

**The Short Term Residential College:  
A Model for the Future**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores a common perception that the number of short term adult residential colleges in England and Wales is in decline due to a lack of clarity of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of those who own these establishments. This is despite clear evidence that studying in a residential setting enhances the quality of the learning experience. In very practical terms this research will explore what kind of business model might be successful in such circumstances, and provide an opportunity to secure the future of these unique establishments.

The thesis examines the value of such institutions and goes on to investigate the possible reasons why, over the past 60 years the number of short term residential colleges has declined. By examining the financial and enrolment results of five colleges over a two year period, as well as interviewing principals and learners, proposes a model to secure a future for residential education in this country. The topic for this thesis was identified by the author as a result of 20 years experience as Principal of a short term residential college and latterly Head of a county residential education service.

The colleges investigated were situated in England and differed in size, ownership and managerial structure. They have over the past 50 – 60 years promoted and sold adult residential courses of varying lengths to the adult population.

The research approach adopted in this thesis includes an examination of available literature to determine the original purpose and subsequent development of short term residential colleges. Two major research

strategies were used: firstly quantitative analysis of data collected over a two year period representing five different approaches to ownership and management and secondly qualitative analysis of data collected from interviews with principals and active learners to establish the present and future position direction of the five case studies. The data was triangulated to demonstrate concurrent validity, reliability and confidence in the findings.

The findings of this research provide evidence that there has, over the past 60 years, been a decline in the number of short term residential colleges and that the decline is mainly confined to those colleges owned and managed by county councils. Of the five case studies, three owned by county (or city) councils face an uncertain future due to lack of direction, commitment and investment as well as financial constraints placed upon them. The findings established that active learners clearly supported the quality of residential learning experience.

This thesis recommends that to survive colleges must have a clear unambiguous purpose fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Colleges that are not charitable organisations would benefit from adopting the organisation model in having clear objects encapsulating a unique selling point whether it is defined as a segment of the adult learning sector or a specialist subject area.

The main conclusions drawn from this study are that the adult residential college has a place in the adult learning landscape. Colleges must be financially independent and be nationally recognised for outstanding quality in the adult residential courses they offer.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

The number of short term colleges in England and Wales is in decline arguably due to a lack of clarity of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of those who own these establishments. This is despite clear evidence that studying in a residential setting appears to enhance the quality of the learning experience. This research will propose a model of good practice, which if adopted provides an opportunity to secure the future of these unique establishments.

In order to propose a model for the future, it is necessary to examine the literary evidence detailing when and why these colleges came into existence, their history over the past sixty years, the different models of management adopted by the owners, suggested reasons for the decline in the number of establishments and the success or otherwise of the present day short term residential college. To judge whether or not the colleges of today are succeeding in terms of attracting learners, five colleges with different ownership and management structures will be studied in detail, seeking active learner opinion of their learning experience and the opinion of principals and managers as to the future direction of their college.

The short term residential college came into existence around 1945, just after the cessation of hostilities of the Second World War. Although many have closed at the beginning of the research there are still some twenty-five colleges in England and Wales offering residential adult education in the form of short residential courses. During the two year data collection period of this research four colleges closed and at least three colleges became under threat of closure.

The five colleges selected for study are members of the Adult Residential Colleges Association (ARCA). The reason for selecting ARCA colleges is that what intelligence and knowledge there is of short term residential adult education can be found in the ARCA archives and reports published in educational publications. In addition, although ARCA would not claim to represent every short-term college in Britain, it can claim to represent by far the majority including all those colleges owned by county councils, a significant number that are charitable organisations and a small number in private hands.

The research does not include other providers such as hotels in the private sector which offer residential adult education courses during the weekend as a means of increasing bed occupancy. There are no accurate and concise records of this provision.

The author was in a privileged position to be able to undertake this research having been Principal of a short term residential college, chair and member of the ARCA management committee for over ten years. He was supported and encouraged by the ARCA membership in the gathering of evidence, having access to college records as well as being allowed time for interviews with management staff and active learners.

## **1.1 Reasons for the study**

This research seeks to address a key question: if a residential learning experience adds value to adult learning why is the number of colleges in England and Wales in apparently terminal decline? This study will address

why this is so, examine the issues facing today's residential colleges and propose a model for the future.

One of the main difficulties in conducting this study is that there is a paucity of written material focussing on this particular delivery mode of adult learning. There are a small number of authors, particularly those tracing the history and development of adult education in this country, who make reference to the introduction of the short term residential college. Livingstone (1941), Garside (1969), Legge (1982), Bron (1991), Field (1991), Kelly (1992) and Drews (1995) are examples of authors who, to a greater or lesser extent, consider the emergence of short term residential education either as an addition to, or in combination with, a discussion on the history of the long term residential college. A further difficulty is that when residential learning is discussed authors often speak about the long term residential tradition rather than the short term.

Titmus (1981) presents a number of case studies of good practice for improving adult education provision in Western Europe and considers Study Circles, Folk High Schools, the WEA and the Open University but inexplicably does not recognise residential education in the United Kingdom. Other authors consider the establishing of the short term college as an 'act of faith' (Garside 1969) and many authors comment that historians have hardly acknowledged their existence. This view is firmly held by Drews (1995), a former Principal of Wansfell Short Term Residential College, who was one of the first, and certainly the last, author to devote a complete work to the development of the short term residential college. His treatise is excellent in

considering the operational history but he found difficulty in a number of cases when referring to the rationale underlying the introduction and development of the short term college. Drews attempts to consider the rationale from a philosophical perspective by drawing on the writings of Grundtvig and Livingstone, and their influence on the short residential course, but his section on the value of this form of education acknowledges:

'No in depth research is available which concerns itself with the effectiveness of residential and non residential learning'

Drews (1995, p. 243)

Garside (1969) also exposes the apparent lack of coherent rationale in his questioning of the value of studying in a residential setting:

'The establishment of special centres, involving considerable capital investment, is clearly the most significant feature of the scene, and appears to have been largely an act of faith, as we know little of the precise nature of the value of the residential learning situation, or how it is best organised'.

Garside (1969, p 3)

He then goes on to expose the lack of serious analysis and assessment to develop his argument:

'A good deal of research needs to be done before we shall fully understand how these centres came to be set up, the motivation behind them and the principles upon which they were based, not to mention



how we should define objectives appropriate for a kind of residential programme, and how the effectiveness of this kind of education can be evaluated'.

Garside (1969, p 4)

This research will investigate how the colleges came to be set up and, by means of five case studies, consider the effectiveness of colleges with very different organisational structures. The motivation and principles adopted when they were set up are, unfortunately, not at all clear in all cases but are more evident in those that embraced Sir Richard Livingstone's work. Some colleges were set up with clear aims and objectives whilst others were purchased, staffed and allowed to be carried along with whatever was considered to be fashionable at the time:

'At one period in the 1960s it seemed as though there was a fashion that encouraged every self-respecting authority to have a short-term residential college'.

Legge (1982, p. 75)

There would appear to be no empirical evidence focussing on the contribution today's short term residential college makes in terms of the education of adults, the value of that contribution, the business objectives with regard to 'profit and loss' and whether the aims of the founders were ever achieved. Furthermore, what is missing from much of the literature is any assessment of how the residential learner views or values this mode of learning.

By examining the reasons offered for why, over the past 60 years, the number of short term colleges has declined, a model for the future organisation and direction of the short term residential college will be advanced.

## **1.2 The Early Enthusiasm**

The thoughts and writings of Sir Richard Livingstone, Vice Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast (1924-33), President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford (1933-50), and Vice Chancellor of Oxford University (1944-47), were extremely influential in shaping the foundations of the short term residential college. His belief was that residential learning was more suitable for cultural and intellectual studies than traditional evening class provision:

'Livingstone's views influenced the nature of many of the short-term colleges founded after the war, such as Pendley Manor at Tring, Hertfordshire; Burton Manor, Cheshire; the Wedgwood Memorial College in North Staffs; and the Women's Institutes' Denman College at Marcham Park, Berkshire'.

Fieldhouse (1996, p. 257)

(Fieldhouse is mistaken when he places Denman College in Berkshire; it is in fact in Oxfordshire).

Kelly (1992) reports that by 1948 there were more than twelve colleges and by 1950 more than twenty. Drews (1995) lists eighteen colleges by 1948 and some twenty-six by 1950. Although Drews challenges the accuracy of Kelly's work, and in his opinion the lack of detail in discussing the emergence

of short term residential education, the figures clearly show an enthusiasm in the 1950s for the introduction and growth of the concept of the residential college.

This enthusiasm can be clearly seen in the writings of Hunter (1952), Warden of Urchfont Manor College:

'The impact of new surroundings, fellowship and the frankness it creates, the absence of distractions, all combine to make possible the strongest impact on a student, and as a whole person rather than in purely intellectual ways. ...The peculiar virtue of residence lies in the intensity of impact on attitudes rather than on extensive study'.

Hunter (1952, p. 52)

Hunter's enthusiasm for the residential learning experience is more clearly defined in the debate he engenders regarding 'how ' and 'why' the 'working man' should be encouraged and enabled to undertake residential courses.

In 1947 the Ministry of Education produced a document dealing with further education and according to Harris-Worthington (1987) constituted the first movement towards a national recognition of the value of residential education. One key journal of the day noted:

'Residential courses, where students have been able for three or four weeks to devote the whole time to the pursuit of some subject of their choice, have been an outstanding success. This suggests that there may be considerable scope for, and value in, short courses as a permanent part of adult education if a sufficiently wide range of subjects - practical as well as a theoretical - is made available'.

Further Education (1947, p. 35)

Drews (1995, p. 193) lists a cross section of fourteen short term residential colleges founded between 1944 and 1949 detailing the 'supporting agency' and the 'purpose for founding'. Of the fourteen colleges six were owned solely by LEAs, three were trusts, two owned by universities, two owned by a consortium of agencies and one owned privately. In terms of residential adult education it was the main purpose for seven of the fourteen colleges. The remainder provided residential facilities for activities such as teacher training as well as residential adult education.

Was this early enthusiasm for residential education sustained for the following sixty years?

### **1.3 Overview from the 1950s to 2009**

In order to support the thesis statement that the number of colleges over the past sixty years has declined, the research will review when and where colleges were founded and when and why they were closed. The reasons why they (the colleges) were closed is not always apparent from the available literature.

Drews (1995, p. 239) lists the short term residential colleges in England and Wales from 1938 until the end of his research period, 1995. From 1995 until 2009 there have been further closures but also a small number of colleges opened. Detail will be given in Chapter 2. To summarise Drews, fifty-four colleges have at some time been in existence and over that time twenty colleges have closed or remained open, albeit to serve other purposes such as conference centres. From 1995 until 2009 four colleges

have opened, two in private hands and two as charitable organisations.

However since 1995, seven colleges have closed, one owned privately, five owned by county councils and one owned by a tertiary college. From very enthusiastic beginnings in and around the 1950s, 50% have closed.

Where possible, this study will postulate some of the reasons for closure, even though information is either difficult to obtain or disputed. Latterly, county council owned colleges have given the reason for closure as financial; i.e. the college operating at a deficit, but the managers of a number of these colleges would dispute that this is so.

Legge (1982) questioned the financial arrangements of colleges and Hunter (1952) foresaw the financial difficulties ahead:

'... people have been content to let development drift, therefore running the risk of collapse under the strains of uneven demand, overworked staff and ad hoc expediency. The greatest danger in the early 1980s, however, would seem to be the threat of closure on simple financial grounds. LEAs looking for economies in their educational budgets find it difficult to resist the temptation to remove a provision which seems inevitably expensive, and inflation has put under severe strain colleges owned by private individual charities. Not much saving can be made on the already skeleton staff and there are limits to cuts in ancillary staff or educational material. High 'economic' fees would also destroy the purposes for which many were established. The colleges however are a national asset which, if destroyed, would be hard to replace'.

Legge (1982, p. 81)

By looking at the financial detail provided by the case studies, the assertion that this provision is 'inevitably expensive' made by Legge will be

tested. Many colleges operate on a 'full cost recovery' basis when taking into account all business activities.

The case studies have been carefully chosen to represent different ownership arrangements and different strictures and limitations under which each college has to work. Secondly a key question arises: if these colleges can demonstrate an adult education 'value' then is there a more cost effective management arrangement, or financial arrangement, that would stand a better chance of survival in today's harsh economic climate? This question forms the heart of the research and will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

In order to illustrate the organic, changing nature of the world of residential adult education, included below is a note received by email August 2009:

'I write to you all as The Hill is being boarded up. A business proposal was put forward in order to keep The Hill working (albeit on a more lean structure) and the volume of objections to the proposal was incredible (though many local). However, at the end of the day, none of the proposals could provide the college with the sum of proceeds of sale which will be invested in Coleg Gwent to secure the future for learners and staff across the Coleg Gwent'.

Member of staff – The Hill College 2009

All the short term colleges discussed in this study have been, or are, members of the Adult Residential Colleges Association (ARCA). It should be noted that this is a voluntary organisation managed by the principals and managers of the short term colleges. In terms of short term residential

education, ARCA is the only national organisation promoting the value of residential education.

## **1.4 The Adult Residential Colleges Association (ARCA)**

Formerly the Wardens' Standing Conference of Short term Residential Colleges, ARCA represents many of the short term colleges in existence today. There are a small number of private providers that are not in membership but all county council colleges and most charitable organisations are members.

The reason for selecting five ARCA colleges as case study material is due mainly to the accessibility afforded in terms of data collection, the opportunity to conduct research interviews with principals and interviews with learners in the form of focus groups. The group that is missing from the research is the private provider. The difficulty in selecting a private college was reluctance on their part to provide any meaningful data, certainly to the depth that the other contributors were willing to. The private provider was much more sensitive to business confidentiality. ARCA has remained particularly interested in the results and recommendations made by the research, and have throughout the study been most supportive and cooperative.

The full details of ARCA membership can be found in

*Appendix 1 p. 353*

The full details of college membership at 2009 can be found in

*Appendix 9 p. 370*

## **1.5 The Future**

The future of a number of colleges is uncertain. At the time of this research two indicators are emerging that may point the way for the future of the short term residential college as perceived by one group; the ones owned by county councils. The first is the replacement of senior staff. In the 1950s Hunter (1952) suggested that the residential college should have a Principal with an educational background leading the college. This is not now the case. In all recent appointments, managers have been engaged to administer the college, usually with a business instead of an educational background. Secondly, if the Head of a college resigns, local authorities are not advertising the vacancy as a permanent post. This situation applies to two colleges at the time of this research

## **1.6 Summary**

As will be shown the future of many of the short term colleges is uncertain, particularly those owned by county councils as the following note received by email August 2009 makes clear:

'This is to inform you that Horncastle College, Lincolnshire, will be ceasing Residential Adult Education as from the end of December 2009'.

(email received by the Treasurer of ARCA August 2009)

This research will determine the number of short term colleges that have closed over the past sixty years and will analyse the reasons for their closure.



The reasons why some colleges are successful will be examined and their strengths scrutinised to also inform a model for the future:

- Chapter 2 will look at the available literature and examine the possible reasons and motivations behind the introduction of short term residential adult education. The extent to which the colleges were introduced on a clear philosophical principle and sound financial footing and the extent to which such elements have had implications for their ultimate survival will be explored.
- Chapter 3 explains why various research methods were adopted in order to determine whether the statements of clarity of direction, purpose and investment hold true today. The research methods chosen will result in an understanding of the business position of five present day colleges reviewed over a two year period. For a college to succeed income generated from learner enrolments or other sources must match or exceed expenditure. To attract enrolments elements such as the standard of living accommodation, the standard of teaching accommodation, quality of teaching and curriculum are considered by the methodologies adopted in this research.
- Chapter 4 presents quantitative and qualitative data. The data presented was collected over a two year period from five case studies to support the thesis that a lack of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of who own these

establishments are key elements for any understanding of the position that colleges experience today. This two year snapshot of the business of five colleges will provide a description of the current business position of the five colleges.

- Chapter 5 explores the apparent situation that the number of short term colleges is in steady decline and yet from reports of interviews with active learners, stands in direct contradiction with the high regard learners have for the residential experience. The five focus groups, by means of discussion, indicate what benefits or disadvantages they perceive from a residential learning experience.
- Chapter 6 examines in more depth the experiences of managing the first of the 'new' colleges. In particular this Chapter seeks to justify the thesis arguments that even in the early days of the short term residential college there was in some cases a lack of clarity of purpose. In many cases there was little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of the owners.
- Chapter 7 looks in more detail at recent college closures explaining why such action has been taken. The inclusion of this data and explanations is important as these colleges have tried to survive in today's economic climate but sadly failed.

- Chapter 8 explores future possibilities and, using the information presented particularly from those colleges that appear to be surviving, a proposed model of good practice is presented that could be adopted. This may provide an opportunity to secure the future of short term adult residential education in England and Wales.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

The content of this Chapter has been arranged into eight sections to address the arguments detailed in Chapter 1. In order to propose a model for the future, it is necessary to understand the reasons why short term residential education was introduced after the Second World War. The characteristics of short term residential education and degree to which the remit for these colleges differed from the well established and successful long term residential colleges will be explored. By examining the writings of the early Wardens information will be sought regarding the purpose and strategic direction of these colleges as well as indicators as to why so many have closed. In particular the ownership of the 'new' colleges will be examined in order to determine whether one type of ownership is more susceptible to closure than another. This review will also ascertain the numerical decline of the short term residential colleges over the past sixty years.

Learning in residence has been in existence for many years and has, over that time, been generally perceived to be 'a good thing'. Residential learning communities were constructed on the conviction that they provided a better climate for achieving educational, as well as personal development goals, (Bron, 1991). Monasteries, Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, boarding schools for the upper classes and for religious sects such as Quaker Schools are examples. Bron adds a note of caution suggesting that not all residential learning communities are necessarily designed for the individual good:

'There is, however, a negative experience of residential education as well, like that established by Makarenko in Soviet Russia, which were prison-like institutions for young orphans whose parents had been killed by the Bolsheviks...Some extreme religious groups use residentiality for both manipulation and brainwashing (i.e. Moon sect). It seems that the boarding school idea was built on the conviction that they provide a better climate for achieving educational and personal development goals'

Bron (1991, p.3)

Bearing in mind Bron's cautionary words the available literature, of which there is little, suggests that the intensity of studying in residence adds quality to the learning experience:

'There are good logical reasons to suppose that this informal learning is intensified by the fact of residence, which provides space, experimentation and exploration of the learner's - and teacher's - personal identity and underlying values; yet this has received little or no attention from researchers'.

