult and Community Education is the main provider of adult education for the local authority and its provision is spread across four geographical areas. Area teams are responsible for both the local authority's adult and youth services. Palm Adult and Community Education also administers the Council's grant aid for community and youth projects delivered by the voluntary sector (Three Year Development plan, 2003-06).

Palm Ault and Community Education delivers a range of adult and community learning (ACL) and further education provision. The ACL courses are non-accredited programmes aimed at learners' personal development and the promotion of a learning culture (Three Year Development Plan 2003-2006). The institution also delivers vocational programmes mainly in the basic skills and information and computer technology (ICT) curriculum areas. Palm Adult and Community Education has a partnership arrangement with Acacia College that formally classifies it as an associate faculty of that college. Palm Adult and Community Education plans and delivers its entire adult learning in partnership with Acacia College. 3,359 learners started programmes at the institution in 2000/01, 2,721 started in 2001/02 and 4,038 in 2002/03, with 25 per cent describing themselves as white and 75 per cent classifying themselves as members of ethnic minority and other communities (figure 23, p. 106).

5.4 Oak College

Mission

The college's mission, revised in 2003 is *"to lead in the provision of learning for work in response to the changing needs of London's economy and in partnership with employers and the community"* (Oak College website).

College description

Oak College is one of the largest further education colleges in England. Oak College's funding from the LSC for the 2003/04 academic year was £23,000,000, which is among the top 10 funded institutions (LSC 2003c). The college has three campuses, located in the North, Central and South East of the borough. B2 is an outer London Borough with 54.7 per cent of its population from ethnic minority communities (OfSTED, 2004). The borough's unemployment rate, at 10 per cent is significantly higher than that of both the London and national averages (Office for

National Statistics 2004). The college's largest campus and main site houses around half of its learners (OfSTED, 2004). Just under 50 per cent, are located at the two other main sites, with the remaining learners spread across the borough. The college offers a wide choice of courses in the following faculties:

- Arts, Community and Leisure
- Business, Mathematics and Computing Studies
- Languages and Humanities
- Technology

Oak College's website notes that most learners use the college as a starting point to higher education, and the college has links with three post-1992 universities to facilitate the progression. Progression routes for learners also exist within the college. The college had a total of 19,542 learners in 2002/03 (see figure 26, page 109), with 25 per cent describing themselves as white and 75 per cent from ethnic minority or other communities.

Conclusion

All the case-study institutions had widening participation as part of their mission statements. Both location boroughs also had large numbers of ethnic minority and unemployed residents. A difference worthy of note, however, is that in 2002/03 the B2 institutions had larger percentages of ethnic minority learners than the B1 colleges (75 and 85 per cent for Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College, compared to 70 and 75 per cent for Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education) even though the latter borough has a higher proportion of ethnic minority residents. The similarities between the case-study sites, however, were more pronounced in that the proportions of ethnic minority learners at all the institutions were far greater than the relative proportion of these groups in the populations of the boroughs in which they are located.

CHAPTER 6. DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS FROM THE DATA.

6.1 Introduction

As stated in chapter four, I have used multiple data collection methods – interviews, questionnaires, documentary and statistical evidence to answer the research questions in chapter seven (see figure 2, page 46).

Also as detailed in chapter four, I have used a basic descriptive framework (Yin 1994) to analyse the data. Interview data were categorised and coded manually and then examined using the various categories as sub-headings. I interrogated the questionnaire data by constructing frequency distribution tables for each category (Robson 2002), illustrated by graphical displays. A similar mode of analysis, as for questionnaires was used to interrogate the statistical data. Data from local college and local education authority (LEA) documents have been used to underpin the findings in each of the categories used for the other evidence sources.

To allow for anonymity, the case study institutions are referred to as Acacia College, Ash Adult and Community Education, Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College (see chapter five). Respondents to interviews are referred to as R1, R2 or R3 etc, prefixed by the institution they belong to, thus respondent one from college two would be termed Ash Adult and Community Education.R1. The case study boroughs are characterised as B1 and B2. A detailed analysis of the data follows.

6.2 Review of interview data

To carry out the interviews, as stated in chapter four, I designed and used a schedule with a format based primarily on the example for semi-structured interview outlined in Robson (2002) (see appendix one for the interview schedule). In the following sections, I have described the findings from the interview data using six main categories:

1) Engagement in collaborative practices
2) Purposes for collaboration
3) Why institutions engage in collaboration
4) Effects of collaboration on participants from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed
5) Effects of collaborative practices on the retention, progression and achievement rates of learners from disadvantaged communities
6) Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration

6.2.1 Engagement in collaborative practices

The general view, from the case study institutions, appears to be that they all engage in collaborative practices. Every respondent stated that his/her institution was involved in various forms of partnerships activities. Examples of partnership activities mentioned included fund raising, with partners coming together to identify funding opportunities, as well as writing joint bids to funding bodies. Respondents also cited partnerships for recruitment and delivery of education and training for the purpose of widening participation. Interviewees gave a number of examples to support the view that they engaged in collaborative practices. These examples included one where the institution (Acacia College) engaged in a collaborative arrangement with partners to deliver Basic Skills, worth over £750,000. This institution also franchised out LSC funded provision and had been involved in partnership bids for funding to provide education and training for disadvantaged groups from sources such as European Social Fund (ESF). Other examples included an external institution (EI) entering into a concordat agreement with a neighbouring college, which was described as a real working document to promote collaborative (or at least cooperative work) between the two institutions. One respondent suggested that this new move towards partnerships may be due to LSC encouragement to work collaboratively as part of the move towards Strategic Area Reviews (StAR), but also noted that it may in part be due to providers wanting to deliver a coherent service for learners and to avoid damaging competition.

One respondent claimed that his institution was engaged in a unique form of collaboration, being the only local authority adult and community education service where the main local further education provider, the sector college, contracts its community work to the main EI, rather than the other way round. The respondent noted that it is much more common for LEAs to contract with local colleges to deliver their adult and community learning. It was pointed out that the two institutions involved in this unique partnership, Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education, also collaborated in other ways, including sharing common centres, integration of learning programmes and joint management of resources.

Some examples of collaborative practices given included partnership activities between further education colleges within single, and across several, boroughs and collaboration between colleges and external institutions (EIs), as well as voluntary and community groups. Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R1 for example stated that "*we also engage in collaboration with the voluntary sector, such as the Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities (NLDC), we fund the voluntary sector umbrella organisation in the borough*" so that they can support their members who deliver education and training to disadvantaged groups.

Other forms of partnership generally cited included, LSC driven collaboration, such as the area learning partnerships and the sharing of venues to ensure that delivery is undertaken at the most conducive site for the target community.

Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R2 encapsulated this view by stating that:

> "*We contract collaboratively with other organisations for the actual delivery of training for young people, so it is not all by ourselves, not monolithic in that sense. We work collaboratively with other organisations in terms of the support that groups of young people require. Those young people require significant levels of personal support – collaborative arrangements are used to provide this support, whether it is with Connexions youth awareness programmes, with drugs counselling and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that young people get access to the personal development services that are required.*"

Reasons given for participating in these collaborative activities included **extending institutions' work out of the main sites into the community** in order to widen access, which conforms to Burke's (2002) analysis of outreach as a means of education and training to hard-to-reach groups (see chapter 3). Several respondents stated that outreach work enabled the institutions to fulfil the obligations of their mission statements, which in all cases related to widening access to the whole community (Annual Reports, 3-Year Development Plans, Institutions' websites). For example, one respondent stated that: "*so I always term the widening participation aspect the partnership approach and the outreach work we do as the Heineken effect. The innovative programmes that we have developed are the Heineken effect because they reach groups that would not normally come in to us*" (Oak College.R2). Another respondent noted that the rationale for the institution engaging in collaborative provision was to reach disadvantaged learners *"out from its traditional locations into particular communities in order to gain their confidence and put them in the right setting so that people can be given tasters, and progression onwards. And very often the smaller providers are actually very much connected into their local communities and are very well known in their local communities".* (Acacia College.R3)

Funding was another important reason given for engaging in partnership activities, for example the fact that the LSC regards partnerships as forming a pivotal part of the *Success for All* (2002) strategy and also that partnership proposals are strongly favoured in bidding for funding such as the European Social Fund (ESF). This view is backed by the following quotation from the London Skills Commission (2004, p.28)), taken from the European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 programme 2000/06: *"Integrated packages of support for those excluded from the labour market will continue to be encouraged within the programme. This means that ESF funded activities may serve multiple purposes (objectives) and cut across a number of providers".* The same document notes that: funders and policy-makers are increasingly looking to partnership and consortia arrangements to help targets and strategic objectives and that larger contracts are preferred and encouraged. Some respondents also cited the ability to effectively deliver contracted funding outputs through partnerships as a motivating factor for collaboration. Other interviewees, however, noted that collaborative partnerships that are purely based on financial considerations could be counter-productive. For example, one interviewee stated that:

> *"It's about the nature of the collaborative provision. The partners involved. If the provider sees the relationship simply as a way of making money without necessarily delivering, then it is not going to reach the people. If you have got serious organisations, serious about their remit, if the relationship is one of equity where people are actually being rewarded for services then it would work"* (Acacia College.R3).

The view that big institutions prefer to use funding locally through sub-contracting to benefit the local community than return money to funders was another reason given for collaboration. One respondent for example noted that sometimes the big institutions do not have the resources to deliver whole projects by themselves and need partners help to deliver those projects. He noted that those aspects were very strong reasons for engaging in collaboration and that is why they contract out delivery to partners such as community providers. Another respondent reported that: *"we don't want to give funding back and if we can't deliver then we always look for partners to help us deliver. A lot of it is to do with widening participation, but there are some financial reasons"* (Acacia College.R4).

Another reason given for engaging in collaborative practices centred on **recruitment of the relevant target groups**. For example, one interviewee from Acacia College noted that the pragmatic approach to recruitment inherent in partnerships, with voluntary sector providers who had better access to their communities and the "more effective" marketing techniques used by private sector providers, meant that recruitment targets were more readily met. This conclusion was illustrated by the following quotation; *"recruitment of students is better with collaboration, private providers are more successful at helping recruitment, because they look at it from a financial point of view. And they are actually bringing in business practices far more than the public sector ones. Collaboration helps to increase turnover"* (Acacia College.R4). Another respondent cited **referrals** as a good reason for engaging in collaboration. This interviewee stated that one of the main reasons for his institution engaging in collaboration *"is referrals of young people, where we collaborate with others to ensure that we get the most appropriate referrals – schools, community organisations making referrals. So referral of young people to our programmes is done in a collaborative way*" (Palm Adult and Community Education.R2)

The issue of the local FE College and the community education service working together was also raised in each case study borough. An interesting development, in the case of one borough, is that a concordat agreement now exists between Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College. This was exactly the opposite of the "frosty relationship" that existed between these institutions in the mid to late 1990s when I served on the Advisory Board of the EI and as a leading member of the Education Committee in that borough. Whether this new collaborative approach in this borough has developed as a result of a thawing relationship between staff at the various colleges or a result of the government's agenda is not very clear.

6.2.2 Purposes for collaboration

Figure 4 (page 75) illustrates the three different types of collaboration identified by respondents at the case study institutions. These can be divided into two broad purposes. Partnerships formed for management purposes – types 1a) and 1b) of strategic partnership, and those formed for the purposes of delivering education and training, which are: franchising and progression/ad hoc.

Figure 4. Typology of collaboration

Type	Nature	Purpose	Practised by Institution
1a) Strategic partnership 1b) Strategic partnership	Managerial Managerial	Permanent arrangements for sharing and managing resources. Loose arrangements for the management of specific projects.	Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College
2) Franchising	Delivery	Sub-contractual arrangements for the delivery of specific education and training projects.	Acacia college, Ash Adult and Community Education, Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College
3) Progression/ad hoc	Delivery	Used mainly by providers to allow for the progression of learners onto higher courses.	Acacia college, Ash Adult and Community Education, Palm Adult and Community Education, Oak College

1) Strategic partnership

Respondents identified two forms of *strategic partnership* 1a) and 1b). As shown in figure four (p. 75), I have identified these types of collaboration as partnerships set up for managerial purposes.

1a) *Strategic partnership*, of type a) involves two or more institutions agreeing to have their future development possibilities constrained by an agreed planning and resource allocation framework. In this instance, two institutions will engage in joint provision in a number of areas from which other partnership organisations will be excluded (Brown 2001). This appears to be the model most applicable to the partnership arrangement between Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education where the two institutions have developed an integrated approach to management, curriculum planning and marketing. The two institutions also share premises. The following quote from respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R1 is a useful illustration of what this type of collaboration entails: *"What I think we are trying to do is ensure that (it is important for the punters) the two major providers of adult learning, Acacia College* and *Palm Adult and Community Education* provide *a seamless delivery. So we have integrated management, we have joint curriculum planning, we have joint publicity, we have clear progression routes into higher learning, so that is basically what it's about."*

An important example of strategic partnership a) identified by respondents but not mentioned by Brown (2001) is Work-based learning. This involves partnership with employers to deliver vocational training, both in terms of work experience for learners, and for colleges to identify courses that are more relevant to the prevailing labour market demand. Respondent Acacia College.R2 for instance, stated that: *"we collaborate with employers to provide vocational training/employment based training. Employers that we collaborate with include small and medium sized enterprises to deliver training for learners on textiles programmes".* This respondent also noted that the college had a small business unit set up specifically to collaborate with employers and the local chamber of commerce in order to link education and training to employment activity. Respondent Oak College.R1 states that:

> *"The college works with employers to find out about skills shortages and what we can do. There is no point in training everyone as an architect, when we have a whole flood of architects within the area, and be totally unemployable. So we need to match the desires of the community that we serve with the actual realistic dreams and practical skills that are actually needed by employers. We do see the college as an institution that provides education and training for employment. So everything we do is geared around that. To cater for disadvantaged groups, we do work with community groups we work with organisations and institutions and other public sector bodies and employers as well."*

Another respondent noted that her institution *"engaged with employers as part of the technology, construction and built environment faculty's work"* Oak College.R2. Examples given of partnership working by this department included a large project with a construction company to build a sports stadium, where the institution provided the training element, and also a training project with another large construction company to deliver vocational training to local residents in skills shortage construction occupations. It was also noted that the faculty of built environment worked collaboratively with national government and other large organisations to deliver training courses.

1b) *Strategic partnership* of type b) could be described as a loose partnership arrangement, cemented by a concordat, typified by institutions Ash Adult and

Community Education and Oak College. Respondent Ash Adult and Community Education.R1 gave an example of this type of strategic collaboration, which is perhaps nearer to the strategic alliances model described by Brown (2001), when he stated that: *"for example we collaborate with the biggest provider of FE in this borough, we have always had a good relationship with them and that has been improved and worked upon in recent times; and in fact in Adult Learners week in 2003 (May) we went into a concordat agreement (you can see on the wall behind me) with this college, which shows how we work closely together collaboratively. So we don't do the same work but do parallel work."*

The difference between these two types of strategic partnership is that type a) appears to be nearer the merger model described by Brown (2001), though, Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education have kept their different identities. The Head of Palm Adult and Community Education explained that this type of very close collaboration between an EI and sector college was most unusual and this may have developed for two reasons: *"the formation of Palm Adult and Community Education paralleled the formation of the FEFC. So we and Acacia College were established at a time when colleges were more centre based. The principal of the college and I were ex-colleagues in community education. So there was more trust there – than would have been."* He contended that in the other borough (the location of Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College), where there was an older Community Education Service, the relationship between the two institutions *"would be more competitive."* This could be a plausible explanation for the different models found in the case study boroughs.

2) Franchising

As shown in figure four (page 75), this type of collaboration is mainly designed for the delivery of education and training. Franchising is defined as a form of collaborative approach where institutions subcontract delivery of LSC or other funded provision (such as European Social Fund (ESF) and Single Regeneration Budget - SRB) to other providers in order to meet contractual and delivery targets. Several respondents (e.g. Acacia College.R1 and R2, Oak College.R2 and R3) stated that their institutions engaged in this type of collaborative activity. Some respondents noted that their institutions subcontracted provision to other training providers to deliver training in areas such as specialist skills that are not accessible to the college and to access hard to reach groups. About 25 per cent of respondents observed that the success of franchising to widen participation was dependent on the nature of the collaborative provision and the partners involved. It was contended that if providers see the franchising relationship simply as a way of making money without necessarily delivering, then it would not reach the people. They argued that franchising provision in order to widen participation would work where organisations were serious about their remit and where the relationship between the partners was one of equity and providers are actually rewarded for services they provide to learners. For example, a respondent noted that: *"as with franchising in the mid 1990s – then the quality left a lot to be desired, and the outcomes in terms of reaching out to learners left much to be desired; for instance, some colleges in the Midlands franchising into London. That was rather about hitting crude targets, rather than serious education and training"* (Acacia College.R3).