Field (1991, p.1)

The findings of this research would support the above contention that the value of studying in a residential setting has received very little attention from researchers. Why this should be so when, as far back as the early years of the 1900s, residential institutions were recognised as a different mode of effective course delivery is unclear.

Woodley et al (1987) discuss the value of residential study and throughout their work, which is concerned with long term colleges, recognise the impact on the learner of studying and living together in supportive groups:

'The few, tiny residential colleges, however insignificant in terms of the small numbers they enrol, occupy a unique position in the total scheme of education for adults in England and Wales, as will be clear throughout this report...As we shall see later, these institutions recruit an occupationally and educationally unusual mixture of students into an intensive learning milieu reserved for adults which is quite unlike that of any other institution in Britain'.

Woodley et al (1987, p. 46)

The authors quoted above agree that a residential learning experience can be characterised as intensive, supportive, having a strong corporate spirit, having a better learning climate, and providing space for experiment and exploration. They also agree that very little research has been undertaken by researchers into this mode of learning hence the paucity of written material. However Drews (1995), former Principal of Wansfell College, a short term residential college, recognising this fact has written a most authoritative thesis on the history of short term residential colleges.

This research will address why, given the strengths as outlined, the number of short term residential colleges are in decline. The reasons why learning in residence was introduced and the additional strengths of residential education as perceived by a variety of authors will be examined in the following section.

## 2.1 Origins of learning and teaching in residence

It would be difficult when discussing the origins of learning and teaching in residence to omit the influence of N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783 – 1872), a theologian, who during visits to Oxford, was convinced that learning in residence was a key factor in developing relationships between tutor and learners. He observed and commented that residentiality gave a feeling of:

‘togetherness and fellowship’

Bron (1991, p.6).

Grundtvig’s revolutionary ideas about the education of young Danish adults, or, as he called them, the ‘common people’, was a desire to educate focusing on history, religion and cultural heritage. Out of this desire came the concept of the folk high school. Grundtvig proposed a folk high school, the Academy at Soer, whose purpose was to ‘seek for enlightenment’ which, in his opinion, would lead to the achievement of democracy in society. The school was never built and it was left to others to put into practice his aspirations for the development of the folk high school. One of the most important aspects of these schools was residentiality:

‘Residentiality was from the very beginning the main feature of the Danish folk high schools. With close contacts between students and between student-teachers, one hoped to reach not only the intellectual, but above all emotional, goals of enlightenment. One should not only live under the same roof and learn together, but also run a household

together – cook meals, work in the garden or at the farm which the school owned’.

Bron (1991, p.8 )

All Nordic Folk High Schools, apart from those in Sweden, were developed as residential learning communities. In Britain the development of the folk high schools in Denmark had not gone unnoticed. A number of adult educators, in particular those from the Quaker school movement and the WEA, having visited Danish schools, opened residential colleges based on the Danish model. Experience had also been gained from a number of universities which held summer schools to provide opportunities in the field of university extension work and also from the Quaker experience in running ‘Guest Houses’. These guest houses are claimed to be the first short term residential centres.

Ruskin College founded by W. Vrooman in 1899 was established, in theory, to be part of a national network of working class residential colleges that would offer courses and training for potential leaders of the working class movement. It provided working class organisations with university standard residential education. Based in Oxford, Ruskin Hall as it was formerly named was an independent college with strong political links, particularly with trade unions. The college had strong relations with Oxford University which allowed for special privileges such as attending lectures and the use of most facilities:

‘Its work showed, however, the value of residential education for young English workers’.

Jennings (1983, p.13)



The accommodation and 'living experience' as set up by Vrooman was very sparse and bordered on being eccentric. Students were expected to do their own domestic chores and small piles of food such as fruit and bread were made available throughout the college so that students could satisfy their hunger whenever they had the need:

'The twenty students in residence in 1903 included four miners, two composers, a brushmaker, a joiner, an engineer, a warp dresser, a weaver, a docker, a billposter, a clerk, a tailor, a shop assistant, a postal worker, a farmer, and two trade union officials'.

Kelly (1992, p.244

The following extract sets out the philosophy of the college as it operates today, a philosophy that has changed little over the past 110 years:

'Ruskin College is an independent college based in Oxford that specialises in providing educational opportunities for adults with few or no qualifications. We aim to change the lives of those who need a second chance in education. Ruskin welcomes students who not only want to develop themselves but also want to put something back into society. ...We offer university standard education in the informal setting of a small residential college'.

Ruskin College History (Anon., 2010)

However the development of Ruskin College was not without controversy. Ruskin students in 1908 viewed the college as too pro-establishment and imbued with elements of 'social control'. They decided to organise a strike and, supported by the Principal, D Hird, the Central Labour College was

formed to provide independent working class education and was supported financially by the National Union of Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners' Federation. By 1929, due to the Great Depression, funding was not forthcoming and as a result the college closed at the end of July.

The first two residential colleges after Ruskin, opened in 1899 were Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, opened in 1903 as a residential adult school and Fircroft College, Selly Oak, established in 1909, mainly for rural workers. The first residential enrolments at Fircroft College were Danish students:

'Founded by George Cadbury, junior, in 1909, in response to a demand from the adult school movement, it was designed as a centre to which working men might go for a week, a month, a term, or a year to study seriously, with a view to equipping themselves better as citizens, adult scholars or teachers'.

Kelly (1992, p.262)

Both these colleges operate today, Fircroft belonging to the 'long term' tradition of adult residential provision and Woodbrooke belonging to the 'short term'.

Although it is recognised, and rightly so, that Grundtvig exercised a powerful influence on the development of Danish schools, it was Kold (1816 – 70) who translated Grundtvig's ideas into practice and gave the Danish folk high school the form it has today:

'Kold and Poulson Dal (teacher) lived under the same conditions as their students, ate the same food as they did and slept beside them at

night in the loft above the classroom ...Kold insisted that a school ought to resemble the pupils' home as much as possible in order that they might feel receptive and relaxed. The classroom, for instance, should look like an ordinary living room'.

UNESCO (1994, pp. 21-35)

Bron (1991) also acknowledges the important part that Kold played in the practical realisation of the folk high school:

'Kold began his career by starting schools for children, and gradually became aware, because of his own experience, as well as Grundtvig's influence, that schools should be designed for young adults. As with other schools, it was, for Kold a boarding house that played the crucial role in enlightenment. As he did not have his own family, but wanted one very much, he created his schools as a family to get the feeling of real togetherness. In small groups of pupils, with one teacher, and his sister as housekeeper, he reached 'family like' life at school'.

Bron (1991, p.6 )

The concept of the folk high school was evident in many countries of Europe before the First World War, including Hungary, Croatia, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. After the First World War this number increased and Austria, The Netherlands, Bulgaria and Estonia were added to the list. In Germany the Association of Rural Residential Folk High Schools laid down that its members should offer at least one residential course lasting a minimum of four weeks each year. It is interesting to note that in his book Strategies for Adult Education Titmus (1981), when surveying the structures and organisation of adult education in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Federal

German Republic, France , Norway, The Netherlands, Denmark and Italy, describes at length and in some detail the contribution of residential education in all these countries apart from the United Kingdom. In essence, both the long and short term colleges in the UK would appear, in his opinion, to have made no contribution to the education of adults. He does however accept that the Open University, in its early days of development, included a residential week as part of the learning experience. The reasons why the Open University included a residential learning experience called 'residential schools' as part of its degree courses will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

In England, as has been mentioned, Woodbrooke College and Fircroft College were established within six years of each other and, coincidentally, in the same location:

'At Fircroft the Warden, Tom Bryan, aimed at the development of an intense corporate life combined with a spartan regime. Fircroft did not, however, develop as a college recruiting mainly rural workers: the majority of its students came from industrial occupations'.

Jennings (1983, p.12)

At about the same time (1903) another major influence was the involvement of the Workers Education Association (WEA). The WEA was deeply rooted in the education of workers from rural, urban and industrial communities and embraced a wide range of activities. The setting up of a 'tutorial class' system was one of its aims and the organisers looked to Denmark for inspiration and guidance. In 1910 the WEA formed an Advisory

Committee on Education in Rural Districts and argued that England should adopt the system employed by Denmark for rural workers:

'The Danish Folk High School had been an inspiration to the WEA in launching its campaign for rural education, but a different method had turned out to suit English conditions better'.

Jennings (1983, p.15)

The different method developed by the WEA was to establish a network of rural classes which in turn were part of a system of rural branches:

'The Workers Education Association, founded in 1903, became the organising partner of the Universities in developing these 'tutorial classes' which are a distinct contribution of Britain to the world movement for adult education'

Hunter (1952, p.12)

'The success in rural areas of both the normal WEA branch organisation and its class programme of liberal studies – history, economics, literature, etc. – took the steam out of the campaign for a rural workers' college'.

Jennings (1983, p.14)

An important characteristic of the WEA, and dealt with at some length in The 1919 Report: the final and interim reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-1919 (hereafter known as the The 1919 report), was the responsive nature of the organisation:

'It may be observed that the facilities for study offered or arranged by the Workers' Educational Association respond rapidly to the needs and demands of the time'

Ministry of Reconstruction (1919, p. 216)

What is interesting is the WEA involvement in residential learning by supporting one of the short term residential colleges both financially and academically. The value of residential learning had been recognised by WEA officials visiting folk high schools in Denmark and in 1943 the North Staffordshire District of the WEA joined forces with the Staffordshire LEA, the Oxford Delegacy for Extra Mural Studies. This group negotiated with Josiah Wedgwood, a lifelong supporter of the WEA, for the lease of Barlaston Hall. The negotiations were successful and 'The Wedgwood Memorial College' opened in 1945:

'When the college opened in 1945 the WEA was given a special role in the planning of courses and in the recruitment of students. This role was based on its previous experience in promoting weekend schools and again demonstrated the trust afforded to the WEA by its other two partners, in particular the LEA.'

Drews (1995, p.123)

So, although the WEA did not realise its aspiration to open a residential college of its own it certainly was a major partner in the opening of Wedgwood Memorial College.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century rural culture gave way to an Industrial Revolution. Industrial towns grew, attracting rural workers who were in need

of 'adult education' to enable them to learn the skills of basic literacy and numeracy. The Mechanics Institutes and Working Men's colleges took up the challenge the first being incorporated in Glasgow in 1823 and in the same year the London Mechanics' was founded:

'In the Mechanics Institutes and in the Working Men's colleges in London or Sheffield men began to learn to read and write, simple mathematics; others to learn accountancy and commercial subjects; others to learn the science of their factory trade; others still to reach out to some understanding of the new marvels of science and the older riches of literature and the arts. In the colleges (for the Institutes banned politics) there was also a strong group struggling to master economics and political philosophy, since from learning they believed that social emancipation of the industrial masses would come'.

Hunter (1952, p.11)

The Working Men's Colleges, soon to be organised by local authorities, concerned themselves with technical and vocational training. However, there was a demand for 'learning for its own sake', which is still very pertinent today. Government funding over the past few years has been directed towards vocational skills-based learning, with 'learning for its own sake' being starved of funds and under serious threat of disappearing from the educational landscape.

The Second World War provided an insight into the low level of education of the ordinary person and also the desire for adult education as a means of educational improvement. Hunter (1952) cites as an example the desire for learning in prisoner of war camps. He suggests these experiences

led to a realisation that a residential experience based on interest, imagination and practical activity could be of immense value to the education of adults. Directly after the war, the climate for adult education was ready to accept methods that would help recently demobbed soldiers update and improve their educational skills. There was a realisation that 'learning for its own sake' had a rightful place in the society of the day and recognition of the work of the long term colleges, which were by now well established. The long term colleges were beginning to experiment by providing adult courses for a shorter period of time, particularly for the unemployed. Fircroft offered a new concept; learning holidays for women that lasted for one week and which ran alongside their long term courses.

Kelly (1992, p.361), having looked in detail at adult education provision, concluded that in the post war years adult education was a partnership between four significant providers: central government, the universities through extra mural departments, the voluntary bodies mainly through the WEA, and LEAs, which included some short term residential colleges. He describes a partnership that was not altogether harmonious. For example, as they grew in strength, university extra mural departments offered a greater range of courses but operated independently of each other and significantly also became more and more independent of the WEA due to social and educational changes after the war:

'Universities attach special value and importance to Tutorial Classes and to other forms of their work which they conduct in co-operation with



the WEA. They cannot, however, regard their services as available exclusively to any one organisation or section of the community'

Kelly (1992, p.363)

Another factor in the extra mural development was, as Kelly (1992, p.365) noted, the move towards the provision of 'adult education for the educated'. He draws on surveys published during 1961 – 1962 which indicated that 70% of all students fell in the three highest occupation categories of higher professional, lower professional and clerical, and highly skilled. These courses were not of the WEA pattern but tended to be one session based on personal interests. Kelly (1992, p.374) notes that residential courses offered a substantial contribution to extra mural departments in such subjects as current affairs, military history and strategy, and science. During the 1950s the WEA suffered a sharp decline in courses and a consequent decline in enrolments. The association reported that it had lost sight of its original goal, namely to provide serious study for working class students in subjects relevant to social emancipation. The Association in 1949 published a volume entitled The WEA: the next Phase (cited in Kelly 1992, p. 376) which included an article by Raybould in which he stated:

'[the WEA] ... was providing the wrong kind of tutorial classes; it was recruiting the wrong kind of students – too many middle class students and not enough manual workers; and it was studying the wrong kind of subjects – too much music and not enough economics'.

Raybould cited in Kelly (1992, p.377)

Work with the trade unions, who made a 2d. levy on their members, provided much needed funds for the promotion of work with the WEA. The result was that they effectively demonstrated that, given sufficient funds to support teaching and organising staff and tutors, it was possible to attract into adult education many trade union members who would not consider enrolling on a traditional WEA class. This development counteracted the tendency for some extra mural departments to recruit those from the better educated sectors of the population. Kelly noted the introduction of the new short term residential colleges:

'One of the most encouraging and interesting features of this post war period was the increasing provision of special centres for adult education, both residential and non-residential'

Kelly (1992, p. 377)

Richard Livingstone was a key figure in promoting the benefits of residential education. Kelly (1992) drew on the writings of Livingstone to highlight, as he saw it, the importance of 'adult education centres'. Livingstone maintained that the true centre for adult education was a building dedicated for that purpose and used as examples the short term and long term residential colleges. The problem for all organisations; Universities, WEA, LEAs and other providers was a serious shortage of funds to provide for capital and organisational development. (See *Appendix 2 p. 356* for an extract from Hansard regarding the political debate regarding WEA funding.)

The long term residential colleges did however benefit from some direct government grants and were able to undertake modest building works.

Ruskin College for example benefitted from public funds but also from trade union funding. However, the major feature of the post war period was the introduction of the short term residential college due to a large extent to the encouragement of Sir Richard Livingstone. By 1968 some thirty short term residential colleges were in existence, associated with university extra mural departments, LEAs, and others in private hands. An important point made by Kelly (1992, p.394) and others commenting on short term residential colleges was the problem of what these colleges should be used for during the week. Weekends were well attended when learners had leisure time but weekdays were another matter and as will be seen when examining the detail of the five case studies is still a problem today.

Garside (1969) in summarising the contribution of residential colleges made reference to other providers, although from the standpoint of the nature of courses undertaken rather than the potential value of residentiality:

'A large proportion of the total volume of work undertaken is of a liberal non-vocational kind, but some participants are vocationally motivated, and some programmes are directed at specific occupational groups. Industry, commerce and the public services have followed suit and there are now at least as many residential centres run by companies, industries or services for the purpose of improving the vocational skills of their personnel'.

Garside (1969, p.2)

The literature traces the origins of learning and teaching in residence and strengthens the case for residentiality adding quality to the experience. The fact that many organisations in the private sector discovered the value of

residential education as a means of generating profit by delivering conferences and courses adds strength to the residentiality argument. There is a similarity between many of the remarks made by the authors quoted. Grundtvig, Bron, Field, Woodley, Livingstone, Drews are examples of authors who argue that residential learning develops 'togetherness and fellowship, 'close contact between learner and tutor', 'introduces close corporate life' and 'mimics family life'.

The idea that there was educational value in a short residential course was born but there were early signs that a serious shortage of funds would hinder development not only in the residential sector but in adult education as a whole.

Without doubt the key figure credited with bringing purpose, direction and support to the concept of the short-term college, was academic, philosopher and educational visionary Richard W. Livingstone. Given his influence in the field of residential education, the reasons for his enthusiasm and how he perceived residential learning, will be considered in order to determine his contribution to and ideas about the purpose of the adult residential college.

## **2.2 Adult Education and the residential concept in England.**

'Education, Livingstone thought, should be continued throughout life and as a model, at least for the early years of adulthood, he turned to the Danish residential colleges, where, during the winter months young adults in rural communities could make use of their spare time to learn about literature and culture, rather than more efficient ways of farming'.

Drews (1995, p.103)

As mentioned Drews (1995), former Principal of Wansfell College, has written a most authoritative thesis on the history of short term residential colleges.

He wrote:

'There appears to be no evidence that anyone other than Sir Richard Livingstone advocated the establishment of residential colleges for adult education in England, teaching in the main literature, history and other non-vocational cultural subjects, before the second world war'.