A specific purpose of franchising arrangements identified by respondents was delivery of Basic Skills by big sector colleges in partnership with other providers, particularly voluntary sector training providers. Examples given included large colleges sub-contracting projects such as ESF and SRB contracts, which stipulate delivery of basic skills and job preparation programmes to ethnic minority groups, the unemployed and refugees and migrants to small community and voluntary sector training providers with good track records for reaching these communities. The institution I work for has delivered similar collaborative provision with Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education in the past.

Informant Ash Adult and Community Education.R1, for example, also cited a partnership between his institution, the Local Learning Partnership and the Borough Forum to support the existence of this type of collaboration. This partnership, according to the respondent put together a successful bid for a piece of research which led to the establishment of a project to encourage local community groups, particularly refugee communities, to set up courses that helped individuals to acquire information technology (IT) and Life Skills.

3) Progression/ad hoc partnerships

This type of collaboration conforms to the model termed ‘ad hoc partnership’, which entails loose arrangements with each institution maintaining its own identity to deliver a specific project (Brown 2001). Where, for example a college enters into a partnership with a higher education (HE) institution for the validation of access, or degree courses as well as allowing for progression of learners from further education colleges to university. As illustrated in figure 4 (page 75), this is also a delivery model. Several respondents particularly those from sector colleges, confirmed that their institutions engaged in this type of collaboration. For example, respondent Acacia College.R2 stated that: *"we collaborate with HE providers and other FE providers to act as a conduit to progression for our learners"* and also for the *"validation of foundation degrees, for example fashion and textiles"*. About a quarter of all respondents also identified collaborative partnerships that are used to allow for progression for learners from basic courses onto FE programmes. Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R1, reported that Acacia College is enabled through collaborating with Palm Adult and Community Education to deliver non-accredited learning alongside FE courses which allows for seamless delivery and valuable progression routes: *"I suppose what I have to stress is that we have non-accredited learning (that is ACL) being delivered alongside, and planned together, with FE; because we still believe that non-accredited learning is in fact the active route for many people into learning"*.

6.2.3 Why institutions engage in collaboration

A majority of interviewees suggested that the case study institutions engaged in collaborative activities in order to fulfil their strategic aims and objectives. Documents including annual reports and three-year development plans – as well as inspection reports for two of the institutions (Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) websites) – show that all the institutions regard widening participation and meeting the needs of the local community as their mission.

One respondent (Ash Adult and Community Education.R1) felt that operating in isolation from other providers could render the institution "dysfunctional and a dinosaur". There were also pragmatic reasons, such as wanting to 'earn brownie points' with the government and statutory funding bodies, as well as being able to keep abreast of developments in the local community. For example, respondent Ash Adult and Community Education.R1 stated that: "*working collaboratively means that you get the sum of all the pluses together. Also if I am honest as well, you get brownie points if you work in collaboration with people. If it works you do it. Sometimes they are choosing for you but the LSC would like to see say all six adult education services working together, because it would be easier for them?*"

Others felt that institutions needed to engage in collaboration in order to have better access to public funds, which are increasingly geared to promoting partnership activities. One respondent (Ash Adult and Community Education.R1) noted that while, in his view collaboration works better than other paradigms for widening participation, the government was pushing a lot of this agenda. It was argued that the government wanted institutions to collaborate with others all the time. Another (Ash Adult and Community Eduction.R2) noted that her institution engaged in collaborative practices in order to survive, because whilst the demand for "second chance" education and training was getting bigger, money was getting tighter and increasingly being steered towards partnership activities.

Meeting the needs of employers and the local community was also cited as a vital reason for collaborating with those stakeholders, because it was felt that without this form of partnership, providers would find it very difficult to attract learners onto their programmes. As respondent Oak College.R1 puts it, "*at the end of the day we would not have any students, if we did not meet the needs of employers and other partners such as community groups. We also need to be consistently looking at how we can meet the needs of the whole community, the employers, the politicians, local and central government, the private and the community and voluntary sector*". Another respondent suggested that collaboration was necessary for breaking into new markets in education and training - for example providing for those in employment, as the percentage of employees, in this country with level 2 qualifications was lower than for the European Union. It was contended that engaging in this type of collaborative delivery, which includes on the job training and education links in with the government's *Success for All* (LSC, 2001) agenda.

In summary, reasons given for collaboration included pressures from the government and funding bodies for partnerships and for pragmatic reasons - mainly to be able to assess employers and community needs in order to provide relevant and effective courses to learners from the relevant groups. The evidence also suggested that the case study institutions collaborated to widen participation, because it was in keeping with their strategic aims and objectives.

6.2.4 Effects of collaboration on participation by learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed

Respondents identified a number of ways in which collaboration enables members of disadvantaged communities to participate in education and training. These included the view that funding regimes such as ESF, which usually favour partnership delivery, also enabled providers to support hard-to-reach groups with facilities such as free childcare and help with travel fares. Hence collaborative bids that succeeded usually enabled partners to offer support services, which attracted disadvantaged communities onto courses, but also enhanced the chances of members of these groups completing courses and achieving their learning aims because of the additional support provided. For example, one respondent stated that collaborative practices *"do have an impact. Can only draw down funding - if you are targeting people from ethnic minorities and people who are unemployed, which means that each year we are working with substantial numbers of people who are unemployed and from ethnic minority communities. It doesn't mean that they are the whole cohort"* (Acacia College.R1). Some respondents felt that most of the outreach work carried out by their institutions concerned members of ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed, for example: *"to be honest, most of the outreach that we do concern ethnic minority individuals. I will say probably about 90 –100 per cent of what we deliver on the outreach concern these groups and the long-term unemployed."* (Oak College.R1)

Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R2 noted that within the New Deal for the Unemployed Consortium, the local college and EI work in partnership with voluntary sector providers in order to access young people from disadvantaged community groups and also that these training providers delivered the Basic Skills courses: *"they do the starting point and the progression is catered for by us."*

One respondent noted that collaboration was an important way of making sure that institutions understand the range of needs, and that working with partners from the relevant communities enabled them to address these needs and thus encourage participation from these groups. All agreed that partnership delivery enhances participation by disadvantaged groups, although some respondents also pointed out that this may be due to the fact the case-study institutions were located in boroughs with high levels of deprivation.

6.2.5 Effects of collaborative practices on retention, progression and achievement of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

Views regarding the effects of collaboration on the retention, achievement and progression rates of disadvantaged groups, were very varied. Some respondents highlighted the fact that retention and achievement were hard to record – stating that instruments to measure outcomes of collaborative delivery were often either non-existent or in the process of being developed. One respondent also suggested that often small organisations that delivered franchised courses for his college were not subject to rigorous audit requirements and therefore did not keep usable records on outcomes. Other interviewees stressed the need to consider the 'value added', (distance travelled by learners) in terms of their educational achievements, as a result of benefits provided by programmes delivered on a partnership basis. One respondent explained this view thus:

"The important thing around those areas is to measure improvement around what has come before - around value added. What has come before, because often they would have had a history of poor attendance and poor achievement - so the importance of measuring against what has gone before? But having a range of provision, a range of providers in a range of different situations and delivering in different ways is crucial. If you don't have that then it doesn't work. To have that, working with a range of different organisations implies collaboration."
(Palm Adult and Community Education.R2)

Several respondents talked about factors that might improve retention and achievement, but were not very certain of whether collaborative provision actually did improve the retention and achievement rates of disadvantaged groups. One respondent (Acacia College.R1) noted that diverse communities have more problems. She observed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can sometimes be from highly transient communities, for example refugees, and some have to work to feed their families and others may have childcare needs. These factors, according to the respondent, can make it difficult for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete courses. This respondent noted that retention was usually poor on year-long qualifications, but better on short courses. She argued that sticking to traditional qualifications, which often require a year or two years study hampers widening participation, because if learners cannot attend courses for long periods of time, they cannot achieve. Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R1 supports this view, when he states that: *"I think that most deprived parts of the country have the same problems with retention and progression. Most students are part-time (approximately 6 hours per week) hence the ability to impact on their attendance is limited. Full time students can have broader pastoral support far more than part-timers."* According to respondent Acacia College.R1, to counter the situation where learners are classified as not having achieved unless they successfully complete nationally recognised qualifications, her college had developed a modular scheme where learners are accredited for units completed. Respondent Acacia College.R2 confirmed this statement and elaborated on what this modular scheme entailed. She explained that this was an access diploma, which is validated by the Open College Network (OCN). This programme allowed learners to take "bite size" learning and build up a portfolio of units (based on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ format), which gave them a level 1 certificate when they achieved three access modules and a higher qualification when they attained six modules. This meant that when they did a term's work, for example, they could achieve an accredited qualification.

Some respondents thought that figures for retention and achievement might be lower for collaborative programmes than for courses delivered solely by case study institutions – what one interviewee termed *'mainstream provision'*. It was, however, suggested that this might be due to difficulties encountered in collating data relating to partnership provision. For example, respondent Acacia College.R4 noted that the college's statistics were not very good in this area, simply because data for collaborative delivery were not being collected properly. He felt that *"our data collection is not good enough to use as a base"* and that *"certainly in terms of collaborative delivery, retention and achievement is lower than the whole college's. But this may be more in terms of data collection methods, which is an ongoing problem – it is hard to say"*

Some respondents, however, felt that retention; progression and achievement rates were relatively acceptable. As with the above argument, several respondents argued that innovative programmes, which also include support mechanisms, such as help with child care and travel for learners, usually led to reasonable retention, achievement and progression from disadvantaged groups. Burke (2002) among others has made a similar observation. Respondent Oak College.R1 also supports this view when she states that:

> *"I mean we have had some difficulties with retention with these groups. For instance – the refugee groups – with dispersal – it is not that they want to leave, but they have been made to leave. There are some factors that are totally out of our control.*
> *There are aspects of people who may have got a job or have difficulties with childcare.*

> *But once they are actually onto the course, the retention tends to be very good. Because we seem to engage in exactly what they want. In fact on outreach classes the retention is actually better than anywhere else. Because we are going into their communities, there is a safety net for them. They are not mixing in a big college or anything like that. In most cases, it is a setting that they will go to anyway for support. I know the benchmark for retention is about 75 per cent. Progression obviously depends on individual needs. But they do progress onto other courses at the college, they do progress onto work trials and into jobs."*

Some respondents whilst accepting the limitations of collaboration in terms of enhancing the retention, achievement and progression rates of disadvantaged groups, nevertheless also pointed out that evidence exists to suggest some successes in these areas. Respondent Palm Adult and Community Education.R1, for example, states that retention levels for collaborative programmes delivered by his institution were between 70 and 80 per cent and that achievement levels were similar. He noted that they had some anecdotal evidence that progression was reasonable, but that there were no statistics to support this point. This respondent acknowledged the institution needed to review its systems in this area and to begin to analyse retention and progression data in greater detail.

Other respondents felt that collaborative approaches have a positive effect on the retention, achievement and progression rates of disadvantaged groups. One interviewee reported that a course they run in partnership with a small community group, and another college, resulted in nine out of 11 participants gaining admission to a higher-level course at the other college. This respondent also stated that learners on collaborative programmes would often start courses such as ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) or Basic Skills in an outreach setting and then progress onto programmes such as plumbing, decorating or design at the main college. Another respondent reported that:

> *"For example, a partnership we are currently engaged in with the local Health Trust, where we have been working with the* (local) *Asian Women's Project and about to work with a Somali group. Both were interested in further education and training and to provide services in health and jobs in health. The first programme that we run was with Asian Women's Project. I think I heard last week that 80% have got work placements or employment within the health sector. Yes I think you can work collaboratively to reach hard-to-reach groups."*
> (Acacia College.R1)

From the foregoing, respondents appear to be suggesting that collaborative approaches can in some circumstances enhance the retention, achievement and progression rates of disadvantaged learners, although by and large, the evidence appears to be inconclusive. This could be due to the fact collaboration appeared to be relatively new to the further education sector (compared to higher education, for example) which meant that some respondents were not very clear about the merits of collaborative approaches for widening participation. It is worth noting that other external factors regarding the quality of life of disadvantaged learners may also impact on the retention and achievement rates of these groups.

6.2.6 Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration

An examination of responses from interviewees suggests that recruitment of hard-to-reach groups on to courses is more effective with collaborative programmes. For example, respondent Acacia College.R3 claims that recruitment of learners is better with collaboration, because private providers are often more successful at recruitment onto collaborative programmes. In his view, private providers use business practices,

which allow them to recruit participants on to courses, more effectively than their public sector counterparts. About 25 per cent of providers also noted that collaboration allows partners to recruit learners from varied communities, in a way that is not often possible for sole providers, particularly large colleges.
Some respondents stated that joint delivery brings different strengths, such as resource and expertise sharing and helps institutions to meet delivery and funding targets.

Some examples proffered to support this contention, included the view that sometimes large institutions do not have the resources to deliver whole projects exclusively, and therefore require partners to deliver such schemes effectively. Other respondents argued that strategic collaboration (as in the case of Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education) helps to widen participation. The reason given for this was that it allows for seamless planning and delivery, which enables the partnership organisations to pool their resources to widen participation. Outreach activities were also identified as making for effective recruitment because they allow institutions to reach disadvantaged groups in their community. Equal partnership, trust, firm structures and clear service agreements were also identified as factors that make for effective collaboration

Other respondents felt that institutions engaged in collaboration to enhance their reputation, as well as to garner more business. It was also suggested that collaboration afforded institutions an opportunity to offer more varied work and opportunities to their staff, particularly in instances when the partnership entailed working with employers.

One interviewee (Ash Adult and Community Education.R1) suggested that collaboration could broaden the horizon of an institution – that working in partnership with other organisations can give an institution a wider perspective on the community and environment it operates in. It was also argued that collaboration can make institutions more receptive to diversity – that partnerships have the potential to prevent institutions and communities from becoming polarised: "*so for instance when community groups remain totally separate from the others, like in Bradford, they tear themselves apart, that is not good, whereas in this borough, it seems a lot easier to be who you are. Because it is very multicultural, it is OK to be different. So that type of vibrancy and working together*" suggesting that collaboration in general can be very beneficial for the community as a whole (Ash Adult and Community Education.R1).

On the other hand some respondents expressed a number of misgivings about the value of collaboration. For example, one interviewee (Ash Adult and Community Education.R2) suggested that the returns from collaboration in terms of generating outcomes, was not always commensurate with the effort and energy that is usually expended on setting up partnerships. It was felt that the rhetoric and push by government, via the LSC, to promote collaboration was not always matched by a funding regime which focused on the delivery of 'higher level' courses. This is particularly the case with the drive by the government for level 2 and 3 courses, which might make it more difficult for institutions to engage in outreach programmes focusing on Entry-Level programmes.

Some respondents felt that making funding mainly dependent on level 2 and 3 courses was in direct conflict with the LSC's emphasis on collaborative working by further education providers to widen participation. Respondent Ash Adult and Community Education.R2, for example noted that: "*I think that we are in a period of profound change and I think that funding is really concentrated on those government targets that need to be met quickly and I think there is a danger that there will be a group of people that remain excluded, because the funding is no longer there. However much the rhetoric is there, I don't think funding is going to follow it, and there lies a big problem.*" This respondent felt that this might actually discourage institutions from going into partnerships, as the priority for the institution will focus on delivery of education and training at the required levels in order to meet their contractual and funding targets.