Drews (1995, p.106)

Livingstone (1941) referred in detail to the work of Grundtvig and Kold and lamented the fact that the educational developments achieved in Denmark drew comparatively little attention. He makes a comparison between the economic states of Denmark and England at the beginning of the twentieth century suggesting that Denmark has transformed into 'one of the most prosperous and progressive democracies of Europe'. He attributes the Danish success largely to school education and the work of Grundtvig and a 'working cobbler' called Kold, a 'man of the people'. He goes on to say that when writing his report there were fifty seven High Schools in existence, they were nearly all residential and the Government gave grants to aid access to these colleges. The students were over eighteen years old and were mostly farmers and smallholders with some labourers. Perhaps one of the most significant points that Livingstone makes is that only 25% of the learners had anything more than a rudimentary elementary education and that the Government was prepared to pay half the fees for those who could

not pay. The seeds of the short term residential college movement were about to be sown. Of the Danish system of adult education, he wrote:

'Here is a force quite unlike anything in Britain. We have, it is true, residential colleges for adult education, Coleg Harlech, Newbattle, Fircroft near Birmingham, Avoncroft near Bromsgrove (for agricultural workers), Hillcroft at Surbiton and others. But whereas we have about nine such residential colleges in the country of forty-four and a half millions, Denmark has fifty-seven for a population of three and a half millions. Further the clientele at our colleges is an intelligentsia, and their studies of the W.E.A. type, hence, admirable as they are, they could not solve the problem of educating the masses of the nation. We have the W.E.A. But while the W.E.A. in a country with thirteen times the population has some 60,000 students attending evening classes on 24 evenings of the year, Denmark has 5802 students attending for periods of three to five months continuous study. In Denmark adult education penetrates the whole nation; in this country it touches individuals and small sections'.

Livingstone (1941, p.46)

Livingstone supported his arguments by detailing the three 'secrets of success' namely: Danish schools admitted adults, the fact that they were residential and that they were 'essentially a spiritual force'. He then, very carefully and deliberately, expanded on the three secrets. The 'secret' that is of the most interest here is the second one – that schools are residential. The other two 'secrets' could and are used to justify other modes of adult education.

His arguments for residentiality unsurprisingly accord with the advocates described above, and are as follows;

- Atmosphere: the learner is 'steeped' in the atmosphere of education.
- Enhanced relationship between teacher and learner: the teacher is continuously in touch and can adjust to changing needs.
- Environment: pleasant attractive buildings.
- Not a piecemeal experience: a formation of an outlook and attitude.
- Social: the power of comradeship. By living together learners gain from each other's views and personalities.

Livingstone (1941, p.50)

But above all Livingstone makes a strong plea that adult education will not succeed unless organisations make adult education more social:

'Consider how often education has burned most brightly at a common hearth, where men gathered together in company to warm their hands at its flame: in antiquity, Socrates in the market place and the gymnasium, the great classical schools of the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoa, the Museum of Alexandria; in the Middle Ages, the universities, culminating in the residential university, recognized, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, as their ideal form'.

Livingstone (1941, p.52)

Although a continuation of the above, what follows is worthy of highlight as it is the most quoted passage from Livingstone's writings and has been used extensively over the years by many authors and organisations to argue the case for residential education, particularly the short term colleges:

'No doubt a lamp of wisdom can burn in solitary shrines and even in dismal lecture halls. But for the many it will not burn brightly, if at all, unless fanned by that social, corporate life which exists in a residential university and which both educates and makes education attractive'.

Livingstone (1941, p.52)

Livingstone was invited by a number of short term colleges to speak at college opening ceremonies, for example in 1948 the National Federation of Women's Institutes College, Denman near Oxford. It must have been a proud moment to see his ideas come to fruition in a number of local authorities and charitable organisations.

As noted previously two years after Livingstone published 'The Future of Education' (1941) the British Institute of Adult Education published a slim report entitled 'Adult Education After The War' (1943) and although Livingstone was not a member of the committee, chaired by Viscount Sankey, members engaged with many of the ideas promoted by him:

'With notable exceptions, it is still true to say that the majority of adult classes meet in rooms which are either uncomfortably seated, badly heated, lighted or ventilated, depressingly decorated, ill supplied with sanitary accommodation, or which too often have more than one of these disadvantages. Whilst recognizing that in spite of this, many thousands of students are prepared to make the best of bad conditions for the sake of education, the drawbacks cannot be condoned'.

British Institute of Adult Education (1943, p.45)

They argued forcibly that poor accommodation conditions not only deter the potential learner but also affect the quality of the learning taking place. It is



not unusual, and sadly it is still true today, that adults are expected to be taught in rooms equipped for primary school children and are therefore totally unsuitable for purpose. The committee addressed these concerns by postulating three alternatives: firstly the provision of a purpose-built adult education institute, secondly the requirements of hired premises and thirdly the dual use of schools.

They went on to deal with the other major ingredient for a successful adult education service, namely the recruitment and training of staff. They observed that teachers engaged in adult education are not assimilated into the educational system as a whole. They suggest that if there is a system of transfer where teachers could move from one branch of education to another, without loss of status or remuneration, adult education would become professionalised:

‘This system might have the two-fold advantage of providing the adult branch with competent teachers, and also offering wider opportunities for those entering the teaching profession. In addition, it would stimulate the flow of teachers through the whole education service’.

British Institute of Adult Education (1943, p.49)

In summary the committee (p. 57) sets out clearly a vision for the future of adult education and it is fascinating to observe some seventy years later how many of their suggestions were implemented and how much of the vision was realised. This will be examined in Chapter 6.

All points made were directed toward the provision of adult education but the following selection is of particular relevance to short term residential colleges:

**'1. Scope and purpose of adult education:**

1.3. Education should be made available to the whole population and should be varied in range and standard to suit a variety of their requirements.

1.4. The distinction between vocational and non vocational education has been emphasised - they should be brought into closer relationship with each other

**II. Development:**

II.6 From a narrow range of more strictly intellectual subjects to a wider range, including the arts.

II.7 From a few types of organisation to many.

**IV. Institutional forms:**

IV.18 Education is a social, as well as an intellectual activity.

IV.19 An institutional setting has the same value for adult education as it has in university and school life.

IV.24 Residential institutes offering varying types and varying lengths of courses should be provided.

IV.25 There is a special need for residential institutes catering for short courses of a few weeks duration, for holiday and weekend schools and conferences.

IV.26 For longer courses, employers of labour should be encouraged to grant leave of absence to their employees'.

British Institute of Adult Education (1943, p.57)

Livingstone devotes considerable thought to the practicalities of how his theories could be realised. Part of his proposed solution is the formation of short term residential colleges. In the chapter 'The way out' Livingstone

(1941, p.63) cites the growth of Women's Institutes and Women's Clubs as organisations that have grown up from below rather than imposed from above in developing informal education. He links this to the possibilities of residential colleges based on the Danish model and makes connections to the role of the state and LEAs in that development. His argument rests on the responsibility of authorities to keep alive the habit of study beyond statutory school leaving age and so enable the growth of a healthy democracy and the educational regeneration of the population after a devastating world war:

'While our future educational development thus automatically brings adult education into the foreground, economic conditions give an exceptional chance for its development on residential lines. There will be no need to build colleges. All over the country great houses will be vacant, calling for occupation, purchasable for a song. Why should not each Local Education Authority start its own house of education? Not followed the exact lines of the People's High School, if that is found to be impracticable. It might be used for weekends, or for weeks, of study, for educational or other conferences. Out of small beginnings great developments might grow'.

Livingstone (1941, p. 65)

Livingstone's work and the recommendations made by the British Institute of Adult Education were influential in Government thinking. According to Drews:

'It appears that the recommendation made by the British Institute of Adult Education enquiry had borne fruit. This was a first, and also the last time, a government White Paper or Act has come out in favour of establishing a number of (or indeed any) residential colleges'.

Drews (1995, p.113)

Hunter (1952) also recognises the impact that Livingstone had on the formation and introduction of the short term residential college:

'No doubt the writings of Sir Richard Livingstone did more than anything to focus British attention here, though 20 years earlier George Cadbury had founded a small residential college at Fircoft as a result of inspiration from a visit to Denmark. But now the time seemed to be right. The Ministry of Education was encouraging expansion and experiment. By chance, there were a large number of fine country houses, now too big for private dwelling, on the market at knockdown prices'

Hunter (1952, p.17)

Not all commentators agree that Livingstone was the driving force behind the establishment of the short term residential college. Garside (1969, p.10) cites three or four short term colleges that were opened before the intervention of Livingstone. Although chronologically Garside may be factually correct and the named colleges may have opened without the direct influence of Livingstone, what he does not make clear is whether or not these colleges were aware of Livingstone's thinking. For example, Pendley Manor owned by Dorian Williams was converted into a short term college in order to 'save' the building, but Livingstone agreed to become the President of Pendley at its opening in 1945.

It is interesting to note that in these early days financial investment, or lack of it, was a major consideration. Livingstone comments enviously that the Danish model secured government funding either by capital investment or supporting learners by paying for half the fees. He suggests that country houses could be purchased at 'knockdown prices' and points out that the long term residential colleges attract government financial support. In the following section characteristics of the long term residential tradition and short term will be considered. The majority of long term colleges, although

fewer in number, have survived until the present day. The issue arises as to whether there are any attributes or characteristics that the short term college should adopt to secure a more sustainable future.

## **2.3 Characteristics of short term residential education and long term residential education.**

It is helpful at this stage to consider the differences between long-term and short-term residential colleges. Prior to 1945 this was not necessary as the only residential colleges in the English education system were colleges that are now called 'long-term'. The phrase 'short-term' did not come into existence until after this date as a means of differentiating between the two residential sectors:

'The major development since 1945, however, has been the establishment of colleges for short residential courses, 'short' meaning, in general, periods varying between 2 to 14 days, although several colleges were initially envisaged as offering courses of one to three months duration'

Accommodation and Staffing for Adult Education (1962 p.270)

This introductory paragraph of a first report was approved for submission to the Minister of Education at a meeting of the Council of the National Institute of Adult Education on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1962. The report examined in depth the characteristics of long term and short term colleges of which the following has been drawn.

Characteristics of long term colleges summarised from the report are:

- Pursue courses directly related to work

- Most receive grant aid from the Ministry of Education
- Principals tend to work collectively in negotiations with the Ministry of Education and the national representative bodies of LEAs
- They are often described as colleges of the 'second chance'
- They are extremely diverse and reflect most importantly the personalities of their Principals.
- Colleges have in part contributed to changes in the working lives of their students.

Adult Education (1962 – 3, Vol XXXV p. 270)

Characteristics of short term colleges summarised from the report:

- Pursue course periods varying from 2 to 14 days
- Some set up by LEAs acting singly or jointly
- Some set up by universities and voluntary organisations and several by individuals
- Some receive financial support because tutors are seconded from university extramural departments who claim salaries from the Further Education Grant regulations 1959
- Wardens meet under the auspices of the Standing Conference of Short-term Residential Colleges set up in 1947
- By 1961, of the 29 colleges in existence, 22 were members of the Standing Conference of Short-term Residential Colleges
- 15 directly provided by one or more LEAs

- They should have an academic head with clear responsibility for devising the programme that occupies the greater part of the college year
- Sometimes looked on as convenient lodging houses for privately organised residential courses
- All operating in adapted buildings
- Learners are expected to share bedrooms because of a lack of small rooms

Adult Education (1962 - 3 Vol XXXV p.276)

These descriptions provide one of the few definitions of residential colleges and were intended as a 'model' for later development.

A list of long term colleges in existence between 1945 and 1960 is attached as *Appendix 3 p.358*. A list of short term colleges in existence between 1945 and 1960 is attached as *Appendix 4 p.360*

A question arises as to why some colleges, particularly in later years, saw themselves as short term or long term and thereby associated with the Standing Conference of Short-term Residential Colleges (now the Adult Residential Colleges Association) or Residential Colleges Committee (long term). For example Woodbrooke College Birmingham, a charitable organisation, promotes a diverse programme with students residing at the college for longer periods than fourteen days. The same argument would apply to West Dean College, Chichester, a college that provides courses for students over a two to three year period as well as weekend courses. Both colleges are members of the Adult Residential Colleges Association (ARCA). Similarly Northern College, Stainborough near Barnsley, a long term college,

clearly sees the importance of short courses and celebrates the fact that it is different from other residential colleges:

'From its inception, the ethos of the Northern College has been different from other residential colleges. Existing colleges are mainly concerned with full-time courses of one or two year's duration, which lead to academic diplomas that often provide access to university degree courses. While about half the residential spaces in Northern College are reserved for learners studying for a diploma, the remainder are allocated to learners who come for shorter courses lasting a few days or weeks. These short courses are often linked with courses provided away from the College campus'.

Ball et al (2003, p.3)

These observations are supported by Fieldhouse et al (1996) when they state that none of the long term colleges:

'...have been exclusively long-term, even from the beginning. They took on various external functions and increasingly added short courses to their provision, and even began taking day students'.

Fieldhouse et al (1996, p.255)

It would appear that the purposes and characteristics of the short and long term colleges did not determine which residential organisation the college should belong to. The decision rested with the Principal or Warden at the time and may have been no more complicated than a personal preference.

At the time of the submission by the Council of the National Institute of Adult Education (1962) some 33 short term colleges were in existence. The long term colleges were characterised by working collectively in negotiations with national bodies, and by offering work related courses. They had a



reputation for offering adults 'a second chance' and received financial support in the form of grants. On the other hand, the short term colleges were mostly in the ownership of LEAs. They were characterised by courses lasting for 2 to 14 days with a programme devised and delivered over a year and with opportunities for courses provided by private organisations. It would appear that the long term colleges had a clear purpose and status within the adult education landscape. The short term college from the outset did not enjoy such clarity of purpose and was seeking investment and direction in adult education and adult learning provision.

It is perhaps not surprising that the short term college suffered from a lack of direction. At the time of their introduction, government inquiries had been undertaken regarding the education of children and a few regarding adult education and lifelong learning but none regarding residential adult education. In 1973 a report by the Russell Committee was published and significantly directed government to focus on what was described at the time as non-vocational adult education. Short term residential education was for the first time included in a government report.

## **2.4 The impact of the Russell Report**

In 1973 'Adult Education: A Plan for Development' was published, (hereafter known as the Russell Report) and was hailed as an important guide to the future of adult education. Its terms of reference were:

'To assess the need for and review the provision of non-vocational adult education in England and Wales; to consider the appropriateness of

existing educational, administrative and financial policies; and to make recommendations with a view to obtaining the most effective and economical deployment of available resources to enable adult education to make its proper contribution to the national system of education conceived of as a process continuing through life'.

Russell Report (1973, p.V)

The Principals and Wardens prepared a submission to the Committee of Enquiry. This is evidenced in Appendix D of the Russell Report (1973, p.293) under the heading 'Sources of Evidence: Organisations'. It also indicates that not only written evidence was submitted but also oral evidence. Drews (1995) gives more detail including a change in name of the organisation:

'A substantial document was prepared and submitted to this committee on behalf of the short term colleges, entitled 'Report and Submissions from the Association of Wardens/ Principles of Short-Term Colleges of Residential Adult Education to The Committee of Enquiry on Adult Education'. It was completed in November 1969 and was the first combined effort by this newly-titled association which, until 1968, had been 'The Standing Committee of Wardens.

At their annual conference in May 1969 there were thirty-two wardens in membership'.

Drews (1995, p.203)

In the final report Part 2 reviews existing provision and residential colleges (short term and long term) are discussed in nine paragraphs. (paras 133, p.44 to para 141, p. 46). Part 3 proposes a future for Adult Education

and separates long-term residential colleges under the heading 'Full-Time Education' (para 247, p.83) from the short term colleges under the heading 'Accommodation and Equipment - Residential Accommodation' (para 340, p. 113).

Part 2 draws a distinction between a residential college and the growing market of conference centres by suggesting the college appoints a 'warden' or 'principal' to manage a 'positive educational provision of its own, even if for part of the time it is available for hire as a meeting place for courses and conferences arranged by outside bodies'. (para 134, p44). The report then defines residential education in terms of long and short term:

'If "residential adult education" is taken in this sense, two groups of colleges may be distinguished, the long-term and short-term. The differences between them amount to much more than the duration of their courses; they have different objectives, attract different types of student, and are staffed and equipped in different ways'.

Russell Report (1973, p.44)

At the time of writing this may have been true, but as colleges developed over the next forty years the differences became blurred. For example many long term colleges promoting and delivering residential short courses of two or three days

The Danish Folk High Schools are mentioned but only to suggest that they have 'little resemblance', suggesting that there has been an increase in the growth of demand for residential conferences and training centres. The Principals and Wardens who contributed to the enquiry must have been

disappointed to read the committee's interpretation of their work. Kingsbury (1973) comments:

'But the point is that our resource is ideal for purposes other than study in the traditional sense- for the evaluation of experience, for role playing and simulation in adult and further education and professional training courses, for adult to drop out of the system for a while and re-discover in an absorbing affective experience, to give an evening class the bonus of meeting the nationally famous and so on. Perhaps this was implicit in their statement, but I wish that is – and quite a lot else – had been made more explicit'.

Kingsbury (1973, p.17)

There was however a positive aspect that perhaps steered towards future direction and development of the short term colleges:

'The perpetual round of short courses of such variety has meant that at times a college may seem to lack central purpose and its programme to approach the ephemeral. On the other hand their very freedom has enabled the short-term colleges to experiment with and to pioneer a wide variety of different courses for a range of adult students who do not usually attend classes and courses provided by other education agencies. The element common to this work is the exploitation of the appeal and advantages arising from a short period of residence, chiefly the concentration of effort and the opportunity for informal group discussion'.

Russell Report (1973, p.45)

Looking to the future, Russell accepts that there is a demand from a minority of learners for full-time study and argues that these colleges (long-term) are necessary for late developers to have the opportunity to study for qualifications that would enable access to higher education. What is also recognised is the ability for long term colleges to raise funds but there would still be a need for direct grant arrangements:

'The colleges have a remarkable record of finding men and women from unpromising backgrounds and developing their intellectual capacities and personalities so that they have gone on to make an important contribution to society. The colleges have done this by developing, each in its own way, an ethos which combines the traditions of liberal education with academically demanding courses and a strong community spirit'

Russell Report (1973, p.84)

Russell concludes that the long term colleges in existence should continue and that because the greatest demand for places is in the north of England, and most colleges are situated in the south, consideration should be given to the establishment of one additional college in the northern half of England.

The future of the short term colleges is dealt with under the heading 'Residential Accommodation'. Of the two paragraphs (Para 340 and 341, p.114) the first reiterates the argument for adding one northern college to existing provision. This might appear less than a ringing endorsement for the short-term college.