6.3 Review of questionnaire data

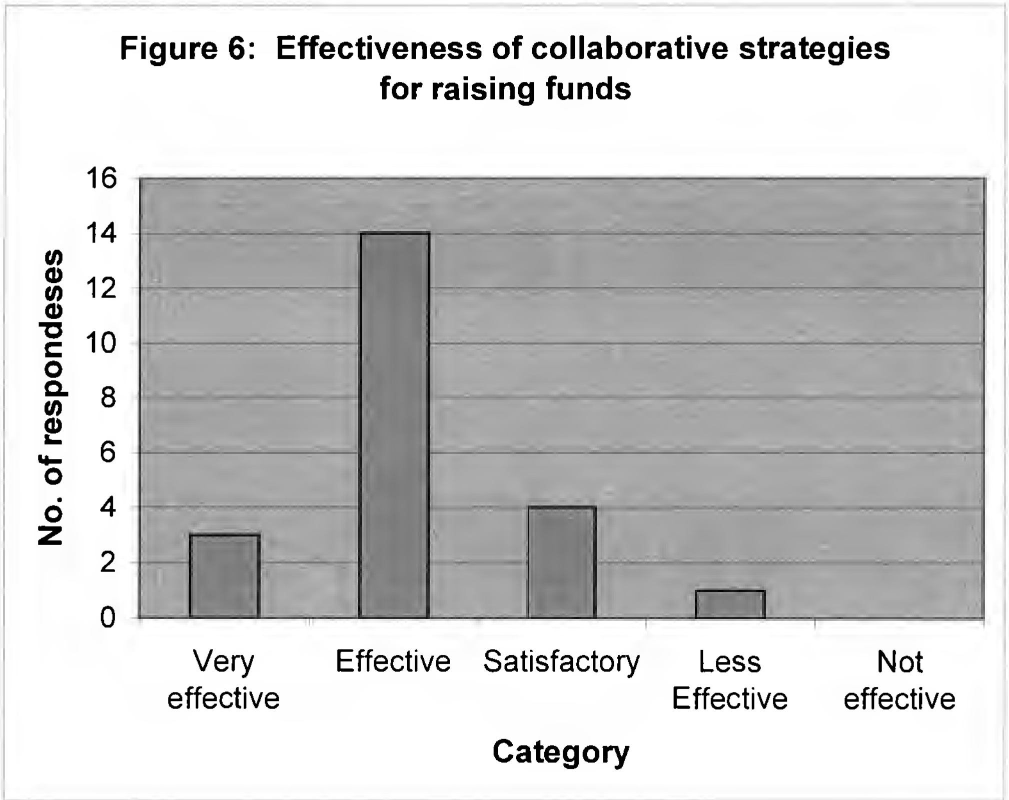
Questionnaires were given to interviewees to distribute to relevant personnel within the case study institutions with a request that they (interviewees) collect and return the completed questionnaires to me. As stated in chapter four, 120 questionnaires were distributed to teachers and managers (30 per setting) and 22 were returned. I recognised that this rate of response was low and attempted to generate some more responses through telephone calls and emails to my initial contacts but had no further success. Seven categories were used to evaluate the questionnaire data. These are the effectiveness of collaborative practices for: 1) raising funds; 2) managing resources; 3) meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups; 4) recruiting disadvantaged learners onto courses; 5) retention rates of disadvantaged groups; 6) achievement rates of disadvantaged groups; 7) progression rates of disadvantaged groups. Each category is examined in the following sections.

6.3.1 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for raising funds

Figures 5 illustrated by figure 6 (below), shows very clearly that the majority of respondents, 17 out of a total of 22, agreed that collaborative strategies were effective or very effective. An even higher proportion of respondents 21 out 22 felt that collaboration was at least satisfactory at raising funds. Only one respondent answered that collaboration was less effective at raising funds.

Figure 5: Effectiveness of collaborative strategies for raising funds

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	3
Effective	14
Satisfactory	4
Less Effective	1
Not effective	0



Despite the strong endorsement of effectiveness of collaborative approaches for generating funds, some respondents (in additional comments provided on questionnaires) argued that this was partly due to the fact that the government applied pressure on providers to collaborate in order to access funding from sources such as the LSC. This view conforms to findings in the interview section where respondents confirmed that funding bodies, such as ESF and SRB as well as the LSC favoured bidding applications from partnerships.

6.3.2 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for managing resources

Figure 7: Effectiveness of collaborative schemes for managing resources

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	1
Effective	11
Satisfactory	9
Less Effective	1
Not effective	0

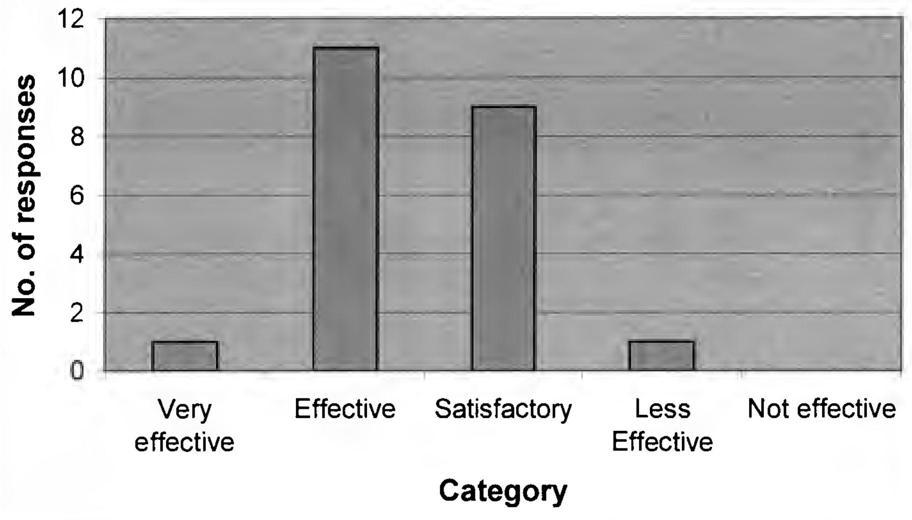


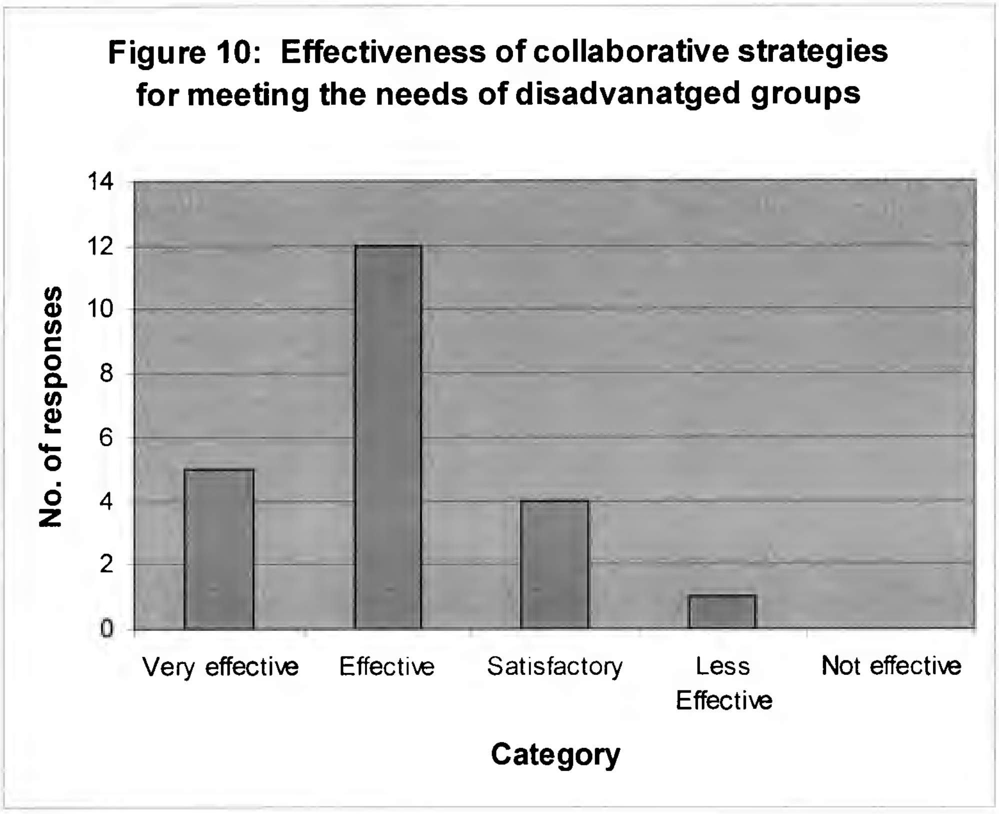
Figure 8: Effectiveness of collaborative schemes for managing resources

Figures 7 and 8 (above) show that as with fund raising, a majority of respondents (here 12 out of 22) felt that collaborative practices were effective or very effective at managing resources. However in this case a sizable minority (10) indicated that collaboration was only satisfactory or less effective at managing resources. These findings make views on the effectiveness of collaborative approaches at managing resources less conclusive than for fund raising.

6.3.3 Effectiveness of collaboration at meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups.

Figure 9: Effectiveness of collaborative strategies for meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	5
Effective	12
Satisfactory	4
Less Effective	1
Not effective	0



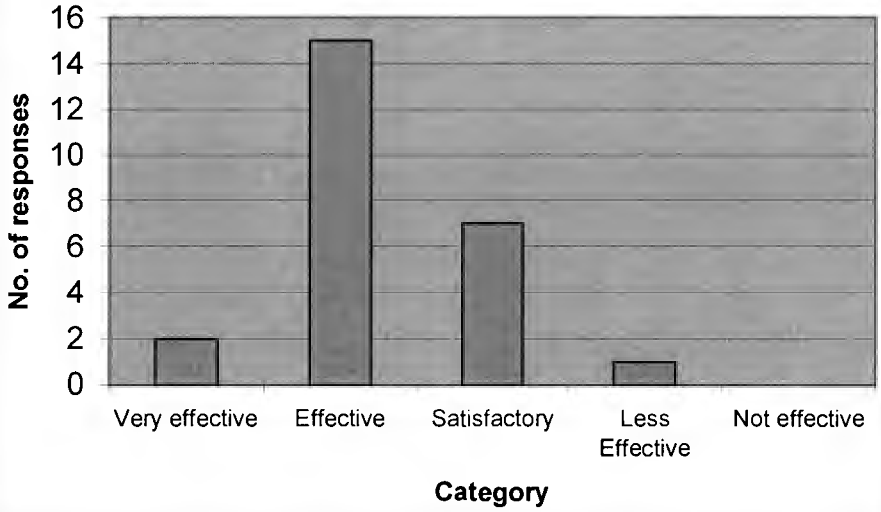
Figures 9 and 10 (above), show that nearly all respondents (21 out of 22) scored the effectiveness of collaborative approaches at meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups at satisfactory or above. Only one respondent felt that collaboration was less effective at meeting the needs of these groups. These findings suggest that most respondents in the case study institutions viewed collaboration as a good mechanism for engaging disadvantaged groups in education and training. The findings from the interview data as already discussed were not so clear-cut.

6.3.4 Effectiveness of collaboration for recruiting disadvantaged learners onto courses

Figure 11: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at recruiting ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed onto courses.

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	2
Effective	15
Satisfactory	7
Less Effective	1
Not effective	0

Figure 12. Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at recruiting ethnic minority community groups and the long-term unemployed onto courses.

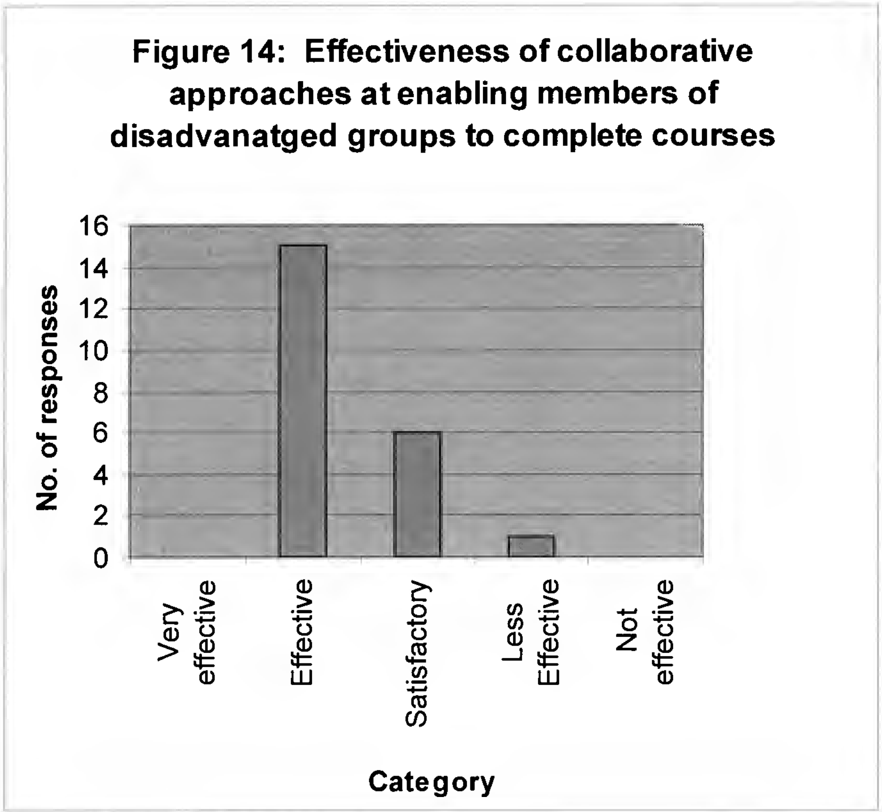


The scores in this category as shown by figure 11 and illustrated by figure 12 (above), show that every respondent, except one, scored satisfactory or above for the effectiveness of collaboration for recruiting learners from disadvantaged communities onto courses. This finding reflects the views expressed by interviewees. In spite of this overwhelming endorsement of the effectiveness of collaborative practices for recruiting members of ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed onto courses, one respondent suggested that this may also be due to the large numbers of these communities in the case study boroughs.

6.3.5 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to complete their courses

Figure 13: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to complete courses.

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	
Effective	15
Satisfactory	6
Less Effective	1
Not effective	0



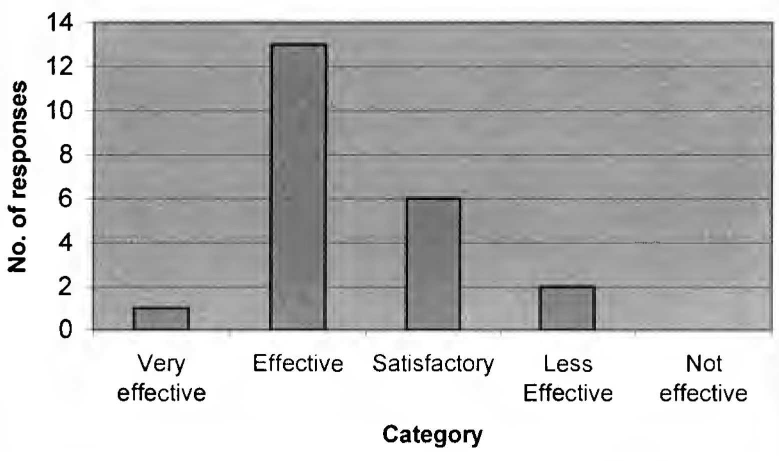
As with all the other categories, the vast majority of respondents (21 out 22 respondents) scored collaborative practices as satisfactory or effective (see figures 13 and figure 14, page 97) at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to complete courses. Interestingly, no respondent scored collaboration as being very effective in this section. The evidence from questionnaire data suggests more conclusively than the interview data that collaborative approaches are affective at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to complete their courses.

6.3.6 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims.

Figure 15: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged communities to achieve their learning aims.

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	1
Effective	13
Satisfactory	6
Less Effective	2
Not effective	

Figure 16: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling members of disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims.



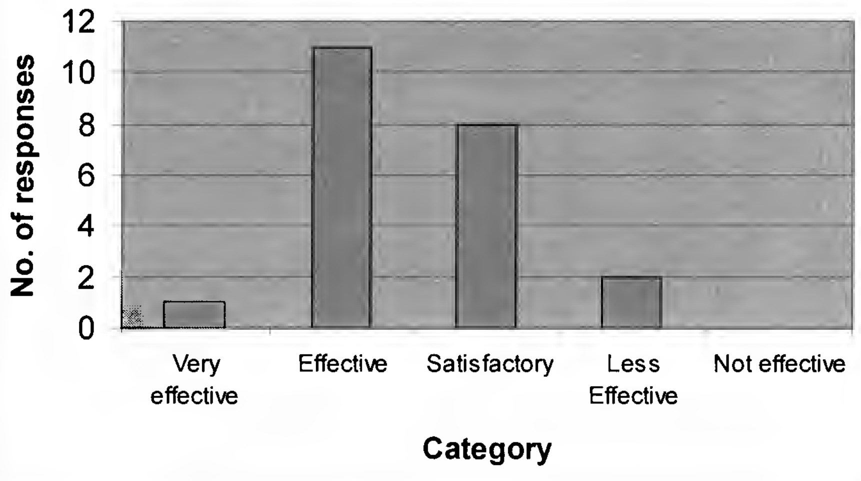
Most respondents, 20 out 22 (see figures 15 and 16, page 98) scored the effectiveness of collaborative practices at enabling disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims at satisfactory or above. Figure 15 shows that six scored satisfactory, 13 scored effective, one scored very effective and two scored less effective.

6.3.7 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling progression for disadvantaged groups

Figure 17: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling disadvantaged groups to progress onto further and higher education and/or jobs.

Category	Number of responses
Very effective	
Effective	12
Satisfactory	8
Less Effective	2
Not effective	

Figure 18: Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling disadvantaged groups to progress onto further and higher education and/or jobs.



As with category 6.3.5 (see figures 17 and 18 above), none of the respondents scored very effective for the usefulness of collaborative practices at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to progress onto further or higher education and/or jobs. Nevertheless, a vast majority scored satisfactory or effective for the efficacy of collaboration for enabling progression for disadvantaged groups. There were no scores for not effective. As with achievement, the evidence from questionnaire data suggests more conclusively, than evidence from interviews, that collaborative practices are effective at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to achieve their learning aims.