The second paragraph states that the provision of short-term colleges, because of the shorter study period, need not be as elaborate as for full-time

residents. Russell concludes that again consideration should be given to increasing provision in the north of England to enable students to minimise costs in time and travel. Also provision should be looked at regionally and in cooperation with other LEAs and university extra mural departments:

'local education authorities to continue to support and develop short-term residential colleges'

Russell Report (1973 – 74, p. 6)

Although residential adult education was included in the discussions relating to the provision of non vocational adult education in England and Wales, the report concentrates on the contribution made by the long term residential colleges. Russell (1973) also made a plea for coherence, consistency and cooperation among the plethora of providers. Had this plea been acted upon perhaps greater cooperation between long and short term colleges giving a clear distinction and understanding would have emerged to the benefit of both providers. Unfortunately this did not happen.

Another 'provider' of residential education for the adult learner was the university extramural department which would be classified as being in the 'long term' tradition.

## **2.5 University residential adult education**

A very useful snapshot of how residential adult education was being provided by universities in 1978 is detailed in a report of the findings of a Working Party set up by the Universities Council for Adult Education. A summary of the report was published in Adult Education Vol LIV 1981 – 82

No 4 (p. 336). Perhaps the most important point, and of particular relevance to this study, is the unanimity expressed by the contributors to the reports on the value of studying in residence.

'About two thirds of universities emphasised the potential for greater student contact both with tutors and with other students, and for more intensive study: the belief, in short, that residence adds an extra dimension to the adult education experience'.

Adult Education (1981 – 82 Vol LIV No 4, p.337).

Once again familiar arguments were rehearsed. Charging for courses varied but 50% received financial aid. All providers agreed that the residential experience added value to the learning experience. One of the most important points was that all weekend courses were grant aided, something that the present day short term residential college would envy. Short term residential colleges suffered from a lack of investment for capital works to improve living and teaching accommodation and financial support to enable disadvantaged students to undertake residential courses.

The following section will determine the number of short term colleges established from 1945. Their progress and development will be considered. and in section 2.7 the number that were closed over the same period.

## **2.6 Short-Term Colleges - 1945 to the present day**

The Educational Settlements Association published Memorandum on Post-War Residential Adult Education (1943) and recommended that

residential adult education should be made part of the educational provision of the country. The Association noted the contribution of the long term colleges but recognised that courses of one or two years duration excluded many potential students who would be unable to obtain study leave for such a long period of time. A pattern of residential courses was suggested namely;

- (a) An advanced type - the long term college. Courses should last for a minimum of 6 months.
- (b) A less ambitious type – courses lasting for between 3 months and 5 months
- (c) Short courses lasting from a week to a month.

'The main purpose of this Memorandum is to emphasise the need for new developments in Residential Adult Education of which the distinctive feature should be the provision of shorter courses than one-year courses'

The Educational Settlements Association (1943 p.7)

The Association estimated that 50 such short term colleges would be required in England, 3 for Wales and 6 for Scotland. As will be seen in Chapter 4 this target was more or less achieved by the mid 1950s but the target of 80 to 150 students being accommodated in each college was totally unrealistic.

Using the definition of 'a short term residential college' it is clear from available college records that the majority of colleges came into existence during the period 1945 to 1955. It can be argued that a few colleges were in



existence before this period but their development was interrupted by the Second World War:

‘ Ruskin College and Ross Waller’s Lamb Guildhouse were taken over and used as maternity homes, rather than continuing to offer new ideas in adult education, Coleg Harlech was occupied by a part of the University of Liverpool, Newbattle Abbey was requisitioned by the army and Hillcroft evicted its students in favour of banking. Only the Co-operative College remained open for its students’

Drews (1995, p.119)

Table 2.1 shows the opening of colleges grouped in ten year periods.

*Table: 2.1 The opening of Short Term Residential Colleges from 1945 to the present day*

Years	Opened		Years	Opened
1931 – 1940	3		1981 – 1990	0
1941 – 1950	23		1991 – 2000	0
1951 – 1960	7		2001 – 2010	4
1961 – 1970	12			
1971 – 1980	9		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

The ownership of the fifty-eight short term residential colleges at the time of their establishment is interesting when comparing with ownership today.

(See Appendix 9 p.370 for ownership at 2009)

- Thirty four were owned by County Councils
- Thirteen were owned by Trusts

- Six were in private hands
- Five were owned by Universities or other FE establishments

At the end of the Second World War the need for the education of adults was paramount. Returning service personnel lacked the necessary skills and general education to enable them to take part in the rebuilding of a war torn nation. Hunter (1952) the first Principal of Urchfont Manor Short Term Residential College identifies two new movements in adult education at the end of the war:

‘...a belief in the cultural value of hobbies and personal interests intelligently developed, and a growing and almost wistful admiration for the folk high schools of Denmark and Sweden, where somehow a quite considerable proportion of ordinary citizens seemed both to want and to be able to take no less than five or six months of residential education in humane subjects particularly in the literature, history and religion of their own country’.

Hunter (1952, p.17)

Hunter (1952) describes how ‘The Ministry of Education’ was encouraging expansion and experiment and as a result how some LEAs took up the challenge, together with other initiatives, to experiment with the addition of a residential college as part of their adult education provision. Twenty colleges were opened in the first seven years after the war. He does however caution against a misinterpretation of the word ‘college’:

'...these new centres are simply houses, sometimes in the large 18th century manner, sometimes simply sizeable Victorian houses. None was specially built for the purpose..... The picture is of a house and gardens - sometimes a formal park - with the main rooms devoted to lecture room, library and dining room, the bedrooms divided or screened to take from two to eight students, the staff are warden with one, two, or possibly three tutors, secretary and housekeeper. The essence of these centres has been small size, intimacy, and an organisation and equipment simple, provisional, often frankly inadequate'.

Hunter (1952, pp.19 - 20)

Drews (1995) details the history of the first generation of colleges based on evidence drawn from 12 institutions which:

'...were all established between 1945 and 1949, by a single Local Education Authority or a consortium of Authorities, by Trusts with University and/or Local Education Authority support, by a University, by Central Government or Private Initiative and Finance and by a National Women's Federation.'

Drews (1995, p.120)

As will be seen, the plethora of different organisations investing in the introduction of short term residential colleges has had an impact on how colleges have responded to the adult education demands made upon them by those organisations and Central Government.

Field (1991), in his introduction to Residential Adult Education, points to the fact that there is very little serious comparative research into how residentiality intensifies informal learning, provides space for experimentation

and exploration of participants' personal identities and underlying values. This study would support Field's view particularly in relation to any research conducted to argue the case for the value of residentiality in undertaking a short residential course. However Lacognata (1961) published a paper entitled 'A comparison of the effectiveness of adult residential and non-residential learning situations' detailing an investigation he conducted under experimental conditions which tested the hypothesis that for adults, in terms of the learning experience, the residential learning situation resulted in higher achievement. The work of Lacognata is examined in more detail in Chapter 5

One source for examining how residential colleges were being developed is the contribution made by Wardens to Adult Education, a journal published by the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE). Many of the contributions are published under the section 'News from the Field' which in many cases is a summary of what had taken place at the Annual Standing Conference of Wardens of Short Term Residential Colleges which had been in existence since 1947. One of the earliest contributors was Hopkinson, Warden, Grantley Hall, North Yorkshire (Est. 1949), writing under the heading Residential short courses –planning and method:

'It has been claimed that the growth of short-course residential centres and colleges has been the most remarkable feature of recent developments in adult education. Certainly much attention has been attracted to their exciting, but somewhat uncertain, progress. As a basis for the discussion of their present achievements, their potentiality and their value to the community, weighed against other outlay on adult education, more should be known about the motives which brought them into existence, the manner in which their programmes are

planned, and the teaching methods they adopt. It has been stated in print that many residential centres were only developed because historic buildings had to be preserved and it was thought a good idea to put them to educational use. Even as loose a statement as this is totally misleading. Only a small minority of the colleges occupy great houses of historical interest; the majority are housed in 19th-century buildings, neither of architectural or historical distinction'.

Hopkinson in *Adult Education* (1951 -1952, XXIV No 4 p.294).

Hopkinson asks that more should be known about the 'motives which brought them into existence' but then only devotes a short paragraph to answering his question. He cites wartime residential schools of education and the residential conference as 'parents' of what might be achieved in peacetime. What is missing is any objective evidence of why studying in residence has a value. Once again what evidence there is, is anecdotal with the result that residential education is 'felt to be a good thing'. He cites the Army Foundation Colleges and residential schools of education maintained by the three services as an 'inspiring' indication of what might be achieved in peacetime but without giving any detailed objective evidence. He deals much more fully with ownership of the colleges, programme planning and teaching methods. Examples of ownership are LEAs or groups of LEAs, charitable organisations and sections of the community such as the WEA. For those colleges that are under the proprietorship of an LEA he draws a conclusion that is based on aspiration rather than fact:

'This means that they (the colleges) are regarded as an integral part of those statutory duties towards adult education which the LEA undertakes'.

Hopkinson in Adult Education (1951 -1952, XXIV No 4 p.295).

In terms of the curriculum he suggests that colleges should promote activities that are broad and general not narrow and specialist and illustrates how those connected to LEAs may be forced to follow the specialist route providing, for example, courses for school teachers:

'Teachers' courses, especially perhaps courses for emergency trained teachers, are undeniably important; the residential factor is certainly an asset to them; but their too frequent occurrence can seriously disturb the balanced development over a broad educational front that colleges ought to have in view'

Hopkinson in Adult Education (1951 -1952, XXIV No 4 p.295).

Hunter, formerly Warden of Urchfont Manor College (Est. 1947) confronted the issue of the residential curriculum by debating whether colleges should promote vocational courses or 'hobby – leisure interest' courses. He identifies, in an article entitled Vocation and culture – a suggestion one of the main curricular dilemmas that is still an important issue today:

'Their (the colleges) central problem, baldly stated, has been to find students from Monday to Friday or go bankrupt. The answer is a short

one. Some employer - industrialist, local authority, government department - must be found willing to release staff for a week or fortnight and to pay their wages. Naturally, the employer must have at least a say in the subject of the course'.

Hunter in Adult Education (1952 -1953, Vol XXV No 1 p.8)

Hunter grappled with what he sees as the purpose of a short term residential college and at the same time observing the way in which Wardens were attempting to balance the financial books:

'Some at least of the founders of the residential colleges saw in them a means to counterbalance the utilitarian trend, pictured them as a beacon of humane philosophy, the liberal arts, and the graces of living in the darkening evening of modern technical barbarism'.

Hunter in Adult Education (1952 -1953, Vol XXV No 1 p.9)

In the same publication Lyle, a tutor working at Newbattle Abbey College, wrote an article under the heading Reflections on residential adult education in which she argued the case for residential adult education but from the standpoint of the long term residential college:

'Many, if not all, of the adult colleges providing one or two year courses were founded by people who believed that they might play a not inconsiderable part in the regeneration of society. They share this attitude with the whole English adult education movement, of which the residential colleges were a part'.

Lyle in Adult Education (1953 -1954, Vol XXVI No 3 p.190).

Lyle argued that the core values and beliefs of practitioners that were the cornerstone of adult education and in particular residential education had been lost. The main arguments for adult education rested solely on giving learners the opportunity to 'catch up' on those areas of learning that for some reason were missed when at school. When considering the function of a college, her answer is social and individual regeneration and although she admits that because of the size of colleges this could only be achieved on a small scale, learners and tutors have a social responsibility to engage with the larger community:

'It is quite possible to run a college as if it were merely a hotel, with the lectures and tutorials 'laid on', but that will hardly serve the purpose we are concerned with'.

Lyle in *Adult Education* (1953 -1954, Vol XXVI No 3 p.191).

These are indeed prophetic words. Some sixty years later colleges are continually faced with the same dilemma. College principals and managers constantly face the question of what should drive the college; education, finance or the finding of the delicate balance between the two.

Lyle insists that the Principal must lead the college espousing high standards and, to achieve a high quality of community life, must involve tutors and learners in developing a sense of belonging:

'...but the life and nature of the College community is of supreme importance because it is that which makes the essential difference



between residential adult education and evening classes or solitary study'.

Lyle in *Adult Education* (1953 -1954, Vol XXVI No 3 p.192).

Although writing from the experience of tutoring in four long term colleges and experiencing their management and operational structures, there would seem to be similarities with the aims of the short term college. The main argument is that the college must have a clearly defined purpose. The college must offer valuable periods of retreat for re-inspiration and rethinking. This is not just the preserve of the long term colleges:

'..... by fostering a new convention appropriate to our time - democratic and sociable, yet giving scope for privacy, quiet and retirement; courteous and considerate without being elaborate or formal. If there is to be a future for democracy, there must be a place for such colleges, and for many more of them'.

Lyle in *Adult Education* (1953 -1954, Vol XXVI No 3 p.196).

In the same year in the next issue of Adult Education, Haynes describes the establishing of the Rural Music Schools Association at Little Benslow Hills (est. 1952), a short term residential college, in a rejuvenated Victorian House. Haynes describes quite vividly the atmosphere and what a learner might expect when enrolling for a course. Although the reasons for learning in residence are not explicit, the description of the details of living together suggest a sense of 'community' and of working together:

'... those who come to stay in the comfortably and attractively furnished house either for a weekend or a longer stay - alone or in groups – are not asked to make more than a token contribution to the upkeep of the house and amenities...This charge includes the use of a Dunlopillo bed with a rug and a bed-side table lamp beside each bed (an unheard-of luxury in most residential establishments in the educational world!) a well-equipped kitchen, comfortable common room with a view over pleasant lawns, deckchairs and a garden in summer and central heating in winter. Meals are not usually provided, but bread, milk and, of course, fruit and vegetables can be ordered in advance.

Haynes in *Adult Education* (1953 -1954, Vol XXVI No 4 p.299).

Edna Smith, the first woman Principal of a short term college, Knuston Hall, Northamptonshire (est. 1951), contributed to the Adult Education (1954-1955) edition with an article entitled Widening the field. In it she proposes ideas to promote courses and illustrates her ideas with many examples of how to attract new students to enable widening participation and most importantly, in her view, encourage students to return to study other courses or deepen their knowledge of a particular subject. What is striking about the article and remembering that Smith would have been in post for two years or so, is that other than a brief comment 'those who want to sit up late and talk, may' (Smith in Adult Education 1954 -55 p 56) is the fact that Knuston Hall is one of the new short term colleges. Residentiality is not mentioned as a reason for attracting people to courses.

A report submitted to the Education Committee of the Wiltshire County Council by the Governors was reproduced in Adults Learning 1957 – 58. It gave a very detailed account of the first ten years of Urchfont Manor College (est. 1947). In the introduction the purpose of the college is described:

'the purpose of Urchfont is to provide a period of learning, reading and discussion to those who would like a chance of it; to give an opportunity of wider education to men and women in industry and agriculture; and to act as a centre of information and discussion for people working in all forms of administration and social service in the county'.

Adult Education (1957 – 58, Vol XXX No 2 p.110)

What follows is a comment on the various aspects of managing a residential college, particularly the impact of the residential element. However the fact that learners are living in the college and any benefits that might accrue from that experience are not mentioned. The detail of courses and working conditions of staff outlined in the Wiltshire report are significant in understanding the problems and difficulties county council colleges faced in the early years and perhaps more importantly how they developed into the colleges of today.

In 1952, when at least twenty-seven short term colleges were in existence Hughes, Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford, published in Adult Education(1951 – 52 Vol XXIV No 2) a detailed article describing some of the funding problems associated with the long term colleges and their relationship with LEAs. What is interesting is that he fails to mention in any way the work of the short term colleges and the similar problems they faced and yet at that time the aims of the two residential sectors were so similar:

'The need for informed leadership and trained intelligences at all levels of society is perhaps more vital today than ever before. The long-term residential Colleges believe with confidence that they have an important

contribution to make in supplying this need of a free and democratic society'.

Hughes in *Adult Education* (1951 – 52 Vol XXIV No 2 p.149)

Some five years later under the heading News From The Field a report of the 'Conference Of Wardens Of Short Term Residential Colleges' in Adults Learning (1951-1952) held at Belstead House, Ipswich (est 1949) and under the chairmanship of Harvey Sheppard, Warden of Dillington House, Somerset (est 1950) described a number of the conference sessions programmed over the two days:

'Two further sessions were devoted to a detailed discussion of the organisation, relations and finance, dealing with such matters as, for example, academic, administrative and domestic staff, buildings, equipment and grounds, courses and the public, course fees and expenditure, and lecturers and tutors fees'

*Adult Education* (1951 – 52, Vol XXIV No 3 p.238)

A short report contained in Adult Education (1960 -61 No 4, p.210) under the heading 'Conference of Wardens of Short Term Residential Colleges' described a contribution by Dr F.S. Grimwood, Lecturer in Philosophy and Psychology for the Oxford Extra-Mural Delegacy. He spoke of the contribution of residential colleges to the role of the environment in *Adult Education* as 'contemplative idleness'. The author of the report commented that the colleges were in a strong position to offer this kind of mental and spiritual 'refreshment' as those attending courses had taken the first step of 'temporary withdrawal' from the pressures of everyday life. It is

interesting to note that during the period of short term college development; this was the first suggestion that there were reasons for residentiality other than purely educational.

John Goddard writing in the following year made an attempt to define the role of the tutor in the Short Term Residential College at the Annual Conference of Wardens held at Missenden Abbey. (est 1947) in Adult Education (1961 – 62 No 5, p.275). He found it difficult to define the role as he was aware that each college had its own character which was influenced by the views of the Warden or Principal. What is not made explicit is which member of staff he is referring to. He draws a distinction between the 'tutor' and 'visiting specialists' and that the tutor will necessarily be part time because there is not sufficient work in the residential college for more than one full time post. He suggests that the 'tutor' should be employed on a part time basis for example in an extra mural department of a University thereby strengthening academic links.

A role that the author suggests for the tutor is that of a part time deputy warden. Other than proposing a 'link role' Goddard does not expand on other duties. For example the Warden or Principal will be required at times to be away from the college either attending senior management meetings or indeed taking time 'in lieu' or holidays. It is not difficult to see the need for a member of staff to deputise on such occasions.

Sandford, Head of Department of Social and General Studies, Bristol College of Science and Technology in Adult Education (1964 – 65 No 4, p.178) contributes an illuminating paper on why residential conferences should be seen as an integral element of the delivery of a course leading to a

Diploma in Technology. He defines a 'conference' as a period starting on Friday dinner and concluding after tea on Sunday afternoon, which is the same period of time promoted by short term residential colleges as 'weekend courses'. He recommends that there are many learning advantages that were foreseen and others that emerged as conferences took place:

'First, they provide an opportunity for students and staff jointly to study a worthwhile educational theme in congenial surroundings and in an atmosphere of informality; they are thus a means of liberalising the education of the technologist without impinging on the time devoted to technological studies. The conferences provide an opportunity for mingling students of different specialism, which may help to break down departmentalism in the college and assist the process of student educating student; and they give to students valuable experience of residence and living together'.

Sandford in Adult Education (1964 – 65 Vol XXXVII No 4 p.179)

Sandford highlights one of the unforeseen advantages of residentiality as the 'mingling' of staff from different disciplines. He observes staff discussing common education problems and in so doing getting to know each other better away from work based pressures. In the number of residential colleges used he mentions Dillington House (est 1951) a short term residential college owned by Somerset County Council. The strongest argument for a residential learning experience is, in his opinion, the benefits it brings to a sandwich course. The experience of living together, recreation of the college atmosphere, breaking down departmentalisation, and fostering corporate life:

'Liberal Studies gain in significance and status when pursued jointly by student and tutor in congenial surroundings. And, when few colleges have places in halls of residence to offer, residential conferences give the students a brief but valuable experience of living together '

Sandford in Adult Education (1964 – 65 Vol XXXVII No 4 p.184)

However Sandford concludes by elucidating a serious problem which at the time of writing is particularly pertinent to this study. He has a particular problem in finding suitable accommodation for 'conferences'. University Halls of Residence were not readily available.

'...it has proved very difficult to obtain bookings of adult colleges, whose governors give precedence to 'in county' over 'out of county' organisations and 'public' over 'private' courses

Sandford in Adult Education (1964 – 65 Vol XXXVII No 4 p.184)

According to The Ministry of Education 'Statistics of Education 1961' in Adult Education (1962 – 63 No5 p. 276) there were twenty-nine short term colleges in existence that were maintained or assisted by LEAs with twenty-two in membership of the Standing Conference of Wardens.

In summary Sandford poses several penetrating questions directed at the Short Term Residential Colleges. He asks what criteria are used by Wardens in determining their programmes and questions whether the 'heterogeneous public course' has a greater educational value than the carefully prepared sandwich course for which there is a determined need. If the sandwich course can benefit from a residential experience then surely other courses could offer fruitful cooperation by linking residential colleges

with the Further and Higher Education Sector. Perhaps his most important and direct question seeks to clarify the purpose and function of residential colleges and whether F. E. colleges can 'expect' assistance from residential colleges. From the tone of the last paragraph it would seem that Sandford did not enjoy much cooperation from the wardens of the short term college:

'These issues concern both the philosophy of the adult colleges and the effective utilisation of the national educational resources, but before they can be properly tackled we need more information about residential education. The Crowther, Newsom and Robbins reports have gone far to remove the ignorance of parts of our education system but little or nothing has been done to disperse the mists of ignorance which shroud the stately mansions housing adult colleges. We know little of the motives of the people who attend their public courses but the need for more information is clear, and indicates a strong case for continuing the good work of removing ignorance about all aspects of education in this country by the setting up of a national committee which would examine the whole structure and purpose of adult education and advise on links, if any, which should be forged between the adult residential colleges and the system of Further and Higher Education. Pending such an enquiry, some re-appraisal by the wardens and governors of residential colleges seems to be called for'.

Sandford in Adult Education (1964 – 65 Vol XXXVII No 4 p.185)

Bedfordshire and Monmouthshire purchased buildings to satisfy the residential demands for in-service teacher training programmes. Strand Jones, Warden of The Hill Abergavenny, Monmouthshire (est 1967) describes the main purpose of The Hill as a 'teacher training facility' but when the opportunity arose it would also provide residential courses for adult education:



'This could best be done by ensuring that, throughout the year, courses on a wide variety of subjects appealing to the general public could be held there most weekends. It is hoped also during the summer, and perhaps at Easter, the college will be available to 'schools' of a longer duration, particularly in the visual arts, music and drama'.

Strand Jones in (1967 – 68, Adult Education Vol XL No 6 p.370)

What then follows is a description of how the facilities, including buildings, could be adapted to increase the number of courses and thereby increase the number of enrolments. What is clear, as with other short term residential colleges, is the way adult education was seen as an afterthought; a way of trying to maximise the use of the building particularly at weekends. Very little thought was given to how such arrangements could be staffed and serviced.

The Hill was sold to Gwent Tertiary College in 1995 and at the time of writing is due to be sold on the open market at the beginning of August 2009. In the same article Milnes describes the purchase and opening of Maryland College, Bedfordshire. (est 1967). What is striking is the almost identical purpose that the respective LEAs determined for their colleges. In Maryland's case the college before LEA ownership had been a hospital and Milnes describes how conversions from wards and operating theatres to kitchens and teaching spaces had been achieved on a very small budget. Milnes goes on to list improvements that will be possible when the 'economic climate improves'. As with The Hill but not as explicit is the LEA's reason for purchasing Maryland:

'Although Maryland was purchased by the Bedfordshire Education Authority with the idea that teachers courses at all levels should form an important part of the programme, the authority has wisely taken the line that the centre in its early days should simply run, like Topsy, so that a picture emerges of the way in which county interests in adult education can best be served'.

Milnes in (Adult Education 1967 – 68 Vol XL No 6 p.373)

Not exactly a ringing endorsement for the development of a short term residential college. Maryland was sold on the open market in 2003.

What is striking when looking at short term residential involvement is a feeling of disjointedness. Clearly the purpose of the short term residential experience varied among the colleges. Some pursued cultural values and personal interests, others followed narrower specialist vocational routes whilst others added adult learning courses. Other local authority requirements, for example teacher training courses, had to be satisfied before adult learning courses were programmed.

Over time the value of residentiality was broadening from 'a learning community' to the opportunity for 'mental and spiritual refreshment' but as the colleges were now established questions were being asked regarding their achievements, value and potential for the future.

As will be seen in the next section after an encouraging start colleges began to close, a trend that is still evident today.

## 2.7 The present day

Of the twenty-eight colleges operating as short term residential establishments;

- sixteen are owned by county councils
- eight are owned by trusts
- one is in private hands
- three are owned by universities

*Table 2.2: The opening and closing of Short Term Residential Colleges*

Years	Opened	Closed
1931 – 1940	3	1
1941 – 1950	23	1
1951 – 1960	7	3
1961 – 1970	12	1
1971 – 1980	9	8
1981 – 1990	0	6
1991 – 2000	0	6
2001 – 2010	4	4
TOTAL	58	30

At the time of writing two colleges are closing, two colleges have interim management teams while the authorities decide on their future and one college may be sold to a university.

Twenty five colleges are members of the Adult Residential Colleges Association (ARCA).

## 2.8 Summary

The literature evidence appears to support the claim that learning in residence provides a better climate for achieving educational as well as personal development goals thereby enhancing the quality of the learning experience. Before the introduction of the residential college in England and Wales the successes of universities, Quaker Schools and prisoner of war educational experiences, are often quoted as examples of learning in a residential setting. Scandinavia provided a model and the Danish theologian and academic, Grundtvig, was an early pioneer. His philosophy and methodology were studied and although not fully adopted the WEA and Quaker Summer Schools were the first examples of short residential courses which led to the emergence of short term residential colleges.

The elements and qualities of the residential experience are described by authors as 'an intense experience', 'togetherness and fellowship' leading to a 'corporate spirit' among the community of learners. The residential experience based on interest, imagination and practical activity, had, it was claimed, immense value.

What is clearly missing from the available literature is any in depth research undertaken in this country, as to how learners respond to a short residential course. A number of authors comment that a comparative study between non residential learning and residential learning would lead to a greater understanding of the qualities inherent in the different modes of adult

learning. Chapter 5 will address the issue of the quality of the residential learning experience by examining the results of five focus groups and draw comparisons with the claims made in this chapter.

After the Second World War the need for the working population to be trained in a variety of skills and managerial techniques was paramount. Sir Richard Livingstone recognized the need and having studied the work of Grundtvig sought premises that could be turned into adult education centres. Many country houses and mansions were being vacated and sold in the 1950s and his vision was to suggest to county councils that they purchase these properties and adapt them to accommodate learners attending short residential courses. A number of county councils over the following twenty years purchased houses suitable for adaptation and conversion but, as a number of authors have suggested there was a lack of clarity and a lack of purpose as to what they should be used for.

It would be misleading to suggest that all residential colleges were unclear as to why they were created. However the literature would suggest that even if the managers of a residential college were clear as to their purpose and the role they would play in adult education many commentators questioned their rationale and their motives for existence. Should a short term residential college provide vocational or non vocational education? There was an understanding that employers would release workers for months to undertake a course which would overcome the acute problem of what to do with the college during the week. Should the college facilities be hired to outside organisations and therefore become a 'conference facility'? This suggestion would be anathema to many wardens and managers.

It was evident to a number of authors that because many, but not all, colleges were set up by county councils acting independently of each other there was a confusion as to their purpose and suggestions were made that they should be brought into closer relationship with each other. Russell (1973) comments that at times a college may seem to lack 'central purpose and direction'. He does however suggest that short term colleges enjoy a freedom to 'experiment and pioneer'. It may be however that it was this 'freedom' that was perceived as a lack of direction and purpose which caused so many colleges to close over the next 60 years.

One constant running through the literature is, that having purchased a building there was a lack of financial investment to provide for capital and organisational development in order to make suitable alterations for its intended use. It was noted that many thousands of learners would make the best of bad conditions for the sake of education but the same cannot always be said today. Learner expectations have changed over the years and whereas in the 1950s learners would be satisfied with sharing accommodation today learners expect single bedroom occupancy with en suite facilities. As has been described many of the large houses required significant investment to make them fit for purpose, investment that was not readily available. The literature would suggest that although the house was purchased little or no planning for future development was considered.

It is possible to look at the writings of some of the first wardens and detect these difficulties that still beset the modern short term residential college. As has been stated, to attract learners to adult courses at the weekend was not difficult; the problem was and still is, how to effectively use

the accommodation and facilities during the week. There is little evidence to suggest that county councils had thought through the implications of owning a 'country mansion' from a financial perspective let alone an educational perspective. It is difficult to find evidence of how the owners gave any thought to how the new colleges would be developed and sustained. It is to the credit of the first entrepreneurial wardens that many colleges lasted as long as they did.

From the late 1950s to the present day the number of short term residential colleges has markedly declined. The most pressing question is whether the decline is terminal.

What is perhaps most striking of all, apart from Drews (1995) and one or two other authors very little mention is made of the learner. Did the learner benefit from the residential experience? Was the residential experience of value educationally? Was the experience value for money? How did the learning experience differ from the more traditional modes of delivery? There is some anecdotal evidence of learners' experiences, mainly described by wardens, but this evidence was derived from learners already in the system and who presumably were already converted to the value of studying in residence.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

In order to propose a model to secure the future of the short term residential college, it was necessary to examine and understand when and why short term residential education was introduced after the Second World War. Chapter 2 scrutinised the literature in order to discern the remit and purpose for these colleges. It has been shown that over the past sixty years the number of colleges has declined by approximately 50% and at the time of writing this trend is ongoing. The chapter postulated that there was little historical written evidence to evince clarity of purpose, financial investment and future direction although a majority of authors agree that there is value for the learner in the residential learning experience.

In order to determine whether the statements of clarity, purpose and investment hold true today, the research will result in an understanding of the business position of five present day colleges reviewed over a two year period. Importantly, the ownership and managerial arrangements of the selected colleges will be examined as well as adult education enrolments, finance, curriculum, and capital investment to establish whether the business is in decline or increasing. Principals and managers will, by means of one to one interviews, be given the opportunity to explain the results of the data collection and to discuss their ideas for the future development and direction of the college.

The reasons why particular methods were chosen to encompass qualitative and quantitative data will be explained.

In order to propose a model for the future the results of this, detailed research will be compared with the dominant themes emerging from the



literature search. No such research, using the methodologies chosen has ever been undertaken into the short term residential college since their introduction.

To enable this research to be undertaken the author was given unprecedented access to quantitative data detailing the financial, enrolment and curriculum records of the five colleges and qualitative data in the form of commentary on the quantitative findings by the Principals/Managers.

### **3.1 The case for Quantitative and/or Qualitative research methods.**

Quantitative research is a method of gathering and analysing data usually by using structured questions where the response options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents are involved. (See *Appendix 5 p.363*). When analysing data the researcher claims objectivity and the results quantitatively and statistically valid:

'Quantitative research can be defined as the systematic scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research; it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships.'

Burns and Grove cited in Cormack (2006 p,140)

Feagin (1991) develops a definition by suggesting the purposes of quantitative procedures seek to unearth the uniformity of social life and to render such uniformities into precise, numeric forms that can easily lend themselves to formulations, refinements, and testing of hypotheses. (Feagin et al, 1991, p.17)

Quantitative research is characterised by the assumption that 'facts' are value free. Also such an approach claims to be objective, focussed on issues that are measurable, and using methods capable of testing theory. Reasoning is logical and deductive:

'There is something else that characterises quantitative procedures and that transcends the information they furnish. The survey, the census, and the experiment usually assume a world of causal relations and of causal laws in a vein similar to the natural science framework. Their epistemological foundations are often similar. For quantitative analysts, things can be counted: things are related to one another as natural science forces are related, as cause and effect; and the social world may be assumed to operate according to a few underlying social laws.

Feagin et al (1991, p.22)

Examples of quantitative methods would include surveys and experiments. Surveys collect data from a large number of people who represent a population or a random sample of the population. Experiments are usually conducted to test a specific hypothesis and the purported causal relations between different phenomena. Although these two methods are different they produce data that can be quantitatively manipulated:

'Typically, certain hypotheses are proposed, they are examined with the data, and then some firm conclusions, rendered in the form of probabilistic statements of likelihood set forth by the researcher.'

Feagin et al (1991, p.2)

It has been suggested in Chapter 2 that the number of short term colleges has declined over the past 60 years due to a lack of clarity of purpose, lack of strategic direction and little or no investment. The quantitative and qualitative data will be examined to determine whether or not there is evidence to suggest that if a college is declining in terms of enrolments and consequently is in financial difficulties, the hypothesis proposed is valid.

Authors frequently claim that one of the main advantages of quantitative research is that the researcher can remain totally objective. In fact, when gathering data and analysing the results the researcher can remain quite detached. Conversely, qualitative research is much more subjective and uses different methods of collecting information. Qualitative research is the systematic collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by listening to what people say and so qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things. It is a generic term that covers a number of methodologies but the overriding characteristic, whatever methodology or methodologies are employed, is that research is based on observations and variables in the natural setting. Data is collected by interacting with the 'actors' by using interviews and reporting direct quotations to produce a more in-depth and comprehensive set of data. Where quantitative methodologies

have been described as objective, qualitative methodologies use information based on subjective comment. Qualitative research takes a more holistic approach by making attempts to understand the entire situation. In seeking to understand how subjects interpret the world, approaches are 'open' in terms of method seeking to 'illuminate' the research questions. The approach tends to be inductive rather than hypothetico-deductive and the instruments used are chosen for their 'fitness for purpose' rather than in response to strictures emerging from a particular epistemological stance.

For the purpose of this research, to understand why a number of residential colleges are in decline and yet others are expanding in terms of enrolled learners, it was deemed necessary to conduct interviews with the principals or senior staff who have the responsibility of managing the college. The interview questions were formulated by reference to enrolment totals and other quantitative data collected over a period of two consecutive years.

It should be noted that the author is well known to the Principals and Managers having worked with them over a period of approximately 15 years as a fellow Principal and member of the ARCA Management Committee. It is accepted that this may have affected the nature of the responses and that this was taken into account when conducting the interviews and analysing the data. It could be argued that because the author has a working relationship with the respondents, a more detailed and comprehensive response to questions might be given or conversely the respondent might give an answer that defends his or her position or what they perceive as an 'expected' response.

The data collection instrument (see *Appendix 5 p.363*) was devised and tested over a period of approximately 10 years and over that period was refined to provide up to date accurate information to reflect the demands made on ARCA for statistical information required by LEAs, Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and local and national politicians. Details of the questions used when the principals and managers were interviewed can be seen in *Appendix 6 p366*. As is shown the questions are designed to elucidate reasons for the data results as well as seek opinions as to the purpose, investment, and future direction of the college in terms of residential development and learner provision.

As mentioned above the stress on the need to capture the complexities of the social world is well evidenced in the literature:

'When conducting qualitative research, the investigator seeks to gain a total or complete picture. According to Stainbeck and Stainbeck a holistic description of events, procedures, and philosophies occurring in natural settings is often needed to make accurate situational decisions. This differs from quantitative research in which selected, predefined variables are studied.'

Stainbeck and Stainbeck (1988)

Cohen *et al* reinforce the argument by suggesting that the aim of this methodology is to help us understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself. Cohen *et al* explain (p45) that attempts should be made to present normative and interpretive perspectives in a complementary light and so try to lessen the tension that is

sometimes generated between them. Cohen *et al* quote Merton and Kendall when expressing the same sentiment:

'...social scientists have come to abandon the spurious choice between qualitative and quantitative data: they are concerned rather with that combination of both which makes use of the most valuable features of each. The problem becomes one of determining at which points they should adopt the one, and at which the other, approach'.

Merton and Kendall (1946) cited in Cohen *et al* (2003, p.45)

One purpose of this research is to gain understanding of 'why and how' some residential colleges appear to be more successful than others in terms of attracting learners to undertake residential adult education courses.

Qualitative research methods may discover the reasons behind apparent success or failure when examining the quantitative results:

'If the purpose is to learn from the participants in a setting or a process the way *they* experience it, the meanings they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience, you need methods that will allow you to discover and do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations. Qualitative methods have in common the goal of generating new ways of seeing existing data.'