6.4 Review of statistical data.

As stated in chapter four, three categories, starts, retention and achievement were used to evaluate the statistical data. The data used in this section were based on audited Individual Learner Returns (ILR) to the Learning and Skills and Council (LSC) for 2000/1, 2001/02 and 2002/03. The study focuses on these periods as the achievement and retention data for 2003/04 are not yet available. Each category was reviewed in turn in the following sections.

6.4.1 Effectiveness of collaborative practices for recruiting learners from ethnic minority communities

Figure 19 (page 101), illustrated by figure 20 (page 102), shows that the vast majority of starts on programmes at Acacia College in 2000-2003 were from ethnic minority communities. The figures show that 14,643 learners out of a total 19,337 starts in 2000/01 were from these communities. The corresponding data for 2001/02 and 2000/03 were 17,405 out of 28,312 and 20,970 out of 28,063. These figures represent an average of 70 per cent of starts from ethnic minority communities over the three-year period.

Figure 19

Acacia College – STARTS, RETENTION AND COMPLETION DATA

	2000/01					2001/02					2002/3				
ETHNICITY	Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates	
Any other	2624	1916	73%	1376	52%	1446	1070	74%	685	47%	1664	1348	81%	1145	69%
Bangladeshi	1476	1047	71%	597	40%	1691	1302	77%	742	44%	1653	1273	77%	1044	63%
Black African	4025	2938	73%	1939	48%	5320	4043	76%	2385	45%	6455	5293	82%	4129	64%
Black Caribbean	1316	908	69%	481	37%	1918	1457	76%	772	40%	1802	1459	81%	992	55%
Black Other	535	369	69%	207	39%	670	509	76%	300	45%	696	543	78%	424	61%
Chinese	109	89	82%	54	50%	143	110	77%	54	38%	159	134	84%	114	72%
Indian	1564	1157	74%	775	50%	1618	1246	77%	785	49%	1777	1475	83%	1254	71%
Mixed				0	0%	476	362	76%	221	46%	629	547	79%	394	63%
Other Asian	1063	776	73%	566	53%	1476	1048	71%	713	48%	1990	1572	79%	1415	71%
Pakistani	1931	1294	67%	828	43%	1814	1288	71%	799	44%	2112	1626	77%	1382	65%
Unknown	521	380	73%	266	51%	833	675	81%	473	57%	781	711	91%	583	75%
White	4173	3297	79%	1879	45%	10907	9162	84%	6413	59%	8345	7093	85%	5816	70%
Total	19337	14171	73%	8928	46%	28312	22272	79%	14254	50%	28063	23074	82%	18670	67%

Source: Learning and Skills Council (London East), statistics support desk

Retention = Completers divided by (Starts - *Transfers)
Success rate = Achievers divided by (Starts – Transfers)
*Transfers denote learners who transfer from one course to another during the academic year.

The LSC formula for success rate equates to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) calculation for achievement. This differs from the LSC calculation for achievement, which is achievers divided by completers. The ALI term achievement (which is the same as the LSC success rate) is used throughout the text.

Figure 20. Acacia College – Number of starts

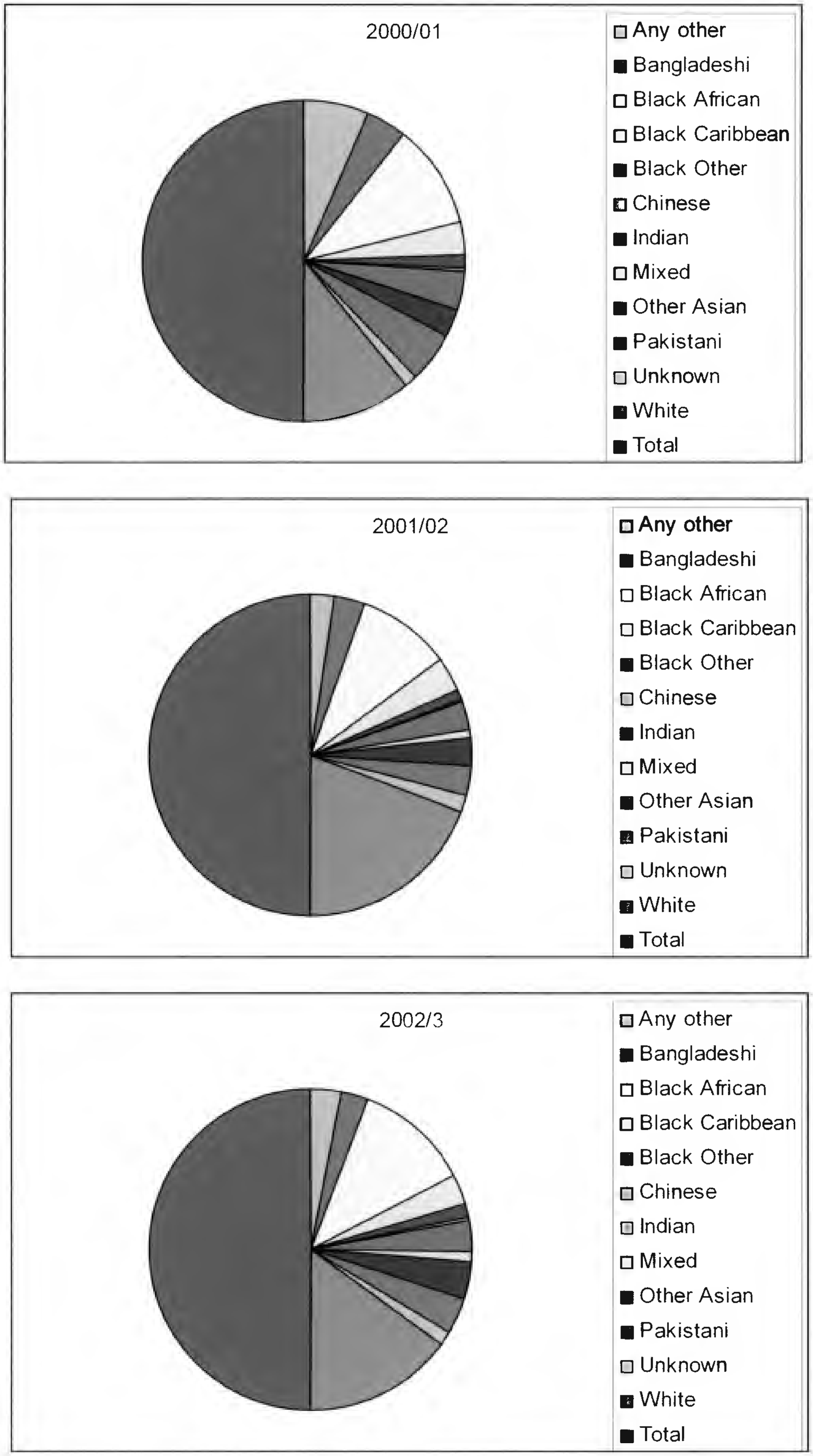


Figure 22 (page 105), as depicted by figure 21 (page 104) show that Ash Adult and Community Education had a large number of starts from ethnic minority communities between 2000/1 and 2002/3. The statistics show that the starts from ethnic minority communities were in 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03 - 5,624 out a total of 6,939, 5,915 out of 7,236 and 5,375 out of 6,346. These figures equate to 82 per cent of the total number of starts coming from ethnic minority communities. A similar pattern of starts, in terms of the proportion of ethnic minority learners is repeated for Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College – see figures 23, 24, 25, 26 (pages 106, 107, 108 and 109). The pie charts (pages 102, 104, 106 and 108) have been presented in a format that shows the proportion of starts from the various ethnic groups in contrast to total starts to lend clarity to the analysis.

The foregoing analysis, suggest that all the case study institutions effectively enabled learners from disadvantaged groups to participate in further education and training. This conclusion is buttressed by the fact that the recruitment figures in all the case study institutions were far higher than the total percentage figures for these groups in the relevant boroughs – average starts in the institutions being 70 per cent for Acacia College, 82 per cent for Ash Adult and Community Education, 78 per cent for Palm Adult and Community Education, 78 per cent for Oak College, as compared to ethnic minority populations of 60.6 per cent in B1 and 54.7 per cent in B2 (Office for National Statistics). It was not possible, however, to determine the extent to which collaborative practices contributed to the success of these institutions at recruiting ethnic minority learners onto courses, given that the statistical data encompassed all provision.

Figure 21. Ash Adult and Community Education – Number of starts

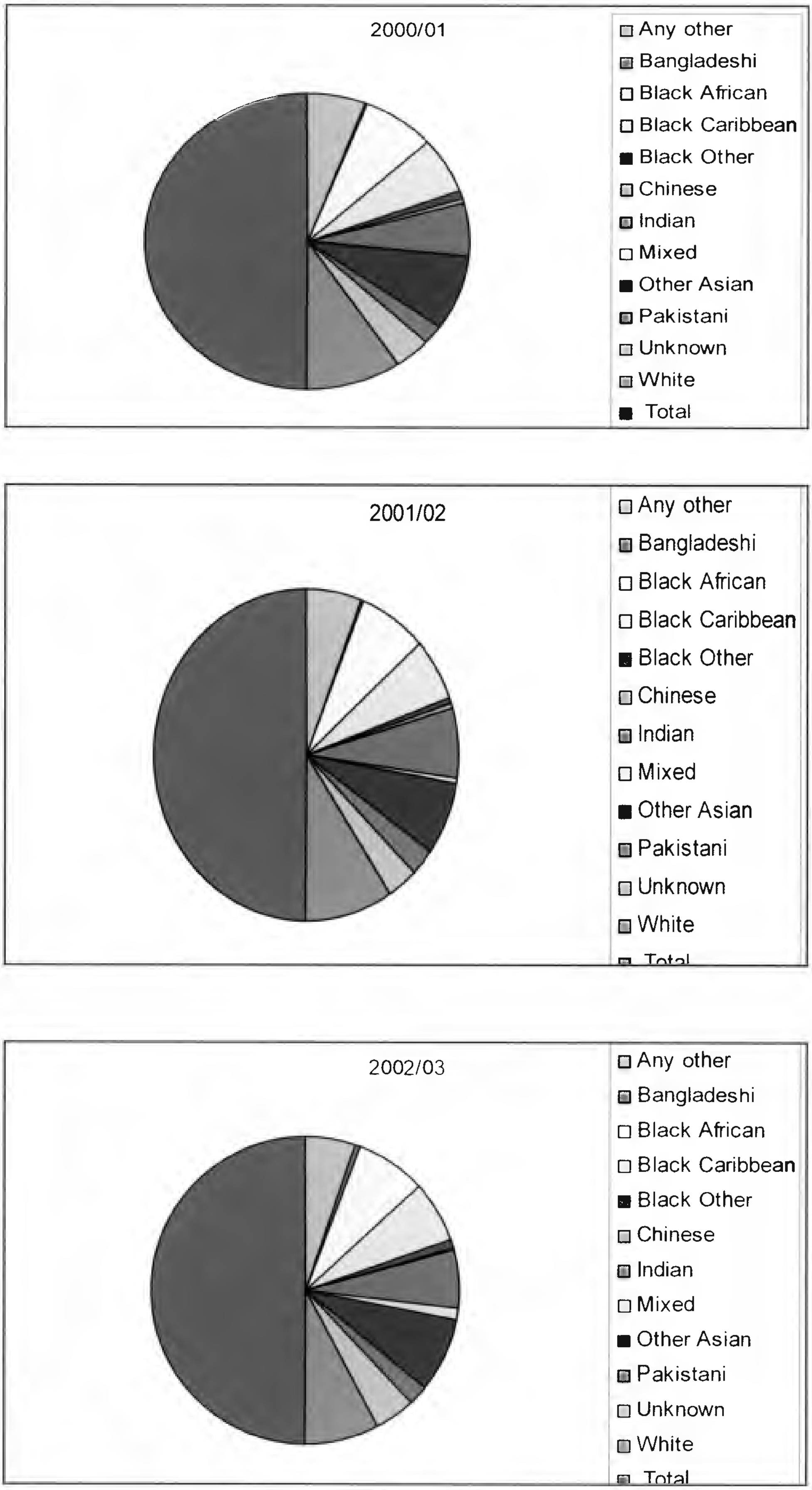


Figure 22
Ash Adult and Community Education – STARTS, RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA

	2000/01					2001/02					2002/03				
ETHNCITY	Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates	
Any other	794	492	62%	359	45%	840	512	61%	399	48%	683	519	76%	472	69%
Bangladeshi	44	26	59%	18	41%	63	42	67%	36	57%	63	53	84%	49	78%
Black African	1000	660	66%	488	49%	1022	593	58%	421	41%	963	674	72%	607	63%
Black Caribbean	850	604	71%	411	48%	873	585	67%	374	43%	790	545	69%	491	62%
Black Other	136	82	60%	443	326%	115	70	61%	46	40%	97	64	66%	56	58%
Chinese	72	50	69%	39	54%	76	55	72%	48	63%	58	49	84%	46	79%
Indian	823	609	74%	414	50%	937	704	75%	58	6%	763	646	82%	588	77%
Mixed	0		0	0	0%	99	51	52%	34	34%	137	88	64%	82	60%
Other Asian	1096	701	64%	554	51%	1045	679	65%	59	6%	995	826	83%	793	80%
Pakistani	302	199	66%	133	44%	360	217	61%	174	48%	289	204	76%	198	69%
Unknown	507	345	68%	242	48%	485	276	57%	193	40%	537	392	73%	361	67%
White	1315	894	68%	635	48%	1321	832	63%	582	44%	971	680	72%	612	63%
Total	6939	4662	67%	3357	48%	7236	4616	64%	3462	48%	6346	4772	75%	4390	69%

Source: Learning and Skills Council (London East), statistics support desk

Retention = Completers divided by (Starts - *Transfers)
Success rate = Achievers divided by (Starts – Transfers)
*Transfers denote learners who transfer from one course to another during the academic year.

The LSC formula for success rate equates to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) calculation for achievement. This differs from the LSC calculation for achievement, which is achievers divided by completers. The ALI term achievement (which is the same as the LSC success rate) is used throughout the text.

Figure 23. Palm Adult and Community Education – Number of starts

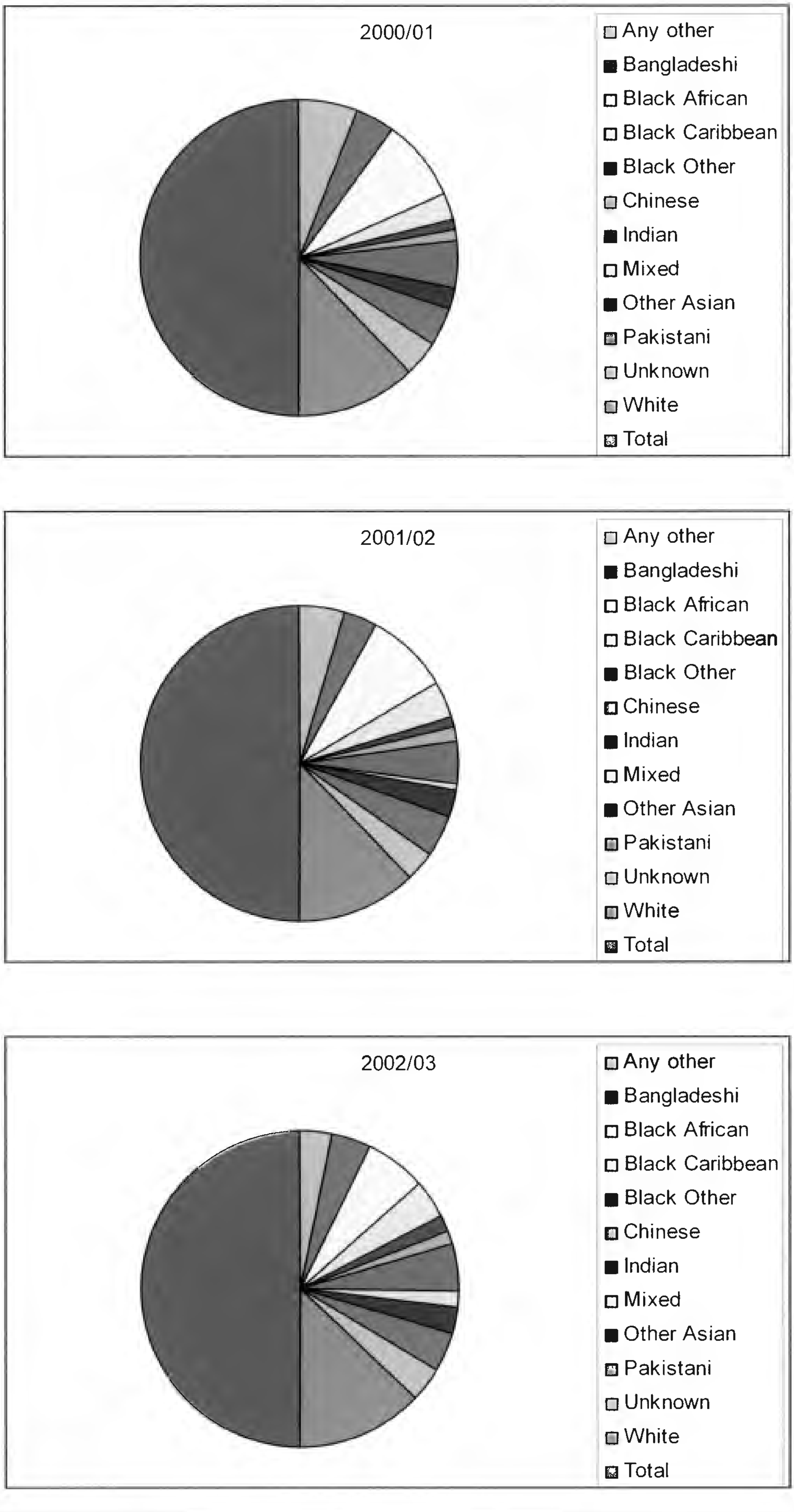


Figure 24
Palm Adult and Community Education – STARTS, RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA

	2000/01					2001/02					2002/03				
ETHNCITY	Starts	Completers	Retention	Success Rate		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success Rate		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success Rate	
Any other	416	295	71%	142	34%	345	242	70%	208	60%	268	169	63%	134	50%
Bangladeshi	256	192	75%	81	32%	254	198	78%	176	69%	319	217	68%	189	59%
Black African	563	422	75%	249	44%	625	469	75%	389	62%	511	312	61%	225	44%
Black Caribbean	185	109	59%	62	34%	280	202	72%	158	56%	311	227	73%	168	54%
Black Other	73	55	75%	22	30%	78	77	64%	52	67%	136	83	61%	62	46%
Chinese	73	52	71%	17	23%	91	70	77%	69	76%	116	97	84%	88	76%
Indian	315	243	77%	117	37%	335	265	79%	215	64%	381	249	69%	187	49%
Mixed	0	0	0	0	0%	42	30	71%	25	60%	138	81	59%	55	40%
Other Asian	150	117	78%	80	53%	201	163	81%	137	68%	219	136	62%	114	52%
Pakistani	270	205	76%	123	46%	309	235	76%	209	68%	321	202	63%	164	51%
Unknown	234	91	39%	70	30%	219	117	73%	98	45%	275	173	63%	126	46%
White	824	552	67%	364	44%	907	653	72%	542	60%	1043	699	67%	531	51%
Total	3359	2333	69%	1330	40%	3686	2721	74%	2290	62%	4038	2645	66%	2037	50%

Source: Learning and Skills Council (London East), statistics support desk.

Retention = Completers divided by (Starts - Transfers)
Success rate = Achievers divided by (Starts – Transfers)
Transfers denote learners who transfer from one course to another during the academic year.

The LSC formula for success rate equates to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) calculation for achievement. This differs from the LSC calculation for achievement, which is achievers divided by completers. The ALI term achievement (which is the same as the LSC success rate) is used throughout the text.

Figure 25. Oak College - Number of starts

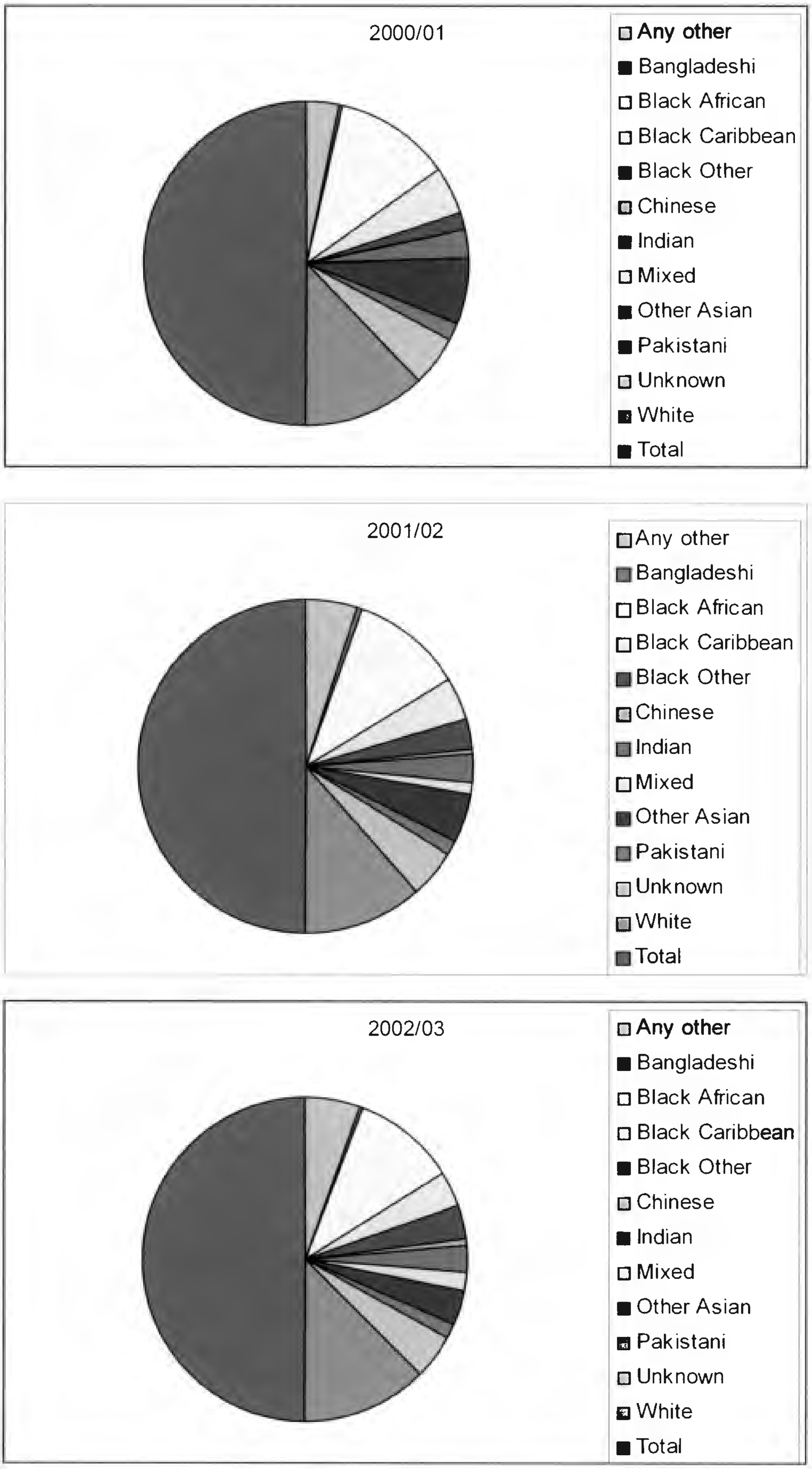


Figure 26
Oak College – STARTS, RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA

	2000/01					2001-2002					2002-2003				
ETHNCITY	Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates		Starts	Completers	Retention	Success rates	
Any other	1534	1243	81%	858	56%	2246	1774	79%	1135	51%	2135	1644	77%	1069	50%
Bangladeshi	145	115	79%	72	50%	209	173	83%	126	60%	146	109	75%	73	50%
Black African	5627	4952	88%	2228	40%	4773	4153	87%	2118	44%	3981	3344	84%	2073	52%
Black Caribbean	2193	1711	78%	1027	47%	1854	1539	83%	1000	54%	1447	1128	78%	801	55%
Black Other	739	562	76%	320	43%	1175	1046	89%	418	36%	1356	1220	90%	756	56%
Chinese	119	106	89%	65	55%	255	227	89%	152	60%	202	178	88%	128	63%
Indian	1277	1111	87%	700	55%	1254	1116	89%	792	63%	1015	842	83%	615	61%
Mixed	0	0	0	0	0%	514	421	82%	269	52%	656	511	78%	337	51%
Other Asian	3215	2733	85%	1967	61%	2065	1631	79%	1060	51%	1418	1106	78%	708	50%
Pakistani	666	546	82%	382	57%	588	587	83%	423	72%	520	426	82%	302	58%
Unknown	2450	2009	82%	1366	56%	2020	1697	84%	1120	55%	1796	1472	82%	1001	56%
White	5800	4582	79%	2932	51%	5073	4160	82%	2870	57%	4870	3896	80%	2922	60%
Total	23765	19670	83%	11917	50%	22026	18524	84%	11483	52%	19542	15829	81%	10763	55%

Source: Learning and Skills Council (London East), statistics support desk.

Retention = Completers divided by (Starts - *Transfers)
Success rate = Achievers divided by (Starts – Transfers)
*Transfers denote learners who transfer from one course to another during the academic year.

The LSC formula for success rate equates to the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) calculation for achievement. This differs from the LSC calculation for achievement, which is achievers divided by completers. The ALI term achievement (which is the same as the LSC success rate) is used throughout the text.

6.4.2 Effectiveness of collaborative practices at enabling ethnic minority groups to complete courses

The statistical evidence from figure 19 (page 101) and figure 27 (below) show that retention rates for ethnic minority learners, at Acacia College, were on average lower than for white learners, 72 per cent compared to 79 per cent in 2000/01 (even though one ethnic group – the Chinese had higher retention rates, 82 per cent, than for any other group). By 2002/03, however, the retention rates for ethnic minority learners and their white counterparts had almost levelled out, 81 to 82 per cent. Overall, the evidence suggests that this institution was effective at enabling disadvantaged groups to complete their courses, relative to their white counterparts.

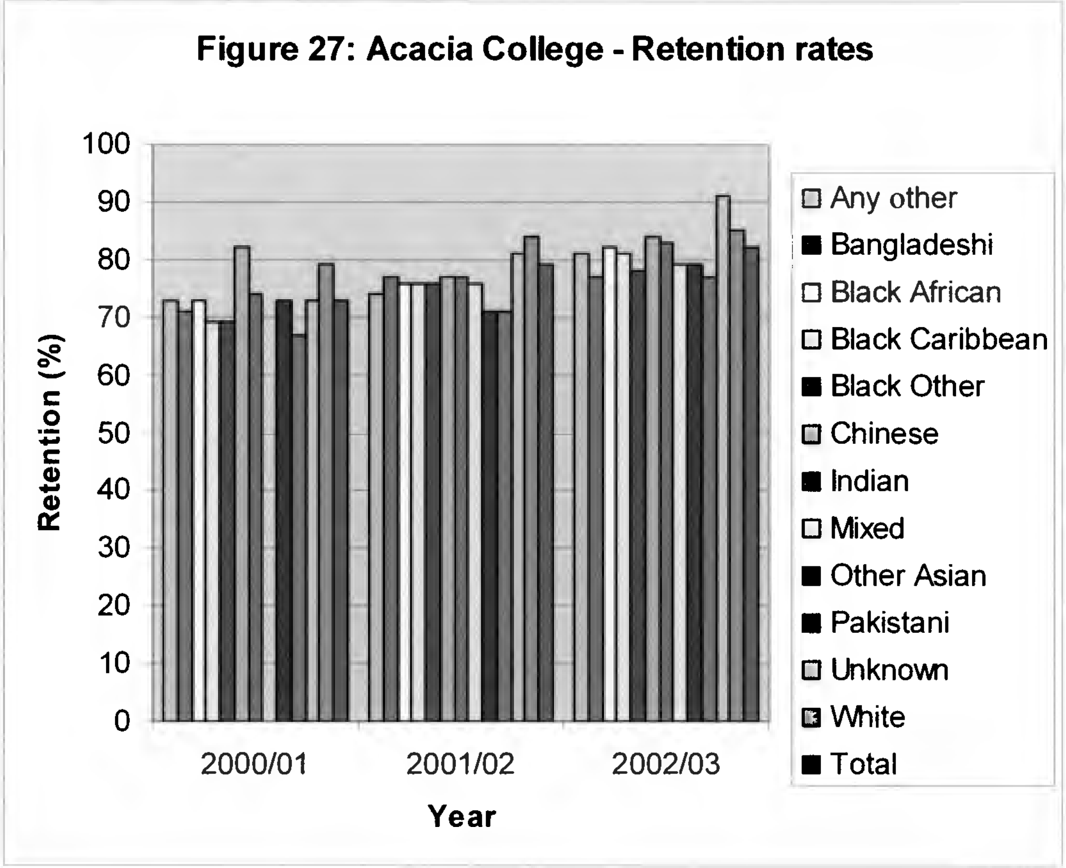
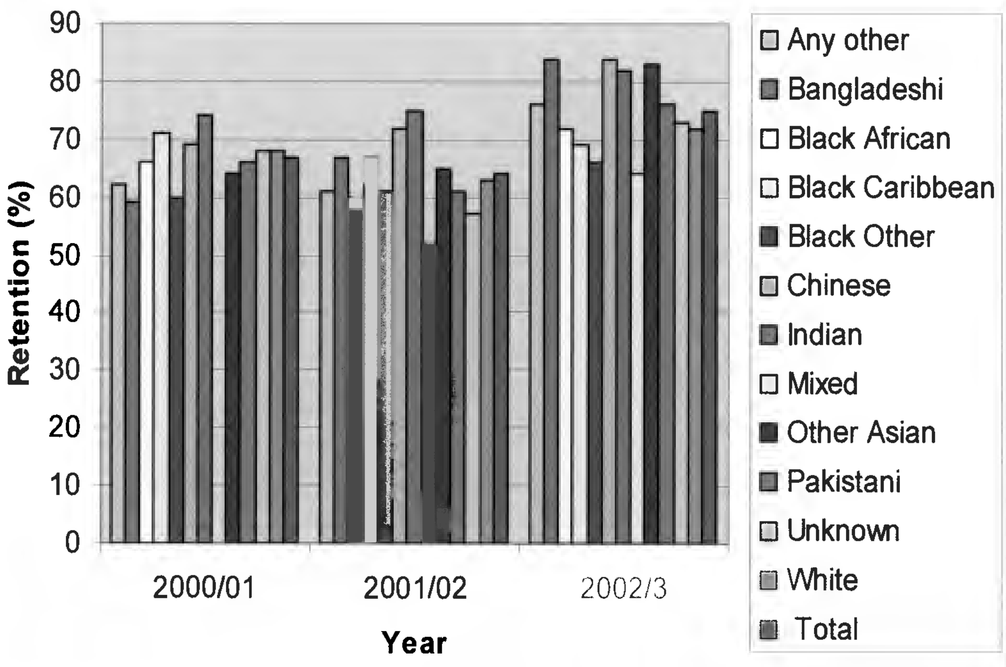


Figure 27: Acacia College - Retention rates

Data from figure 22 (page 105) show that retention rates for ethnic minority groups at Ash Adult and Community Education were on average fairly similar to those for white learners. The table as depicted by figure 28 (below), however, shows some fairly significant variations in retention rates for different ethnic minority groups, and this phenomenon might be worth further exploration in a future study.

Figure 28: Ash Adult and Community Education Service - Retention rates



Figures 24 and 26 (pages 106 and 109) depicted by figures 29 and 30 (page 112) show that retention rates for ethnic minority learners at Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College compare favourably to those for white learners at these institutions. The relative rates of retention appear to be very similar to those for Acacia College and Ash Adult and Community Education. Overall, evidence from the statistical data suggests that all the case study institutions were relatively effective at enabling learners from disadvantaged communities to complete their learning aims.

Figure 29: Palm Adult and Community Education Retention rates

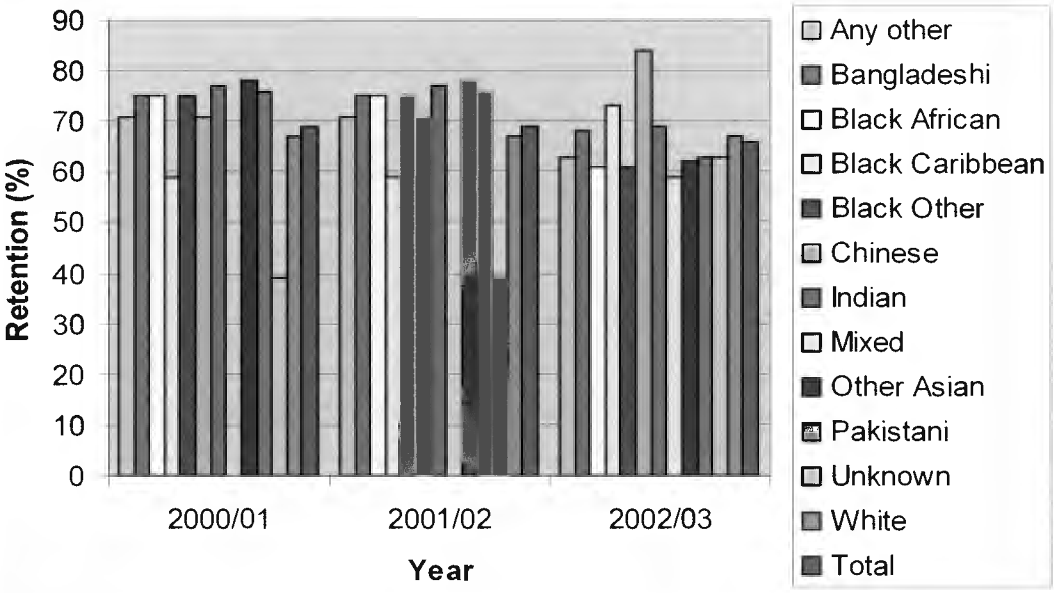
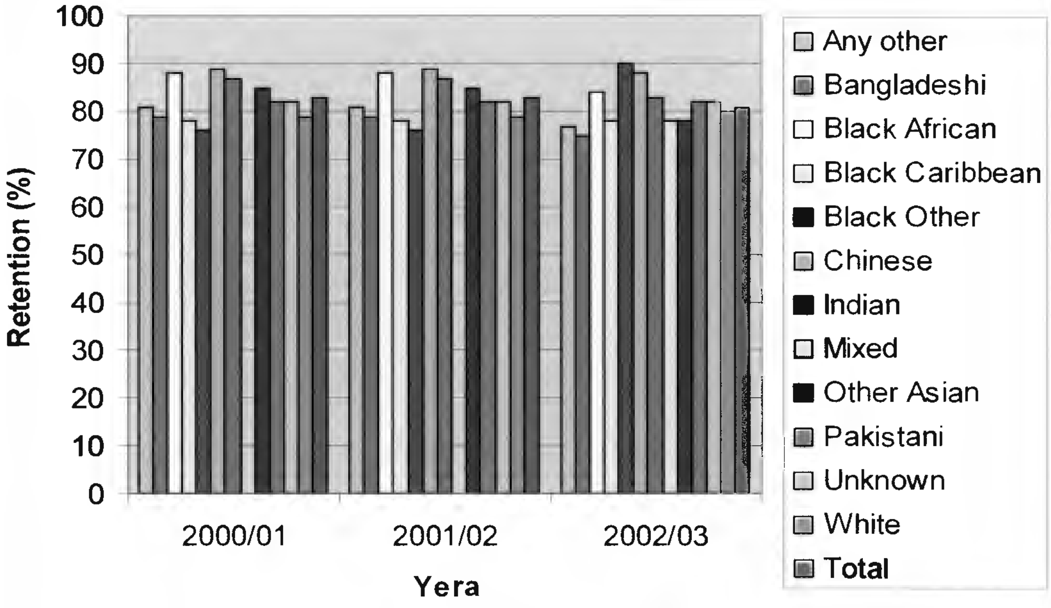


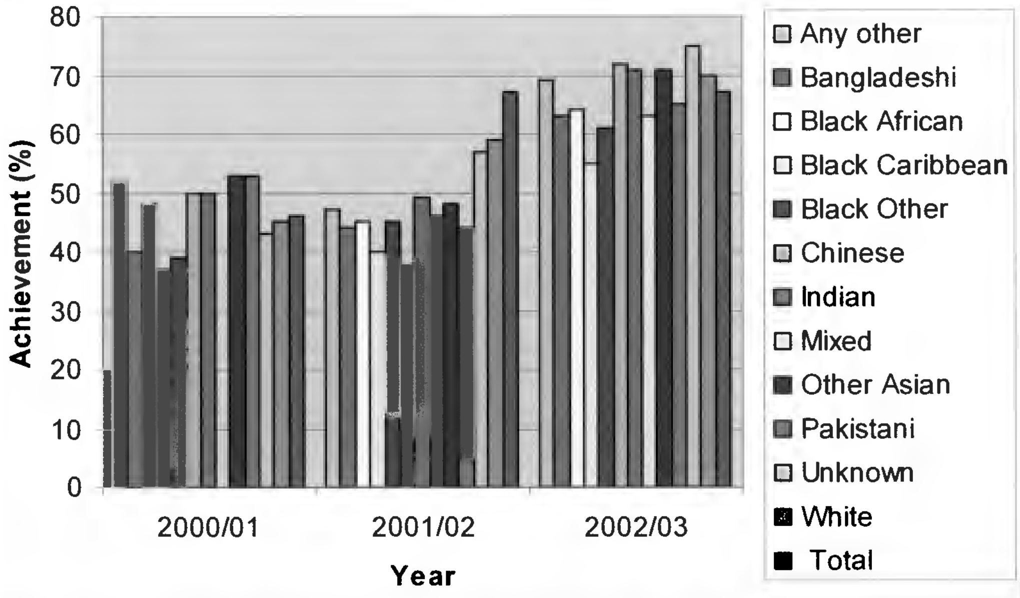
Figure 30: Oak College - Retention rates



6.4.3 Effectiveness of collaborative approaches at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities to achieve their learning aims

The achievement data for institution Acacia College, figure 19 (page 101) shows some interesting variations and improvements over the census period. Some ethnic minority groups such as Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black Other recorded significant improvements in achievement rates between 2000/01 and 2002/03. For example, the achievement rate for Bangladeshi learners went up from 40 per cent in 2000/01 to 63 per cent in 2002/03. The achievement rate for white learners also increased considerably in this period – from 45 to 70 per cent. Figure 31 (below) also shows that all other ethnic minority groups recorded improvements in achievement rates over the same period.

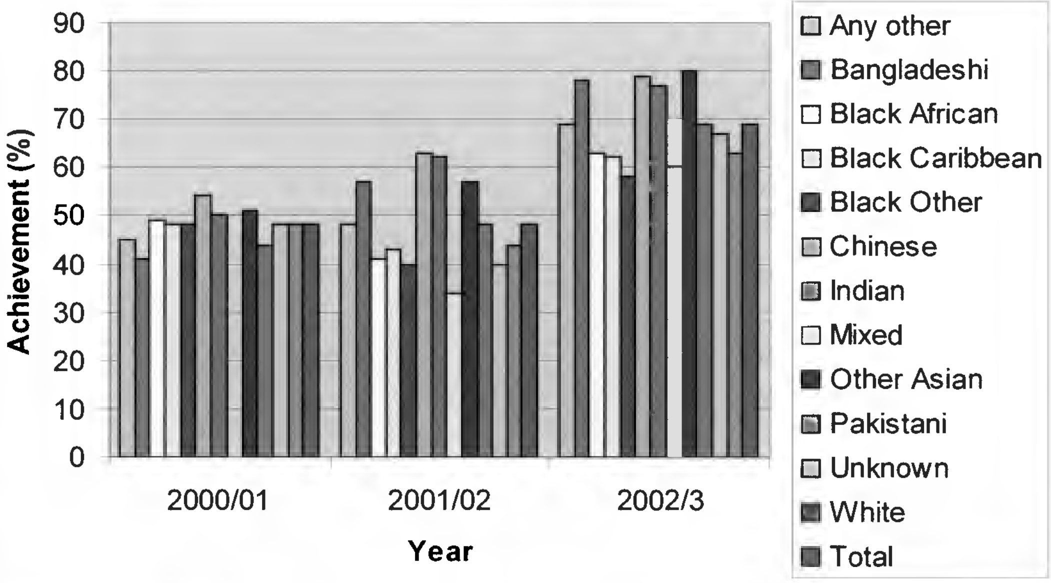
Figure 31: Acacia College
Success (achievement) rates



Even though the average retention rates for ethnic minority learners in 2002/03 (approximately 66 per cent) were slightly lower than those for their white counterparts, some ethnic minority groups, such as Chinese, Indian and Pakistani recorded higher retention rates than for white learners in 2002/03. Overall, the statistical data suggest that this institution was effective in enabling learners from ethnic minority communities, relative to their white counterparts to achieve their learning aims.

Figure 22 (page 105) and figure 32 (below) show that between 2000/01 and 2002/03, Ash Adult and Community Education recorded a similar pattern of improvement in the achievement rates for all ethnic groups. Figure 32 shows that achievement rates for ethnic minority learners were similar to and in some cases better than those for white learners at this institution. A similar pattern of achievement for ethnic minority learners relative to their white counterparts was recorded for Palm Adult and Community Education and Oak College – see figures 24 and 26 (pages 107 and 109) and figures 33 and 34 (page 115).

Figure 32: Ash Adult and Community Education Success (achievement) rates



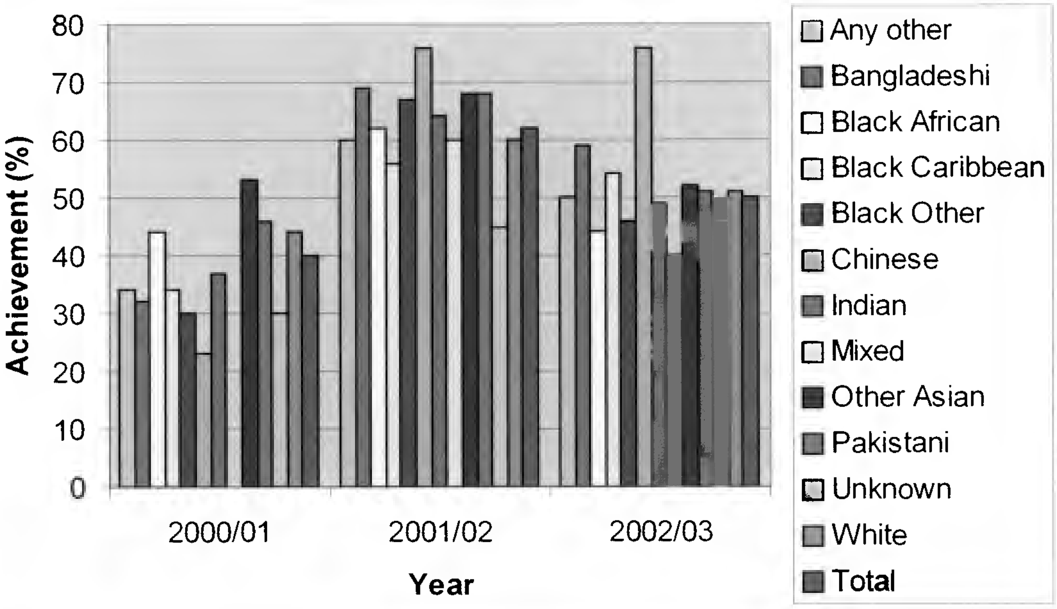


Figure 33: Palm Adult and Community Education Success (achievement) rates

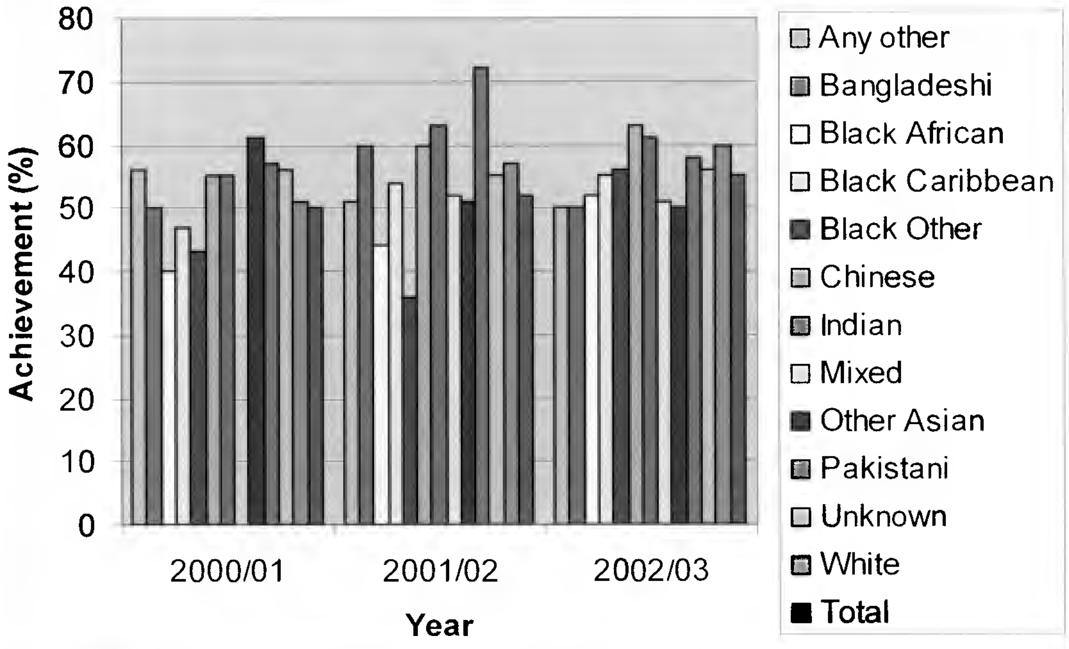


Figure 34: Oak College - Success (achievement) rates

6.4.4 Conclusions

Engagement in collaboration

The evidence from the interview, documentary and questionnaire data suggests a general agreement that all the case-study institutions engage in collaborative provision. Reasons given for engaging in collaborative practices ranged from the strategic, in order to fulfil the mission aims of the case-study institutions, which in every instance was to widen participation, to the pragmatic, in terms of being better able to access funding from public sources, such as the LSC and ESF, as well as delivery to meet funding targets. Evidence from interview and questionnaire data suggested that respondents felt that Government policy, as typified by the current funding methodology of the LSC (*Success for All, 2002*), favoured collaborative approaches for further education and training.

Types of collaborative approaches

Respondents, specifically interviewees, identified two broad purposes for collaboration – management and delivery and three broad types of collaborative practices:

- *Franchising*, which entailed institutions contracting out LSC funded provision to other providers or where for example mainstream colleges farmed out ESF funded basic skills provision designed to meet the needs of specific groups such as refugees and the long-term unemployed to smaller voluntary sector and community providers.

- *Progression/ad hoc*, usually an agreement between an FE and HE institution either to validate an Access or degree programme or allow learners to progress onto higher education programmes at the university.
- *Strategic collaboration*, this falls into two types. The first type involves two or more institutions agreeing to have their future development possibilities constrained by an agreed planning and resource allocation framework. The second type entails a loose partnership agreement between two institutions usually cemented by a concordat.

Effectiveness of collaboration for recruiting disadvantaged learners

The evidence, from documents, interview and questionnaire data suggests that collaborative approaches were effective at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to participate in further education and training. The statistical evidence also shows that all the case-study institutions were very effective at recruiting learners from ethnic minority groups, although the data in this case covered aggregate provision of the institutions and not just courses delivered through collaboration.

Effectiveness of collaboration for the retention, and achievement of disadvantaged learners

The evidence regarding the effectiveness of collaborative practices for enabling learners from ethnic minority groups and the long-term unemployed to complete their courses and achieving their learning aims was not as conclusive as that for participation. Opinion was divided among interviewees, with some informants reporting that retention and achievement were good for collaborative programmes, with reports of 70 to 80 per cent completion and achievement rates. Others, however, reported that retention and achievement rates needed to be improved and also that the rates were lower than for mainstream courses – although this maybe partly due to non availability of adequate data for projects that employed collaborative approaches.

Evidence from the questionnaire data supports the view that usage of collaborative approaches was effective at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to complete courses, and achieve their learning aims. Nearly all the respondents agreed that programmes employing collaborative practices were usually satisfactory or effective at enabling learners from disadvantaged communities to achieve their learning aims. The statistical evidence showed that the case-study institutions were relatively effective at enabling learners from ethnic minority communities to complete courses and achieve their learning aims but, as with recruitment, the data related to all provision at the case study institutions – not just collaborative provision.

The findings from analysing the data in this chapter are now used to answer the three research questions in chapter seven.

CHAPTER 7. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM THE DATA.

In this chapter, the empirical research is used to provide some answers to the research questions set out in chapter four (see figure 2 page 46). Multiple sources of evidence are used to answer each question in turn.

7.1 What types of collaborative approaches do sector colleges and EIs currently employ to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training?

To answer this question, I started by characterising various types of collaborative approaches identified in the literature and used these as a starting point for my study. I then ascertained whether sector colleges and EIs collaborate to widen participation and why. Finally, findings from analysing the data in chapter six were used to determine the types of collaborative practices used by the case-study institutions.

Do EIs and sector colleges collaborate?

The evidence from the findings from interview data suggests that the case-study institutions engage in collaborative practices to deliver education and training to learners from disadvantaged groups. Partnership activities employed to widen participation include collaboration to bid for funding which allows the participating institutions, such as providers from the private sector and community groups, to put on courses in their local communities. These activities help to attract learners who would not ordinarily attend courses at the main college sites. Examples cited by respondents of this type of collaboration were: Oak College working with an Asian Association, and Acacia College using Learndirect centres based in locations away from the main college campuses, to attract non-traditional learners. Another example was that Palm Adult and Community Education funded an umbrella voluntary sector organisation (B1TN), whose sole aim was to attract and provide education and training to members of disadvantaged communities in the borough, in order to reach more learners from the target groups.