Richards and Morse (2007, p.30)

Stake (1995) makes the point that it is the research question that determines whether the researcher should undertake quantitative or qualitative inquiry. The distinction is not, he argues, related to the difference

between qualitative and quantitative data, but to the difference between searching for causes versus searching for happenings:

'Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding of the complex interrelationship among all that exists.'

Stake (1995, p.37)

For the purpose of this research, the interrelationships will be examined from both the quantitative data generated by means of numerical answers to quantitative questions and the qualitative data sourced from interviews with Principals and the results from learners' focus groups.

Cohen *et al* suggest when examining research styles, that the researcher should resist compartmentalising styles. Styles chosen should be 'fit for purpose':

'The gamut of research styles is vast and this part illustrates the scope of what is available, embracing quantitative and qualitative research, together with small-scale and large-scale approaches. These enable the researcher to address the notion of 'fitness for purpose' in deciding the most appropriate style of research for the task in hand.

Cohen *et al* (2003, p.135)

Yin (2003) gives a broad overview of the different methods of collecting evidence and how each method may be categorised:

**'Each strategy is a different way of collecting and analysing empirical evidence'.**

**Yin. (2003, p.3)**

**Yin proposes that there is a misconception that various research strategies should be arrayed hierarchically. He suggests that one strategy is connected to another and that a particular strategy may be appropriate for one particular phase of the research:**

**'This hierarchical view reinforces the idea that case studies are only a preliminary research strategy and cannot be used to describe or test propositions.'**

**Yin. (2003 p.3)**

**Yin disputes this suggestion citing a number of case studies that have been not only descriptive but explanatory. He also suggests that a more appropriate way of looking at different strategies, and one that will be adopted in this research, is an inclusive and pluralistic one with three purposes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. He divides different research strategies into five broad areas – experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study and suggests that each area can have one or more of the three purposes. For example, there can be exploratory experiments, descriptive experiments and explanatory experiments. His argument is developed further by his use of conditions that direct the researcher when to use each strategy. Furthermore he does not imply that strategies are discrete but, on the contrary, suggests that there are times**



when the strategies overlap and that the researcher may use more than one strategy. When to use each strategy?

The three conditions consist of (a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events'.

Yin.(2003, p.5)

Yin argues, along with Stake, that the most important condition for deciding which of the various strategies to use is to identify the type of research question being asked. 'What' questions tend to be exploratory; therefore any strategies can be used. If the question is about prevalence he suggests that surveys or archival records can be used. 'How' and 'Why' questions lead the researcher to case studies, experiments or histories. As has been described earlier it is the how and why questions that are of primary concern in this study.

Yin (2003, p.7) suggests that a further distinction needs to be made to enable the researcher to decide whether, history, experiment or case study strategies are the most appropriate. Histories deal with the 'dead past' when, as Yin (2003, p.7) suggests '...no relevant persons are alive to report, even retrospectively, what occurred'. Although they can be written about relatively contemporary events the historical strategy begins to overlap with the case study approach. Experiments can be done when the researcher is able to manipulate behaviour directly, precisely and systematically which in this research was not possible:

'The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events. Again, although case studies and histories overlap, the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study.'

Yin. (2003, p.8)

A further categorisation is provided by Cohen, et al (2003) who proposes three broad approaches to educational research. The first proposes the creation of theoretical frameworks that can be tested by experimentation, replication and refinement which they call the 'scientific paradigm'. The second approach is concerned with the interpretation of the actions of those involved in the organisation. This method they describe as interpretive and subjective as it seeks to understand the world in terms of its 'actors'. The third approach, described as critical educational research, takes account of the political and ideological contexts of much educational research.

The five colleges selected for study reflect the different contexts in which they were originally created and how they are now managed and operate in a complex social environment some fifty to sixty years later. This study will emphasise interpretive and subjective dimensions based on real life events reflected in the data collected over two years and the comment on, and interpretation of, that data made by college Principals. It would therefore

seem that the approach most suitable for this study would be the case study method.

### 3.2 The Case study method

What is a case study?

'It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand the idea more clearly and simply than by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Indeed a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together. Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis.'

Cohen *et al* (2003, p.181)

Cohen argues that the case study can penetrate situations that numerical analysis cannot and can also establish cause-and-effect relationships because the method observes effects in real contexts. It is further argued that a major strength of the case study is being able to observe a system or organisation that is unique and dynamic. This uniqueness is stressed in relation to the twenty-five or so residential colleges that are in membership of ARCA. It is argued by the principals of these colleges that it is the very 'uniqueness' of each college that gives strength to the colleges association and to residential education in general.

In their introduction to A Case for the Case Study Feagin *et al* (1991) vigorously defend the strategy as a 'significant methodological tool and strategy for the social scientist' and define the case study as:

'...an in depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon. The study is conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources'.

Feagin *et al* (1991, p. 3)

As with Cohen he supports the 'case study' method when the investigator has little control over events and when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed as in this study.

Also, case studies enable boundaries to be defined around the case and these can be defined by those involved in the case as can the roles and functions of those participating in the case. Participants are able to indicate what it is like to be in the real situation and are able to express thoughts and feelings that the bounded case portrays. This evidence will lead to theoretical statements containing a degree of generalisation requiring clarification.

Nisbet and Watts (1980) summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the case study. They suggest that case studies are easy to understand, immediately intelligible, have unique features which hold the key to understanding, strong on reality, provide insights into other similar situations, can be undertaken by a single researcher and can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables.

Some authors, for example Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that the reliability and validity of the case study method would be strengthened and enhanced if several cases in a comparative framework were studied in order to generate theory. In this study five cases will be examined and explored in a comparative framework thereby establishing reliable and valid evidence to generate theory.

### **3.3 Prejudices against the Case Study**

Yin (2003, p.10) proposes that the case study is a distinctive form of empirical enquiry and agrees with Cohen that researchers often dismiss the strategy. Cohen et al (2003) conclude that the case study has to overcome the problem of respectability and legitimacy amongst research academics. Yin (2003) stresses the importance of investigators exercising great care in adopting systematic procedures when designing case studies to overcome the traditional criticisms of the method. Criticisms include the proposition that bias on the part of the researcher is difficult to prevent and that often the scope of the inquiry can be limited due to the comprehensive data gathering techniques that are required. In Nisbet and Watt (1980) weaknesses listed are that results may not be generalisable, not easily open to crosschecking, may be selective and open to bias, personal and subjective. Cohen et al (2003) suggest that the case study has to demonstrate reliability and validity and they do not underestimate the difficulty that this can pose. One of the key issues in undertaking a case study is the selection of information:

'Though it is frequently useful to record typical, representative occurrences, the researcher need not always adhere to criteria of representativeness. For example, it may be that infrequent, unrepresentative but critical incidents or events occur that are crucial to the understanding of the case.'

Cohen *et al* (2003, p.181)

It is therefore important to establish how significant an event is rather than how frequently this event occurs. Yin makes an interesting point that people often confuse case studies used in teaching with those used in research. A case study used in teaching, to emphasise a point or argument more effectively, can lead to the study materials being deliberately altered:

'In research, any such step would be strictly forbidden. Every case study investigator must work hard to report all the evidence fairly ...'

Yin. (2003, p.10)

Yin also suggests that case studies provide little basis for generalisation. He argues that the same criticism can be made for experiments and that to overcome this problem several experiments would be conducted. Why not take the same approach when using case studies?

In this study a multiple case approach was used as 5 residential colleges were studied. Yin makes the point that they can be generalised to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.

Stake, (2000) supports Yin's proposition of multiple case study inquiries:

'... a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. I call this multiple

case study or collective case study. It is instrumental study extended to several cases. Individual cases in a collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic. They may be similar or dissimilar, with redundancy and variety each important. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases'.

Stake (2000, p.443)

### **3.4 Reliability and Validity**

As has been noted one of the main criticisms, by the research community, of the qualitative approach and in particular the 'case study' method is that the very subjectivity of the research leads to difficulties in establishing the reliability and validity of the information gained:

'... case study optimises understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions. It gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of the study. For the qualitative research community, case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts. For almost any audience, optimising understanding of the case requires meticulous attention to its activities'

Stake (2000, p.444)

Yin (2003) argues that the quality of any empirical social research can be judged on the application of four tests. He agrees with Stake that in

preparing a case study meticulous attention must be given not only to preparing and conducting the research but that the four tests should be applied throughout the subsequent conduct of the case study and not just at the beginning. The four tests to be applied are:

**'Construct validity: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied**

**Internal validity: (for explanatory or causal studies only, and not for descriptive or exploratory studies): establishing a causal relationship whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.**

**External validity: establishing the domain to which the study's findings can be generalised**

**Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of the study- such as the data collection procedures - can be repeated with the same results.'**

Yin. (2003, p.34)

Cohen *et al* (2003) agree with Yin (2003) in defining validity and reliability stating that reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy and that if the researcher is able to have confidence in the elements of their research he/she must 'build out invalidity' (Cohen *et al* p 115). Cohen *et al* detail very precisely how this can be achieved and this will be considered further when detailing the design stage of the case study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) agree with Yin (2003) in posing the same set of tests but in the form of questions under the heading of 'conventional



paradigm'. They also ask the question 'What is Trustworthiness?' and suggest that the researcher must persuade the reader that the findings of any inquiry are worth paying attention to. Richards and Morse (2007) suggest that the major thrust in any qualitative research:

'... must be inductive, and this is crucial for the validity of the study'.

Richards and Morse (2007, p.194)

As has been described a multiple case study methodology has been used to examine the business results, over a two year period, of individual cases that have different ownership and managerial structures. Qualitative and quantitative data were examined in each of the different cases and related to the findings of the literature review. A pluralistic approach was adopted and to ensure reliability one researcher conducted the collection of the qualitative and quantitative data of the five cases.

### **3.5 The Pluralistic approach**

In adopting a strategy of research using mixed methods specific advantages are often claimed:

- Research development (one approach is used to inform the other, such as using quantitative research to develop an instrument used in qualitative research)
- Increased validity (confirmation of results by means of different data sources)

- Complementarity (adding information, i.e. the word to numbers and vice versa)
- Creating new lines of thinking by the emergence of fresh perspectives and contradiction.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that there is no necessary conflict between using qualitative data and quantitative data when conducting research:

*'We believe that each form of data is useful for both verification and generation of theory, whatever the primacy of emphasis... In many instances, both forms of data are necessary – not quantitative used to test qualitative, but both used as supplements, as mutual verification and, most important for us, as different forms of data on the same subject, which, when compared, will generate theory'.*

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.18)

### 3.6 Collecting the evidence

To increase the quality of case study evidence Yin (2003) proposes three principles that should be incorporated in the collection of evidence. They are; multiple sources of evidence, a case study database and a chain of evidence. In this study these three principles have been applied. Sources of evidence include detailed interviews conducted with principals, managers and learners and focus on the facts and findings. A case study database of numerical evidence gathered over a period of two years from five colleges' details progression of each college during that period. Finally a chain of evidence is presented showing the explicit links between the responses to

the interview questions, the data collected and any conclusions that can be drawn.

The interview evidence for principals, managers and learners was recorded and transcripts made of the sound recordings thereby allowing for the observation of rapid changes of events and different speech nuances when answering questions:

'...the representativeness of a particular sample often relates to the observational strategy open to the researcher'

Cohen et al (2003., p. 190)

Cohen et al (2003) introduce the notion of concurrent validity where data, as in this study, gathered using one instrument correlates highly with data gathered using another instrument. Cohen suggests that this form of validity relates closely to the concept of reliability namely triangulation. He defines triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in testing the reliability of the data. Studying some aspect of human behaviour from different standpoints makes it possible to use not only qualitative data but also quantitative data:

'Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research'

Campbell and Fisk in Cohen et al. (2003, p.112)

Cohen et al stress that reliance on one investigative method may bias the researcher's interpretation of the data and that confidence in the outcomes of

the research can only be achieved if more than one method is used. By using more than one method and the fact that the Principals and Managers were known to the researcher prior to the study being undertaken, a check will be made on any bias in the interpretation introduced the researcher.

### **3.7 How validity tests are applied to this study.**

Yin (2003, p. 33) summarises tests of validity used by a number of authors to establish the quality of any empirical social research. He cites Kidder and Judd (1986, pp 26-29) as a useful summary. Can the exploration and interpretation of a particular effect be sustained by the data? To answer the question the following four tests are applied. Yin (2003, pp. 34 -39)

#### **3.7.1 External validity**

External validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalised to the wider population, cases or situations. In this study using the methodological framework of multiple case design, the results can be generalised to those colleges that have the same or very similar organisational structures. For example for those colleges that are owned and managed under the auspices of a county council generalisation can take place, similarly for those that are charitable organisations. What would be inappropriate would be to generalise between the charitable trust ownership and the County Council ownership. The results may however cause the County Council college to consider converting to trust status or colleges adopting strategies that are proving successful in terms of increasing learner enrolments whichever type of organisational structure they belong to.

Theoretical propositions about causal relations will be explored throughout the research. Answers to the 'how' and 'why' questions will guide the analysis of the data presented.

### **3.7.2 Construct validity**

The instruments must show that they fairly and comprehensively cover the domain or items that they purport to cover and that they establish correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. In this study the data collection exercise questions were based on a requirement that ARCA needed hard evidence when defending its constituent colleges from outside influences threatening closure. As has been described the questions were based on this requirement, were approved by the ARCA committee and the final draft piloted in one college. The results of the pilot were discussed by the ARCA committee and small adjustments made to eradicate any misinterpretation of the questions. The questions used to interview the principal or manager were in the main related to the data collection instrument and sought to discover reasons as to why over a two year period the results were as they were. (See *Appendix 5 p.363* for details of the data collection instrument). In this way the criticism that the questions were based on subjective judgments by the interviewer was overcome.

### **3.7.3 Internal validity**

Yin (2003, p.36) makes two points to ensure internal validity. The first, a concern for causal studies, is where the investigator concludes that there is a causal relationship between two factors without knowing that a third factor

may actually have caused the observed effect. An example in this study is a possible claim that the effect of an increase in fees resulting in lower enrolments. However lower enrolments may be due to poor accommodation. Causal claims have been examined carefully and other evidence such as the opinions of learners considered. The strength of this approach is that real effects can be observed in real contexts.

The second point made by Yin is the broader problem of making inferences when an event cannot be directly observed. In this study Principals of County Council colleges inferred that the decrease in enrolments was due to significant increases in fees prior to the data period. Therefore no evidence was available and the inference could not be validated:

'An investigator will 'infer' that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on interview and documentary evidence collected as part of the case study. Is this inference correct? Have all the rival explanations and possibilities been considered? Is the evidence convergent? Does it appear airtight? A research design that has anticipated these questions has begun to deal with the overall problem of making inferences and therefore the specific problem of internal validity'.

Yin (2003, p.36)

#### **3.7.4 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the extent to which investigations can be replicated and produce the same findings:

'The objective is to be sure that if a later investigator followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions'

Yin (2003, p.36)

The goal of reliability is achieved by minimising errors and biases in the study. For this to happen the procedures have been clearly documented and a case study database developed. Many authors claim that replications are the best means for validating facts and that collecting evidence from other comparative groups is a way to check out whether the initial evidence was correct. An example is the initial data collected from one source regarding the increase in course fees leading to a decrease in learner enrolments. This 'fact' can then be compared with evidence collected from another comparative group to establish whether or not the fact is a fact.

### 3.7.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour and is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity:

'Triangulation within psychological research was initially conceived by Campbell and Fisk (1959). It was argued that using multiple methods could enhance confidence in the findings, in particular by increasing the ability to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity'.

Dixon-Woods et al (2004, p.2)

Bryman (2001) cited in Dixon-Woods (2004, p2) supports the use of multiple methods as a means of enhancing the confidence of findings and in particular the use of triangulation to overcome the weakness of using just one

research method. Bryman also suggests that using a multi strategy approach is a better way of conceptualising research designs that involve qualitative and quantitative elements.

### **3.8 Instruments**

Three instruments are used for the collection of data. These have been selected on the basis that they could be used effectively and were appropriate for the exploration and consequent interpretation of the data. The only recent study of short term residential colleges was undertaken by Drews (1995) who deals with the history of the short term college until 1995. This excellent piece of work traces the emergence of the short term college from 1945 but does not give any empirical evidence as to their success or failure. Much of the evidence is anecdotal. This study will, by the use of appropriate instruments, seek the opinions of principals and managers, analyse data on the position of the college in relation to numbers of learners over a two year period and seek the opinion of learners as they undertake a course at all of the selected colleges .

This study will consider the position of each college separately and examine in detail its progress over a two year period. The results have been presented as individual cases based on identical questions both in the data collection, the interview with the principal and in the learner group sessions. The results can be generalised to a wider context as a number of colleges outside this study will be able to identify, to a great extent, with one or more of the colleges selected.



### 3.9 Data collection

Research questions 1 to 9 focus on numerical data concerning the progression of the college during a two year period. (See *Appendix 5 p.340* for the data collection instrument).

Data was collected at three points.

- Data Point One. The end of the financial year 2006
- Data Point Two. The end of the financial year 2007
- Data Point Three. The end of the financial year 2008

The questions were devised to gather numerical information that can be accurately compared from one data point to another. Information regarding adult enrolments is the primary focus so that a picture of what was happening to those enrolments over the two data periods tracked. Yin (2003) argues the rationale for what he terms the 'longitudinal case' as studying the same single case at two or more different points in time:

'The theory of interest would likely specify how certain conditions change over time, and the desired time intervals to be selected would reflect the presumed stages at which the changes should reveal themselves'.

Yin (2003, p.42)

The data was collected at the time of each of the data points by emailing the questions to the individual colleges. In all cases the data was returned within four weeks. It would appear that in all cases the data was compiled and returned by an administrative officer of the college.

### **3.10 Interview with the Principal or Manager**

The interview questions are presented at *Appendix 6 p.366*.

Questions 1 to 5 focus on the responses of the principals/managers to the numerical data supplied at the three data points and corroborate the data with explanations as to any trends over time. Interview questions 6 to 13 focus on the curriculum and college finance over the data period and question 14 examines the methods used to determine learner opinion of their residential learning experience.