Responses received from informants indicated that sector colleges and Community Education Services (EIs) collaborate not only with each other, but also work extensively in partnership with other organisations, including community groups, voluntary and private sector providers of education and training and employers. The feeling was that employers and community groups allowed the main institutions to identify the needs of the labour market and the local community, which helped them to determine, offer and deliver the most relevant and effective programmes to attract learners from disadvantaged groups.

Why collaborate?

Findings from the interview data suggest that the main reasons why case-study institutions engaged in collaborative activities were to fulfil their strategic aims and mission of widening participation and to maximise funding. Institutional documents, including annual reports, Three-Year Development Plans, websites and, in a couple of cases, inspection reports by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) confirm that the stated aims of these organisations included the use of collaborative partnerships to widen participation. Several examples of collaborative partnerships are referred to in these documents. Another important reason cited was the need by the case-study institutions to fulfil the requirements of the *Success for All* (LSC 2002) strategy, which stipulates that institutions delivering further education and training must engage in collaborative modes of operation and delivery in order to widen participation – a pivotal aspect of the current LSC funding methodology. Indeed the plan-led funding methodology introduced by the *Success for All* strategy requires all LSC-funded institutions to demonstrate in their Three-Year Development Plans that they engage in collaborative activities as well as widening participation in order for the plan to be approved (LSC 2002). Confirmation of three-year funding is subject to approval of the plan. This rationale for collaboration conforms to the push-side model defined by Brown (2001), although the push in this case emanates from government policy which informs the funding methodology of the major funders of further education.

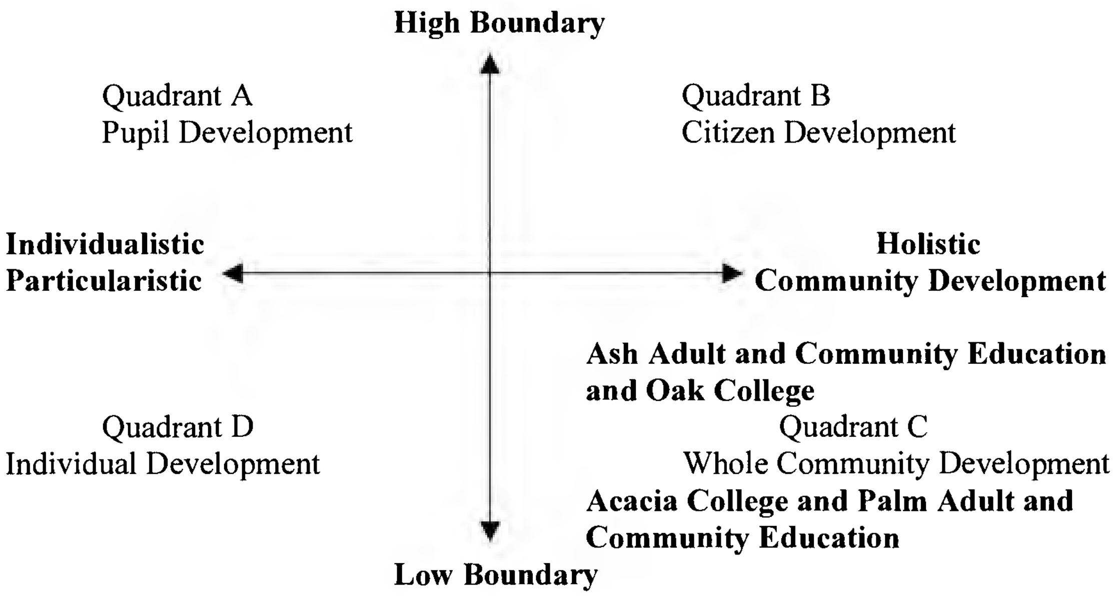
Types of collaboration employed by case-study institutions

As discussed in chapter three, Brown (2001) identified four main types of collaboration with different purposes used in education: *ad hoc partnerships*, *strategic alliances*, *strategic planning partnerships* and *mergers*. Findings from interview data in chapter six, suggest that the first three types of collaborative approaches identified by Brown are used in one form or another by the case-study institutions to enable members of ethnic minority groups and the unemployed to access further education and training. The different purposes of collaborative approaches, identified from analysis of the data: strategic planning for management, partnership for progression and franchising, were defined in chapter six and are discussed further in this chapter. Another collaborative purpose, not mentioned by Brown – work-based learning (a form of strategic partnership) - which involves partnerships between institutions and employers to allow for the delivery of vocational training, was also identified. Figure 4 (page 75) shows that the most common forms of collaboration identified by the case-study institutions were franchising and progression/ad hoc partnerships.

The main collaborative approach used by the case-study institutions conforms broadly to Brown's *strategic alliances* paradigm, where two institutions pool resources to explore particular aspects of delivery, such as the development of new curricula or sharing the costs of common resources. This model does not impact on the autonomy of institutions, but requires some commitment by partners to collaborate on a regular and wide-scale basis. The findings in chapter six show that partnerships of this nature vary in terms of the degree of cooperation between the case-study institutions: the B1 (Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education) variation with very close links between the case study institutions, and the B2 (Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College) type with a more flexible arrangement based on a concordat. Generally, the evidence suggests that both the B1 and B2 variations of collaboration fall within quadrant C (figure 35 page 123).

The B1 model where partnership between Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education encompasses a sharing of premises, joint planning and management of curriculum, joint marketing of courses, as well as joint capital programmes, conforms very closely to Quadrant C of Tett *et al's* model described in chapter three. Findings from data in chapter six suggest that the collaborative approach between these two institutions would be located nearer the low boundary as illustrated in figure 35 (figure 35 page 123).

Figure 35: Location of case-study institutions on Tett *et al's* model



High Boundary
Quadrant A
Pupil Development
Quadrant B
Citizen Development
Individualistic
Particularistic
Holistic
Community Development
Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College
Quadrant D
Individual Development
Quadrant C
Whole Community Development
Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education
Low Boundary

Modelled on Pedagogic purpose and practice (Tett *et al* (2001)

Quadrant C denotes what Tett *et al* term the holistic and low boundary paradigm of collaboration, where institutions are more concerned with the development of the whole community, more or less a regenerative approach to education, and are thus more inclined to adopt closer partnership methods with each other and other sectors to deliver their aims and objectives. Evidence from the interview data suggests that the partnership between Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College, although not as close as that between Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education, also falls within Quadrant C (relative to schools, which were found by Tett *et al* to mainly fall in Quadrant A – see chapter 3) of the Tett et al paradigm, albeit further away from the low boundary point of the quadrant (see figure 35, above).

The evidence from the interview data indicates that the collaborative arrangements in both case-study boroughs recognise the need for EIs to deliver Entry Level, often non-accredited courses, and for the further education colleges to deliver higher level courses to allow for progression routes from one type of institution to the other. Most respondents agreed that this form of collaboration permits better initial access for participants from disadvantaged groups, given that most EIs deliver from outreach facilities, such as community centres, and also provides progression routes for those who want to progress onto further courses.

7.2 How effective are these collaborative approaches (with specific reference to B1 and B2) at enabling members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to achieve their learning aims?

To answer this question, I carried out analysis of data from different sources: interviews, questionnaire and statistics. Initial analysis of the findings from interview data in chapter six was followed by an examination of questionnaire data to provide triangulation. A critical analysis of statistical data, pertaining to the case-study institutions, was also used to answer the question. This research question was answered in two parts:

1) How effective are collaborative approaches in enabling the target groups to participate in further education and training?
2) How effective are collaborative practices in enabling members of these groups to complete their programmes and to achieve their learning aims?

7.2.1 How effective are collaborative approaches in enabling the target groups to participate in further education and training?

Interview data

A broad message from the data is that most respondents believed that usage of collaborative approaches contributes positively to their institutions' drive to increase participation by disadvantaged groups. A number of interviewees noted that the rationale for engaging in collaboration was primarily to reach groups that their institutions found hard to attract onto courses delivered from the main sites – what one respondent termed *"the Heineken effect"* (Oak College.R1). Some interviewees suggested that a commitment to widening participation by partner institutions usually yields the desired result of recruiting more learners from ethnic minority learners and the long-term unemployed onto courses. Other respondents, however, stated that partnerships do not help to widen access when they are forged purely for pragmatic reasons, such as the need to reach funding targets, as happened in the early 1990s. Kennedy (1997) identified this weakness, where due to the adoption of franchising and other methods, participation rates increased considerably, but the number of hard-to-reach groups participating did not rise. Some interviewees suggested that this phenomenon still persists in some instances.

Five interviewees referred to the case-study institutions' history of successfully attracting learners from ethnic minority communities. Ten stated that the vast majority of their learners, usually between 70 and 80 per cent were from ethnic minority communities and significant numbers were on fee remission, meaning that they were either on unemployment benefit or dependent on a benefit claimant. Two suggested that they were usually successful at recruiting these groups onto courses, because their community outreach programmes were designed specifically for this purpose.

Funding

Several respondents (particularly those from Acacia College) stated that collaborative approaches have a positive impact on the recruitment of learners from disadvantaged communities in that partnerships are better placed to draw down funding - from sources such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) - earmarked primarily for encouraging members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training. Four respondents argued that access to these funds allows participating institutions better to plan courses that are relevant to the needs of disadvantaged groups, and also to provide support services designed to attract these groups onto programmes. Two interviewees pointed out that not only are some of these funding streams aimed at disadvantaged groups, but also bidding guidelines often stipulated that funding applications must show clear evidence of partnership. My own experience from bidding for funds from these sources confirms the above. For example, B1 Training Network (B1TN) an umbrella organisation for voluntary sector training providers was highly successful at generating funds from sources such as ESF and SRB for its members. Over a 10-year period till 2003, the organisation was known to have generated an average of £1,000,000 per annum from ESF (B1TN audited accounts and Annual Reports 1996 – 2002), to support training providers in B1 who primarily targeted members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed. On average 90 per cent of participants on SRB funded courses provided by B1TN partners, between 1995 and 2000, were from ethnic minority communities and the unemployed (B1TN, SRB returns 1995 –2000). The view that collaborative approaches are effective at raising funds to widen participation was also supported from findings from analysis of the questionnaire data, where 21 out 22 respondents answered that collaborative approaches were satisfactory, effective or very effective in this respect (see figures 5 and 6 on page 93).

Questionnaire data

Generally, the findings from questionnaire data support the views expressed by interviewees that collaborative practices are successful at attracting members of disadvantaged communities onto courses in further education and training. Nearly all of those who completed questionnaires, 21 out of 22, gave a score of three or above (satisfactory to very effective) for the ability of programmes employing collaborative approaches to widen access (see figures 9 and 10 on page 95). A majority (17) scored effective or very effective for the use of collaborative practices to enable members of disadvantaged communities to participate in further education and training. Respondents who made further comments generally agreed that programmes employing collaborative practices were very effective at attracting members of these groups to participate in further education and training.

Statistical data

Findings from analysis of the statistical data in chapter six suggest that the vast majority of starts on courses at Acacia College were from ethnic minority communities. The data from figure 19 (illustrated in figure 20 on page 102) show that approximately 70 per cent of starts at Acacia College (on average between 2000/01 and 2002/03) were from ethnic minority communities, mostly Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani), Black (African and Caribbean) and a small number of Chinese. The data from other case-study institutions (see figures 22, 24 and 26 illustrated in figures 21, 23 and 25 on pages 104, 106 and 108) follow a similar pattern to that of Acacia College. The evidence suggests that these institutions were generally very successful at recruiting members of the target communities to their courses. This conclusion, to a certain degree, supports the findings from interview and questionnaire data that institutions employing collaborative practices are effective at enabling members of ethnic minority communities to access further education and training.

General observations

The foregoing analysis suggests that collaborative approaches are effective at enabling the case-study institutions to attract the target groups onto courses. It is less clear, however, whether the very high levels of participation by these groups are due purely to collaborative approaches or whether demographic profiles of the boroughs are the main factor. As mentioned in chapter two, these boroughs have the highest numbers of ethnic minorities in the country. They also have unemployment rates that are well above the London and national average. For example, the latest available data, for 2003, (Office for National Statistics, 2004) show B1 with 12.3 per cent and B2 with 10 per cent unemployment as compared to the London average of 7.1 per cent and the national average of 5.2 per cent. Respondents, however, pointed out that participation rates by learners from ethnic minority groups are well above the proportion for these groups in the relevant boroughs. For example, respondent Oak College.R2 stated that the fact that 75 to 85 per cent of participants on courses at her institution were from ethnic minority communities as against 51 per cent of the population of B2 was clear evidence of the institution's success at attracting these groups onto courses.

7.2.2 How effective are collaborative practices in enabling members of these groups to complete their programmes and achieve their learning aims?

Interview data

Interviewees were more circumspect when asked to comment on the effect of collaborative practices on retention and achievement rates of learners from the relevant communities. Most respondents, for instance Acacia College.R1, Ash Adult and Community Education.R2, Palm Adult and Community Education.R2 and Oak College.R1, stated that retention and achievement rates, on collaborative programmes were either problematic for these groups or that there were insufficient data in this area. One respondent (Acacia College.R1) felt that retention and achievement, thought to be 70 to 80 per cent for these groups at her institution, was reasonable. This respondent also pointed out that the relatively high retention rates may have been due to the fact that a lot of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners do not undertake externally accredited courses because they are on Level 1 introductory courses. Another respondent (Oak College.R1) also stated that one-off collaborative programmes aimed at enabling learners from disadvantaged groups to progress onto mainstream courses usually produced high levels of retention and achievement. Some of the reasons given for the generally perceived low retention and achievement rates for these groups included the fact that some may be from transient communities such as refugees, or that most join part-time courses which limits the ability of partnership institutions to provide support facilities which might assist learners to complete courses and achieve their learning aims.

A few respondents, however, stated that once obstacles that hinder effective participation by members of these groups (for example difficult childcare arrangements) have been alleviated, retention tends to improve markedly.

Questionnaire data

Evidence from the questionnaire data (see figure 13, as depicted in figure 14 on page 97) suggests, more convincingly than findings from interviews, that institutions employing collaborative approaches were effective at enabling learners from disadvantaged communities to complete courses. This message regarding retention may be due to the fact that colleges and community organisations do not compile data pertaining specifically to programmes employing collaborative approaches to widen participation – as several respondents commented.

The picture regarding achievement from questionnaire evidence, was again clearer than the views expressed by interviewees, with 15 out 22 questionnaire respondents scoring effective or very effective and a further five scoring satisfactory (figures 15 and 16, p. 98) for the ability of projects that employ collaborative approaches to enable learners from ethnic minority communities to achieve their learning aims.

Statistical data

Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30 (pages 110, 111 and 112) show that, on average, retention rates were fairly similar for both ethnic minority groups and for white learners. A few ethnic minority groups, particularly the Chinese, had higher retention rates than for other communities - this might have been a statistical artifact resulting from the very small numbers of this group participating at all institutions. However, Indian learners also had higher levels of retention at all institutions, in spite of the relatively large number of starts from this community - see figures 20, 21, 23 and 25 (pages 102, 104, 106 and 108). Retention rates, at an average of 66 per cent, are generally lower for Palm Adult and Community Education in 2002/03, as compared with Acacia College (81%) and Ash Adult and Community Education (75%). Generally, however, the evidence as depicted by figures 27, 28, 29 and 30 suggests that retention rates for ethnic minority groups were as good as, and in some cases better than those for the white learners. It appears from these findings that the case-study institutions were successful at allowing learners from ethnic minority communities to complete their learning aims. This conclusion is more clear-cut than findings from the interview data suggest. However, this may be due to the fact that interviewees' comments related specifically to programmes employing collaborative activities and the statistical data related to aggregate delivery by the institutions.

On the whole, data contained in figures 19, 22, 24 and 26 (101, 105, 107 and 109) depicted in figures 31, 32, 33 and 34 (pages 113, 114 and 115) show that average achievement rates for ethnic minority groups compare relatively well with those for white learners at all the case-study institutions.

It may be surmised from the foregoing that the case-study institutions were successful at enabling members of ethnic minority communities to achieve their learning aims. It is not possible, however, to determine from the available statistical data how much of this success was due to the employment of collaborative practices.

7.3 What features of collaborative practices determine effectiveness in terms of widening participation?

Interview and questionnaire respondents identified the following features of collaborative arrangements as being effective for widening participation: i) shared common goals, such as recruitment and funding; ii) strategic planning; and iii) trust.

i) Shared common goals

Findings from the interview data in chapter six suggest that collaboration was thought to be particularly effective when there are shared common goals such as the recruitment of learners from disadvantaged communities onto courses. Examples given by respondents included the usually successful recruitment onto courses when large institutions with funding from sources such as ESF sub-contracted delivery of programmes, aimed at ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed, to voluntary, private sector or community providers who specialised in providing for these groups. Some respondents also noted that this practice enabled all partners to meet funding targets. I suggest policy makers take note of the fact that, whilst funding levers play a part in encouraging providers to collaborate, I found that often groups came together voluntarily to deliver educational and training programmes for members of disadvantaged communities, what might be termed the "bottom up" approach. I found that this type of collaboration can often yield positive outcomes for these communities over a sustained period of time as in the case of B1TN. This approach can be contrasted with the "top down" model, where providers are made to form partnerships as currently promoted by the LSC, which I found can often be counter-productive. In my experience, the fall out from an enforced partnership can sometimes be very costly to participating organisations. For example, one of the EIs involved in the collaborative arrangement that my institution is currently forming has pulled out completely from the delivery of LSC funded activities, due to the pressures placed on their limited resources. This is in keeping with Huxham *et al's* (2004, p. 197) contention that *"one definite conclusion, however, can be drawn. That is that making collaboration work effectively is highly resource consuming and often painful".* To my knowledge, this institution is no longer providing educational services to its predominantly ethnic minority learners. Collaboration (albeit enforced) rather than creating a condition for widening participation may have had the opposite effect in this instance.

Most interviewees and questionnaire respondents agreed that partnerships formed to deliver specific projects were effective at enabling members of disadvantaged communities to join courses. One respondent stated that partnerships with private sector providers are usually more successful at meeting recruitment targets. This respondent claimed that private sector providers treated these ventures as businesses and therefore used very effective business methods successfully to recruit learners onto courses. Another respondent suggested that working in partnership with specific community groups can lead to an increase in participation by that particular group. For example, it was pointed out that working with an Indian Association, allowed Oak College to improve participation by Asians on their programmes.

These findings, coupled with statistical evidence that indicated that the case study institutions were successful at recruiting ethnic minority learners onto courses, suggest that collaboration helps participating institutions to widen participation.

A number of interview respondents stated that partnerships formed to deliver specific projects and to meet funding targets are sometimes necessary to widen participation. Having delivered some of these projects, such as Refugees into Jobs and Basic Skills for Ethnic Minorities, in partnership with Acacia College over a number of years, I am well aware of the benefits of these types of collaboration for the partnership organisations, in terms of effective funding. More importantly, in my experience, this feature of collaboration has usually proved to be very effective in terms of increased access to further education for the target communities. This may be due to the additional support facilities, such as free childcare and help with travel allowances offered to learners on these programmes, made possible by funding such as ESF.
A large majority of questionnaire respondents 21 out 22 scored 1 to 3, (satisfactory to very effective – see figures 5 and 6 on page 93) for effectiveness of using collaborative approaches for fund raising. This may be due to the fact that current funding regimes, such as those of the ESF and LSC actively encourage collaborative

bids. The above view corroborates the findings from analysis of the interview data in chapter six. A small minority of interviewees and only one questionnaire respondent were sceptical about the effectiveness of collaborative approaches for raising funds. However, it could be argued that B1TN's experience of successfully enabling voluntary sector partners to raise substantial funds for over 10 years (see chapter six), before its demise in early 2004, supports the view that collaborative approaches can be used to effectively raise funds to widen participation.

ii) Strategic planning

The strategic planning model of collaboration was deemed to be particularly effective at widening participation by interview respondents from the B1 institutions. For instance, several respondents stated that the partnership between Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education (which delivers 80 per cent of adult and community learning (ACL) in B1) had enabled these institutions to be very effective at widening participation through joint marketing of courses, recruitment and curriculum planning. Some respondents noted that separate operations in these areas would have led to competition and therefore would not have been as productive, in terms of widening participation. Respondents also felt that strategic planning between the two (B1) institutions had enabled them to develop higher quality community-based facilities, which had been made possible through joint funding and bidding. One respondent from B2 was quite sceptical about the effectiveness of strategic collaborative partnerships at generating funds to widen participation. He stated that although there was pressure from the government for partnership fund-bidding, strategies for effective partnership fund-raising have not yet been developed in the further education sector. This view is contrary to the evidence from B1, which suggests that there are some well-developed and effective strategic partnership approaches to fund-raising. My experiences of both boroughs as mentioned in chapter two and elsewhere leads me to conclude that these differing views may be due to the fact that usage of strategic collaborative planning to widen participation has been employed in B1 for a much longer period than in B2.

iii) Trust

The evidence from chapter six suggests that respondents identified trust as a crucial ingredient for the successful deployment of collaborative practices to widen participation. The NWLP was cited as an example of a situation where an equal working relationship, facilitated by trust among participants, worked very well and allowed partners to effectively widen participation. One respondent noted that partnerships work where people are willing to give and take. He stated that: *"I think where partners are working as equals - that's where it works. In the partnership that we have in B2, the NWLP, that's gone very well because everyone has regarded themselves as equals, it hasn't been like a hierarchy of pecking order……… It works where people give as well as well take."* (Ash Adult and Community Education.R1). There is some evidence to support this view. The recent demise of B1TN (an organisation, which successfully raised millions of pounds over 10 years to enable voluntary sector organisations to widen participation and was used as a model by several boroughs in London) is thought to be partly due to in-fighting by members. This suggests that partnerships without trust will find it difficult to survive. B1TN's problems are also thought to have been partly due to changes in the format used for

ESF funding applications. The former bidding structure, which allowed different sectors (voluntary sector, local government and colleges) to bid for funds separately on a regional basis, was replaced by a system known as co-financing in 2002, where all providers bid competitively to co-financing organisations including the local LSC. It has been argued that the new system favours big institutions and may have contributed to the demise of several smaller organisations (B1TN 2004). This issue could form the basis of a future study.

7.4 Conclusions

The preceding sections of this chapter attempted to answer the three research questions. The findings from chapter six suggest that the case-study institutions engaged in collaborative practices with each other as well as other providers of education and training to widen participation. Evidence from the data showed that these institutions employed different types of collaborative approaches to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the unemployed to access further education and training.

The evidence suggests that variations of the *strategic alliances* paradigm were the main type of collaboration engaged in by the case-study institutions. Figure 35 (page 123) shows the location of types of collaboration practised in the two boroughs in relation to the Tett et al (2001) model. The diagram shows that the type of collaboration engaged in by Acacia College and Palm Adult and Community Education comes very close to the edge of the low boundary in quadrant C (whole community development, bordered by holistic development and low boundary) and that the type practised by Ash Adult and Community Education and Oak College is further away from the low boundary. Both types of collaboration are, however, located within quadrant C, meaning that all the case-study institutions recognise the need for, and form collaborative partnerships to ensure, effective provision to all members of the community.

The evidence also suggests that while, to a large extent, collaboration is driven by government policy and funding pressures these institutions, notably, also engaged in partnerships because they considered collaboration to be an effective mechanism for realising their mission statements – which in all cases included the desire to widen participation. The annual reports, Three-Year Development Plans, and, in the case of Acacia College and Oak college inspection reports (FEFC 1998 and ALI 2002) for all the institutions confirm that they regarded widening participation as their main strategic objective.

Analysis of the data suggests that all the case-study institutions used collaborative approaches effectively to enable members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training. Findings from the interviews were supported by evidence from the questionnaire data. The statistical data, although not specifically concerned with collaborative provision, showed very clearly that all the case-study institutions successfully recruited learners from ethnic minority communities onto their programmes.

Evidence regarding the effectiveness of collaborative practices for enabling members of disadvantaged communities to achieve their learning aims was less conclusive.

Evidence from the interview data suggests that opinion was divided as to the effectiveness of collaboration for allowing learners from these groups to complete their courses and to achieve their learning aims. Evidence from the questionnaire data was, however, more conclusive that collaborative approaches allow for good retention and achievement rates for ethnic minority and long-term unemployed learners. One notable factor, identified by some interviewees, for this lack of clarity in terms of the effectiveness of collaboration in this respect, was the lack of adequate systems for collecting data relating to partnership projects. This may in part account for the conflicting findings. It may also be due to the fact that collaboration in further education is relatively new compared to, for example, higher education. The statistical evidence showed that the case-study institutions had reasonable retention and achievement rates for ethnic minority students, relative to white learners. It is not possible to determine the level of contribution of collaborative provision to the findings from the statistical evidence, given that the data were for aggregate delivery by the institutions.

The third question was concerned with the features of collaborative practices that were deemed to be particularly effective in terms of widening participation. The main elements identified as being effective for collaboration were shared common goals, trust and the use of strategic planning.

7.5 Final matters

Contribution to professional and academic knowledge

Preparing for and completing the thesis has given me a better understanding of the intricacies of establishing and using collaborative approaches to deliver education and training. My recent professional experience of setting up a collaborative partnership has shown that where collaboration is imposed by an outside body (in this case a major funding body) the huge opportunity costs, in terms of additional demands on management resources can sometimes outweigh the potential benefits, such as the future sharing of good practice in areas like recruitment and fund raising. This view conforms to conclusions reached by Huxham *et al's* (2004, p.191) that *"collaborative inertia"*, where *"the output from a collaborative arrangement is negligible, the rate of output is extremely slow, or stories of pain and hard grind are integral to successes achieved, captures what happens very frequently in practice"*. This, as Huxham *et al* note, is contrary to the usual premise for engaging in collaborative practices, which is to benefit from *"collaborative advantage"*, which harnesses the synergy created when all partners achieve something.

Another implication of this study for professional practice in further education, is the need for leaders and managers involved in the development and usage of collaborative approaches for delivering education and training to be particularly mindful of the importance of building and maintaining trust at all times. Partnership is not easy and it is important too that they must receive training or attend refresher courses in "change management" (Huxham *et al*, 2004).

As noted in chapter two, much literature exists on widening participation, and there is some literature, albeit relatively sparse, about outreach provision in the further education sector. I found, however, that a gap exists in the literature in terms of further education providers employing collaborative approaches to widen participation. This study has made an attempt to contribute to the knowledge in this area, by identifying some of the purposes, and determining the levels of success, of collaborative approaches used by sector colleges and external institutions to enable learners from disadvantaged communities to access further education and training and achieve their learning aims.

A weakness identified in the study is that the case-study institutions did not systematically gather data pertaining to collaborative delivery. Collection of these data might, for example, have allowed for a more conclusive finding on the effectiveness of collaborative delivery for enabling learners from disadvantaged communities to achieve their learning aims. I recommend, given that current government policy so strongly favours collaboration, that institutions develop robust mechanisms for gathering data relating to partnership provision of education and training.

I recommend that a major statutory funding agency, such as the Learning and Skills Council, commission a study on the costs and benefits of collaborative approaches for widening participation. I suggest that findings from such a report may lead to the development of policy levers and guidelines to assist the formulation and operation of viable and effective partnerships.

Limitations of the study and implications for further research

This thesis is a small-scale research, which has cast some light on an under-researched area in further education and training. I suggest that there is need for further and perhaps a larger scale research in this area.

The main weakness of this study was the relatively small number of completed questionnaires - 22 out 130 distributed. Responses were from senior managers as well as middle managers and practitioners who worked in outreach roles. No responses were received from teachers. This low rate of return may have been due to the fact that usage of collaborative approaches for delivery of education and training is relatively new in the further education sector, usually with small staff teams working on specific partnership projects. However, the use of a case-study strategy employing multiple methods of data collection, (with interviews as the main source of evidence) which allows for triangulation, renders the study more robust.

Further studies in this area may involve an exploration of the views of learners who have been on programmes using collaborative approaches. The effects of the current drive by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), through the Strategic Area Reviews (*Success For All*, 2002) to foster widespread collaborative alliances in the post-compulsory education sector may also be worthy of investigation in the future.

Dissemination

A summary of my research findings will be prepared and made available to all stakeholders, including the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), lead members of local authorities and the Department for Education and Skills, teaching staff, learners and other professionals in relevant settings. I will also aim to have an article published in journals such as the *Journal for Further and Higher Education and Journal of Access and Credit Studies*. A version of this thesis was presented at a seminar of the School of Lifelong Education and International Development at the Institute of Education in 2004. Findings from the study will also be presented at future seminars and other relevant conferences. The purpose of the dissemination would be to publicise the findings, as well as to explore with others the policy, professional and academic implications of the study.

Concluding remarks

I joined the EdD programme in order to examine the reasons for the relative poor participation of members of disadvantaged groups in further education and training because I felt that this adversely affected their chances of economic progress. The rationale for this flowed from my observations and experiences as a Black practitioner in further education and training, as well as a Councillor and a leading member of the Education Committee of a large inner London Local Authority for several years. During the course of the study, I increasingly came to the realisation that widening participation in the further education sector was largely driven by government policy and funding regimes. I also found that the main mechanism that was currently promoted for delivering the government's stated aim of widening participation was collaboration. These conclusions informed the choice of my research topic, which was to explore the efficacy of using collaborative approaches to widen participation.

In undertaking the research, I found that the current "top down" approach used by funding agencies such as the LSC, characterised by funding levers, which compel providers to form partnerships can be problematic. The evidence showed that usage of such collaborative approaches could be effective for enabling members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to join courses. However, I also found that the huge opportunity costs, in terms of management and administrative costs, for setting up such enforced partnerships can sometimes outweigh the perceived benefits of using collaborative practices to widen participation (Huxham *et al* 2004). I found that providers of further education and training had used "bottom up" approaches to collaboration, where providers voluntarily entered into partnerships, for several years to effectively widen participation as in the case of B1TN. In my view, the foregoing discussion suggests that a commitment to values that actively embrace inclusion (Foskett 2002) is essential for establishing partnerships to enable members of disadvantaged communities to effectively participate in further education and training and achieve their learning aims.

In conclusion, I recommend that government policy makers commission a study of "bottom up" approaches to collaboration and include positive aspects of this type of partnerships in future planning and designing of collaborative paradigms that may be used to widen participation.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1) PREAMBLE

The format for the schedule is based primarily on the example for semi-structured interview outlined in Robson (2002). Interviewees will be allowed to elaborate and speculate during the course of the interviews. Open questions will be used throughout the interviews. Cohen et al (2001) list some of the advantages of open ended questions as being flexible and allowing the interviewer to probe so that he may go into more depth if he chooses, or clear up misunderstadings. Other advantages include allowing the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the interviewee really believes, and can also yield unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought of connections. Robson (2002), citing Cohen and Mannion (1989), notes that open ended questions may also encourage cooperation and rapport and allow the interviewer a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes.

The perceived disdavantages of using open ended questions are the possibilities for the loss of control by the interviewer, and in particular that responses may be more difficult to analyse than those garnered from using closed questions (Robson 2002).

2) INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Can I begin by assuring you that you will remain completely anonymous and that your name will not be included in any records of the interview (Robson 2002).

May I also ask your permission to tape and/or take notes of this interview?

As stated when I first contacted you, my name is Moore Giwa. This interview is to assist a research project that I am carrying out to explore the use of collaborative approaches to enable learners from disadvantaged groups (specifically members of ethnic minority communities and the long term unemployed) to access further education and training.

3) QUESTIONS

i) Does your college or institution engage in collaborative practices?

ii) What types of collaborative practices does the college or institution engage in?

iii) In what ways do these collaborative practices affect participation on courses by learners from ethnic minority communities and the long term unemployed?

iv) What effect do these collaborative practices have on the retention and achievement rates of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds?

v) Why does the college or institution engage in collaborative practices?

3) Closing remarks

Thank you very much for helping me and giving up your time. May I finally ask you if you can think of any aspect of collaborative approaches and their effectiveness in relation to disadvantaged learners that has not been covered by the interview?

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENEESS OF COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES FOR WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Questionnaire for managers and teachers

I would like to learn from your experience as a practitioner in order to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative strategies for enabling members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed to access further education and training and to achieve their learning aims.

I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. There is no need for you to state your name.

Name of Institution:..

Date:...

1. General questions:

a. How effective are collaborative strategies for generating funds?

Very effective **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

b. How effective are collaborative schemes at managing resources?

Very effective **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

c. How effective are collaborative strategies for meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups?

Very effective **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

Are there any general comments you would want to make?

2. Specific questions

Are programmes employing collaborative approaches effective at?

a. Attracting members of ethnic minority communities and the long-term unemployed onto courses?

Very effective — **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

b. Enabling members of the above groups to complete their courses?

Very effective — **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

c. Enabling members of the above groups to achieve their learning aims?

Very effective — **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

d. Enabling members of the above groups to progress onto further or higher education and/or jobs?

Very effective — **Not effective**

1 2 3 4 5

Are there any further comments you would like to make?

3. Are there any general comments that you would like to make?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and an early reply would be appreciated.

GLOSSARY

B1	**East London Borough**	
B2	**North London Borough**	
Acacia College	**R1**	**Senior Manager**
	R2	**Senior Manager**
	R3	**Senior Manager**
	R4	**Middle Manager**
Ash Adult and Community Education	**R1**	**Senior Manager**
	R2	**Senior Manager**
Palm Adult and Community Education	**R1**	**Senior Manager**
	R2	**Senior Manager**
Oak College	**R1**	**Middle Manager**
	R2	**Middle Manager**
	R3	**Senior Manager**