The face to face interview was chosen in order to provide an opportunity to probe and ask additional open ended questions specifically to clarify any question and answer issues from the interviewer and also from the interviewee. Telephone interviews were considered but it was felt that an important element, namely, non verbal cues would be missed. Cohen et al (2000 p.124) describe the face to face interview as a 'social situation' and the absence of the social aspect could undermine elements of responses that would cast doubt on reliability and validity of the interview. However Nias (1991) quoted in Cohen et al (2000 p 124) takes the view that telephone interviews may strengthen reliability in that the interviewee may disclose information that they would not do face to face. Face to face interviews were chosen for this study because the interviewees were well known to the interviewer and they all intimated that this would be their preferred method. However it must be acknowledged that because of the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees the nature of the responses will be affected. It could be argued that the Principal/Manager would respond with answers that he/she felt the interviewer would want to hear or conversely

give a more detailed answer because of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee and the fact that the researcher had, at one time, held a similar managerial position. As far as possible, answers were corroborated by scrutinising responses to other questions and in particular the quantitative data, and also responses made by the active learners who were not known to the researcher.

It was agreed should any follow up questions from either side be required, then the telephone method would be acceptable. The same questions were asked of all the interviewees so that the same areas of information were collected and to avoid inadvertently introducing any form of bias. All interviews were conducted on college premises at a time convenient to the interviewee. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

### **3.11 Interviews with learners undertaking a residential course**

The method chosen for the interviews with learners was the focus group. The reason for choosing this method was to obtain perspectives relating to learning in a residential setting including gaining insights into learners' shared understanding of the learning experience. In order to understand the interviewees' attitudes, feelings, reactions and experiences the researcher felt that this method was preferable to other methods, such as one – to – one interviewing, questionnaires or observation in that responses

were more likely to be forthcoming in a social event and the interaction that the focus group entails.

Kitzinger (1994) argues that interaction is a crucial feature of focus groups:

'.... The interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as re-evaluate and reconsider their understanding of their specific experiences'.

Kitzinger (1994) in Gibbs (1997, Issue:19 p.2)

Gibbs (1997) suggests that focus groups can be used either as a method in their own right or as a complement to other methods, especially for triangulation and validity checking, a point that has been made previously to overcome any bias in reporting the findings.

Each group had between six to ten learners and the learners were undertaking a residential course at the time the focus group took place. As the learners were drawn from the courses in residence the learners from a particular group were known to each other but not necessarily known to learners from other teaching groups. Having been informed that the purpose of the discussion was to seek opinions on their residential experience they self selected.

The questions were devised to seek learner opinion about their residential learning experience in terms of the course, value for money, the

living experience and any perceived differences between residential learning and non-residential learning. (See *Appendix 7 p.368* for the Focus Group questions). Importantly the focus group responses would or would not verify the answers given by the Principals as to how they perceived their establishment.

The focus group discussions took place at coffee breaks but took longer than the fifteen minutes or so allocated for coffee and actually lasted between 45 minutes to 60 minutes. The purpose of the session was to elucidate insights and understandings of residential learning by means of interaction between the members of the group. Cohen et al (2000) describes the focus group as a form of 'group interview' with possibly only one topic. This was the case in the five focus groups but with a number of sub topics introduced as the group interacted:

'... the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. Hence the participants react with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that views of the participants can emerge – the participants' rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate'

Cohen et al (2000, p.288)

### **3.12 Summary**

The method chosen for this research is that of multiple case studies. The research focused on real people in real situations and considers the cause and effect of actions taken in real situations. 'How' and 'Why' questions form the basis of the collection of evidence from different sources

to enable research into the apparent success of some cases and the apparent failure of others. In order to achieve this five cases have been examined to reflect different organisational structures. Several sources of evidence were used to collect data over a two-year period. They are face-to-face interviews with principals or managers, numerical data collection and face-to-face interviews with active learners in the form of focus groups. The factor that all cases have in common is that they all provide adult education courses in a residential setting. The boundaries are defined in each case as well as the details of the role, responsibilities and functions of those participating in the case. Cases are to be examined in a systematic way and the results presented comprehensively without personal subjective analysis. To ensure reliability and validity the four tests of reliability, construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability that Yin (2003) espouses were applied. A pluralistic approach will be used, namely quantitative data collection and qualitative data collection in the form of interviews and discussions.

It is hoped that by using the methods described the reasons for the apparent business success or failure of colleges will illuminate the thesis that, as the literature search suggested, the decline in the number of short term colleges over the past 60 years is due to an apparent lack of strategic direction, lack of clarity of purpose, and little or no investment by the owners of these colleges. This research will propose a model of good practice, which if adopted might provide an opportunity to secure the future of the short term residential college.

Chapter 4 will present quantitative and qualitative data for each of the case studies. This two year snapshot of the business of five colleges will provide a description of the current situation and how the colleges' policies and practices compare with the initial aspirations of some 60 years ago as discussed in the literature review.

## Chapter 4 Case Studies

The findings of the 5 case studies have been presented in the same format as follows:

- Description of the college management structure, courses advertised and accommodation.
- College data for open courses from 2005 – 2007.
- Interview with the Principal.
- The College Curriculum.
- Observations.
- Summary.

The findings and the reporting of the key issues have been endorsed by all the participants.

See Appendix 5 p 363 for the data collection instrument

See *Appendix 8 p.369* for the terminology used throughout all case studies.

### 4.1 Individual College

#### Case 1

##### Description of College

The Principal lives on site.

The College was purchased by a County Council in 1954 from its last private owner.

The first residential course was held at the college in February 1961.

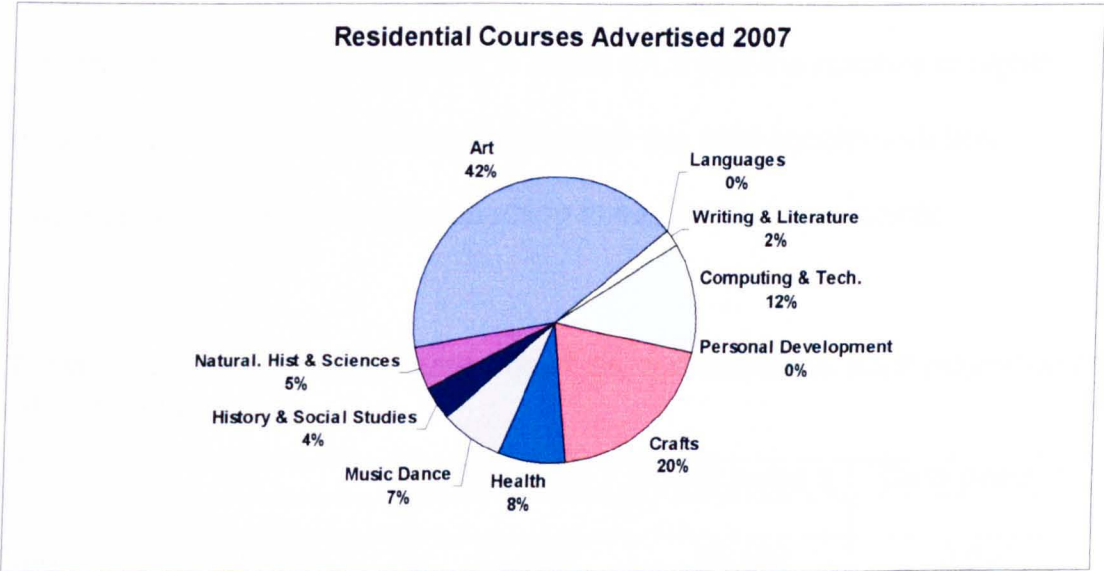


**Management Personnel 2008**

- Principal
- Support Services Manager
- Administrative Officer
- Facilities Officer
- Two Chefs

***Residential Adult Education Courses Advertised in 2007***

*Table 4.1.1: Percentage of residential courses advertised in 2007*



**Accommodation 2007**

- 53 Bed Spaces
- 32 Bedrooms
- 28 En suite rooms

Research questions 1 to 7 refer to adult education residential and day open courses. Research questions 8 and 9 refer to closed courses i.e. those delegates attending residential or non residential courses or conferences

**4.1.1 College Data for Open Courses from 2005 - 2007**

**.Accommodation at each data point**

*Table 4.1.2: Total accommodation at each data point*

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3
Number of bed spaces	53	53	53
Number of bedrooms	32	32	32
Number of 'en suite' rooms	28	28	28

The college is available for residential adult education for 254 nights per year.

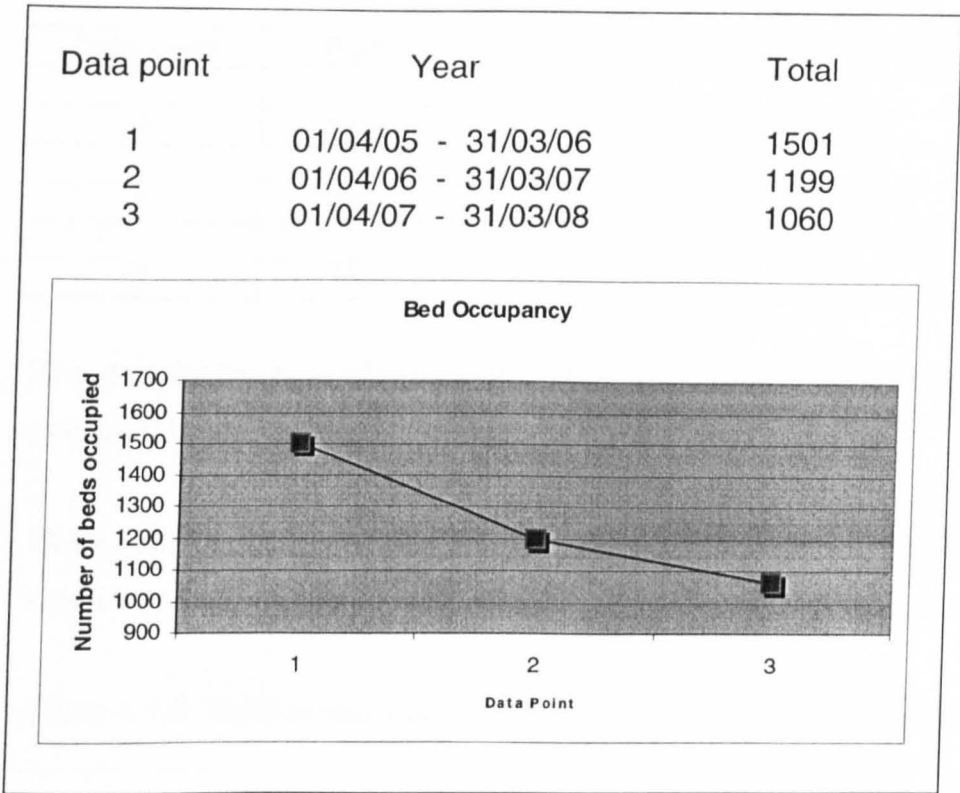
By using the information detailed in Table 4.1.2 and the number of nights available per year, it is possible to calculate the total accommodation available for residential adult education at each of the data points.

*Table 4.1.3: Total accommodation available for residential adult education at each data point.*

	Data point 1	Data point 2	Data point 3
Number of bed spaces	13,462	13,462	13,462
Number of bedrooms	8,128	8,128	8,128
Number of 'en suite' rooms	7,112	7,112	7,112

**Research Question 1: At each of the data points what was the total number of beds occupied per night?**

*Table 4.1.4: Total number of beds occupied at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in bed occupancy of 20% and from 2006 to 2007 a further decrease of 12%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 29%. To put the above figures into context it is possible to calculate the percentage of usage by adult education participants at each of the data points. However some assumptions have to be made. These assumptions are supported by the Principal and evidence from the focus groups.

Assuming that learners would opt for in order of preference, a single en-suite bedroom, a single bedroom or a bedroom with single occupancy, by

calculating what was actually used with what was available for use, it was possible to determine percentage usage.

Table 4.1.5: Percentage of usage in relation to what was available.

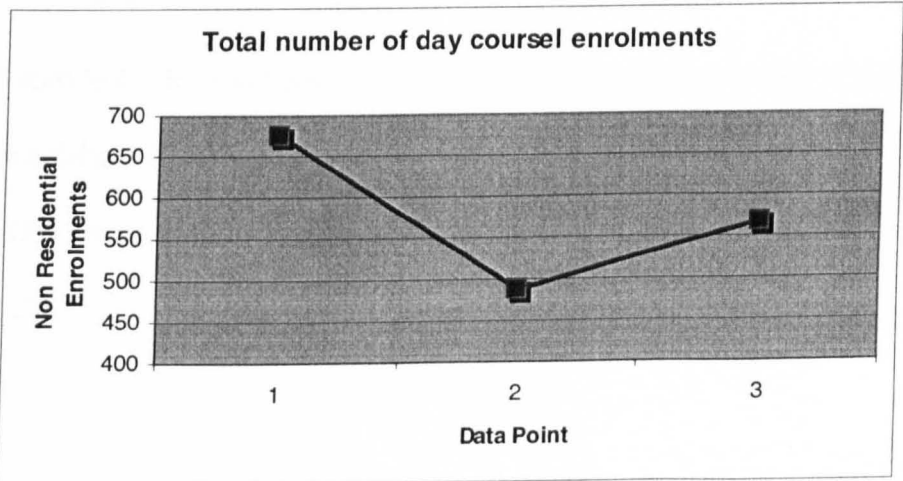
Data point	Beds	Bedrooms	Single 'en suite'
1	11%	18%	21%
2	9%	15%	17%
3	8%	13%	15%

The data for the type of rooms used, beds, bedrooms or en suite is not collected by the college.

**Research Question 2: At each of the data points what was the total number of day course enrolments?**

Table 4.1.6: Total number of day course enrolments at each data point

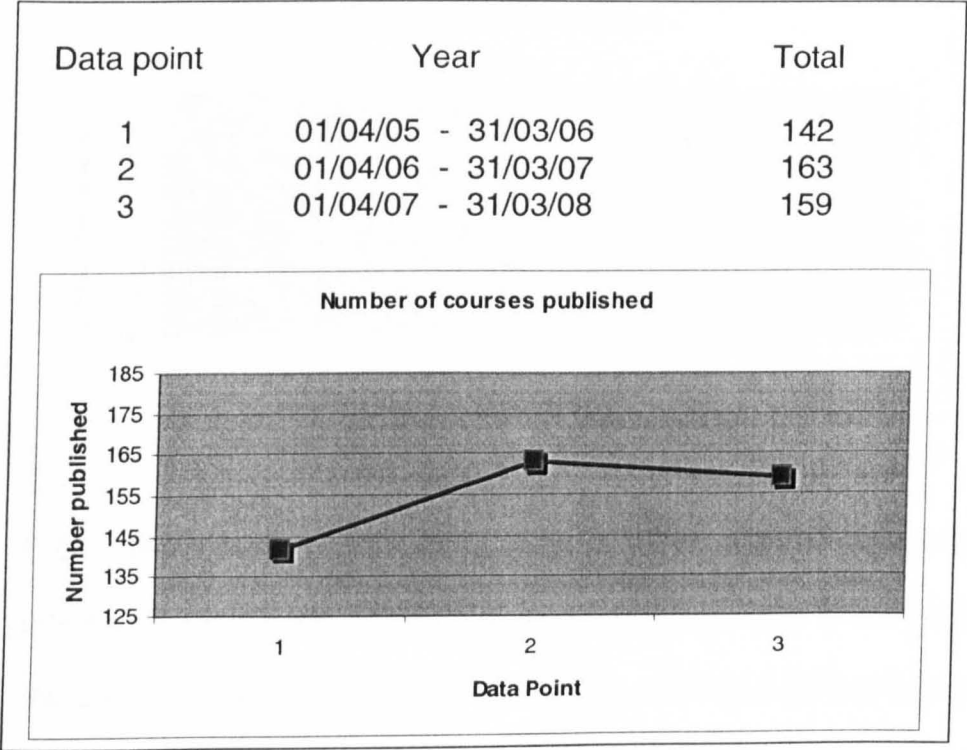
Data point	Year	Total
1	01/04/05 - 31/03/06	675
2	01/04/06 - 31/03/07	488
3	01/04/07 - 31/03/08	568



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of day course enrolments of 28% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 16%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in day course enrolments of 16%.

**Research Question 3: At each of the data points what was the total number of residential courses published?**

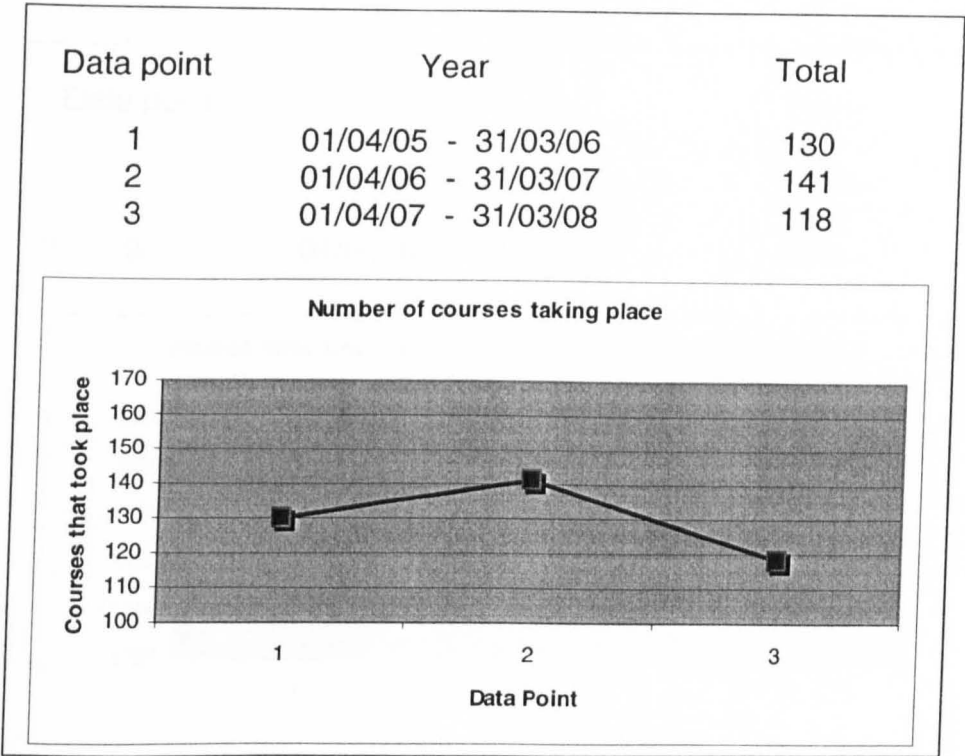
*Table 4.1.7: Total number of residential courses published at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of courses published of 15% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 3%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses published by 12%.

**Research Question 4: At each of the data points how many residential courses took place?**

*Table 4.1.8: Total number of courses that took place at each data point*



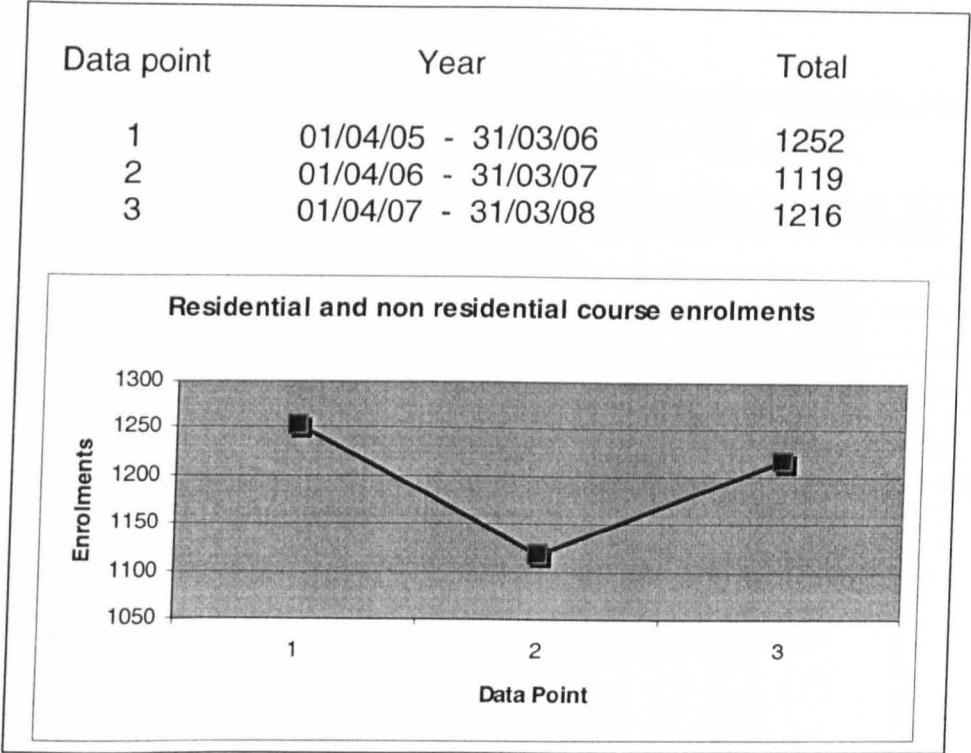
From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of courses that took place of 9% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 16%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of courses that took place by 9%. From the data used in Table 4.1.7 and Table 4.1.8, it is possible to calculate the percentage of course cancellations at each data point and the percentage of courses cancelled over the data period.

*Table 4.1.9: The percentage of residential course cancellations at each of the data points and over the data period*

	Cancelled	%Cancelled
Point 1	12	9%
Point 2	22	14%
Point 3	41	26%
Overall	75	16%

**Research Question 5: What was the total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each of the data points?**

*Table 4.1.10: Total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of residential course enrolments of 11% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 9%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of enrolments by 3%.

*Table 4.1.11: The number of learners participating in adult education courses. ie combining residential, non residential and day course learners.*

Data Point	Residential Enrolments	Non Residential Enrolments	Day Course Enrolments	Total
1	677	575	675	1927
2	581	538	488	1607
3	686	530	568	1784

From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of combined enrolments of 17% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 11%. From 2005 to

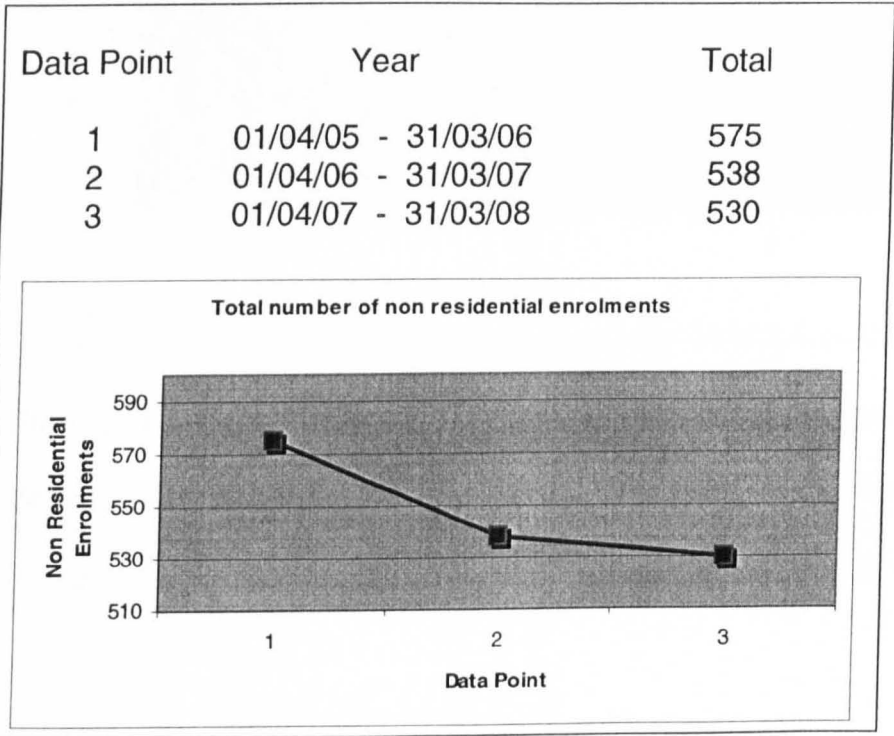
2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of combined enrolments of 7%.

By using the information detailed in Table 4.1.8 and Table 4.1.10, the average number of students per course can be calculated.

*Table 4.1.12: The average number of residential enrolments and non residential enrolments for each course at the data points.*

Data Point	Enrolments	Courses	Average no. learners per course
1	1252	130	9.63
2	1119	141	7.93
3	1216	118	10.30

*Table 4.1.13: The number of non residential learners attending a residential course at the data points.*



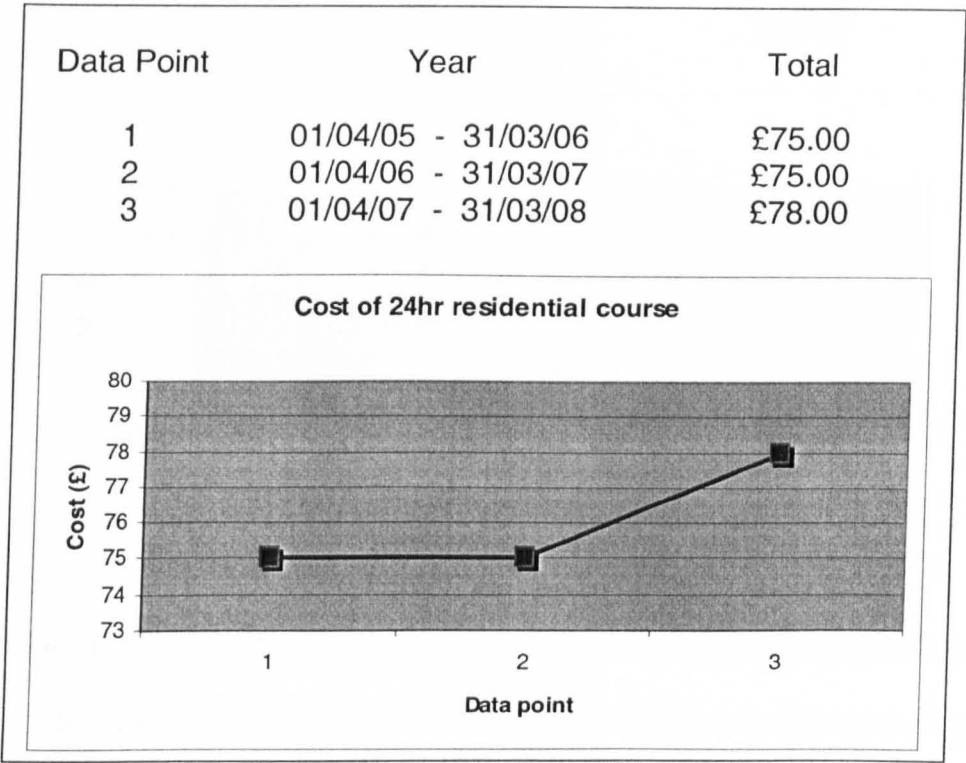
From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of non residential course enrolments of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 2%. From



2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in non residential enrolments of 8%.

**Research Question 6: What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course.**

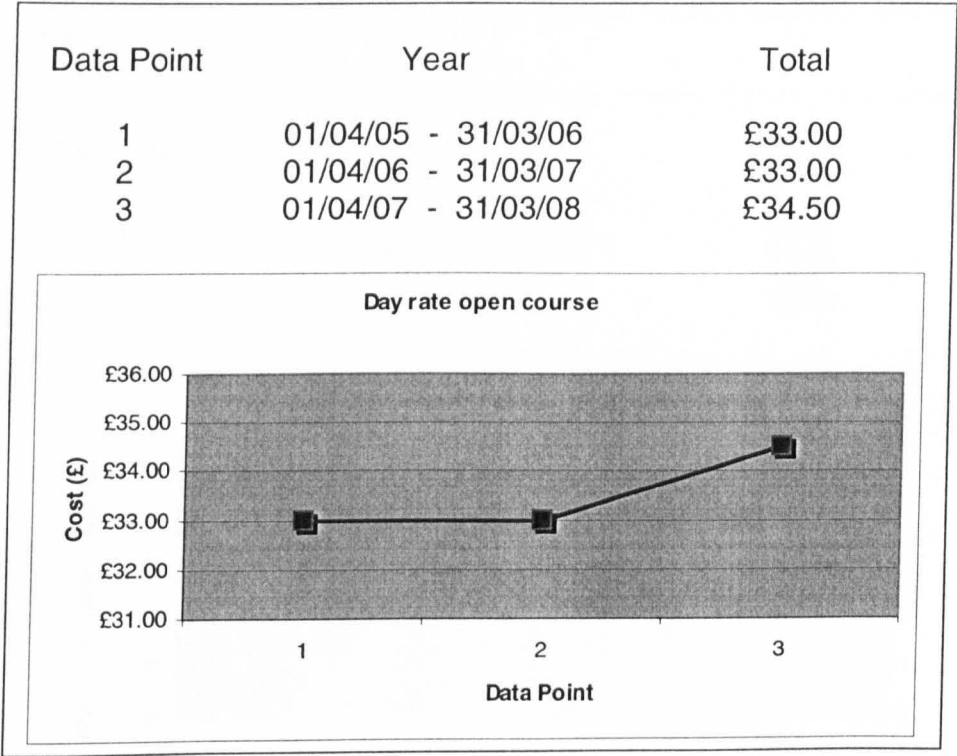
*Table 4.1.14: The 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course*



From 2005 to 2006 there was no increase in the rate charged to learners for 24 hours in residence and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 4% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 4%.

**Research Question 7: What was the day rate charged to learners for a course.**

*Table 4.1.15: The rate charged for a day course.*

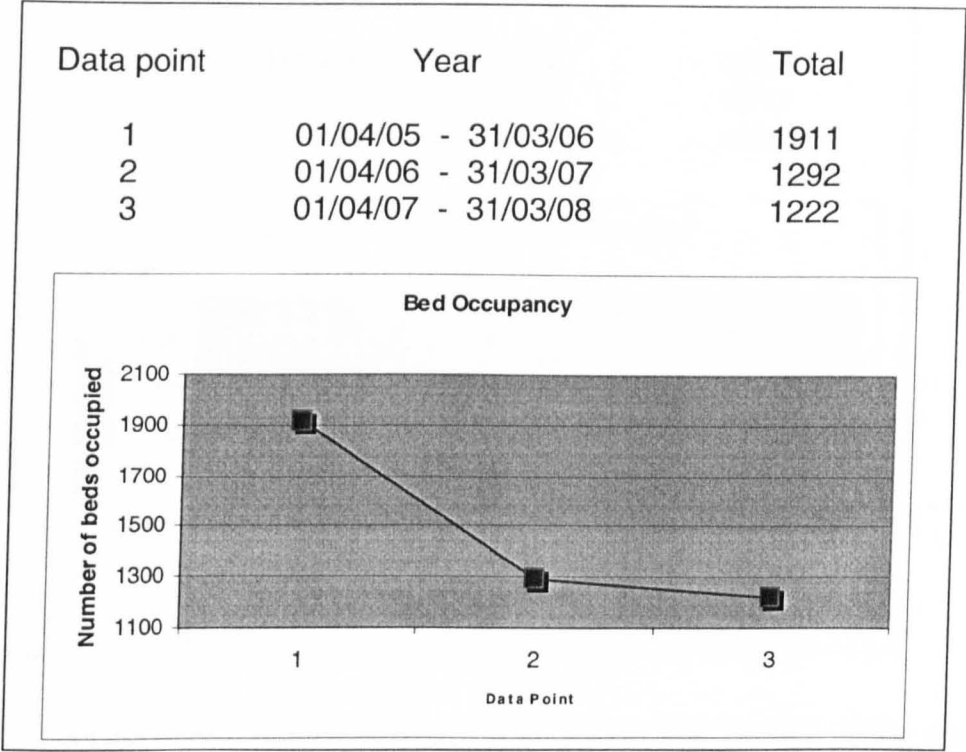


From 2005 to 2006 there was no increase in the rate charged to learners for a day and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 5% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 5%.

4.1.2 Closed Course Data

**Research Question 8: At each of the data points what was the total number of closed course beds occupied per night?**

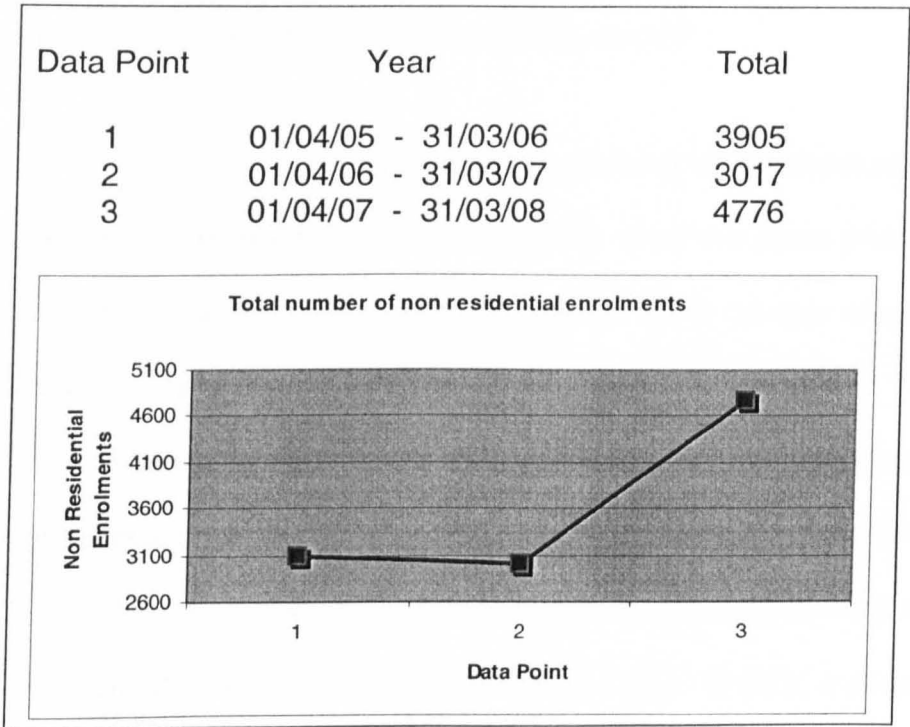
Table 4.1.16: Total number of beds occupied at each data point for closed courses



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in bed occupancy of 32% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 5%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 36%.

**Research Question 9: At each of the data points what was the total number of day closed course enrolments?**

*Table 4.1.17: Total number of day closed course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of day closed course enrolments of 23% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 58%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of non residential closed day course enrolments of 22%.

### **4.1.3 Interview with the Principal**

***Interview Question 1: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.1.4 indicates that overall there was a decrease in bed occupancy over the data period by 29%. Over the same period Table 4.1.10 indicates that there was a small decrease in the number of open course enrolments of 3%.

An explanation for the decrease in bed occupancy was an increase in costs which resulted in an increase in fees charged to the learner. Prior to Data Point 1 i.e. the period 2004 to 2005, a 15% increase had been levied on residential course fees. During the period 2005 to 2006 a decision was made by the Principal to hold the fee at the previous level for the forthcoming year although this did not halt the decline in bed occupancy. Feedback given to the Principal from potential learners was that those on fixed incomes and older learners were finding it difficult to afford courses at this fee level. A further 4% increase was introduced for the period 2006 to 2007. (See Table 4.1.14).

The increase in costs was due to a number of reasons other than the general rise in the cost of living. The college receives funds from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) via the County Council Adult Education Service. These funds in the form of an annual grant are being reduced over

time. The Principal explained that the LSC had taken a policy decision that 'those that can pay, should pay'

The County Council introduced a fee remissions policy which gave financial assistance to those learners claiming certain state benefits. This enabled potential learners to claim a reduction in a course fee for the tuition element of the course. For a residential course this would amount to approximately £20.00 per course for a fee of approximately £150.00. However, the authority does not reimburse the college for the reduction in income and therefore the college must assimilate this reduction in its financial planning.

To explain the small overall decrease in enrolments of 3% (See Table 4.1.10) the Principal explained that to maintain enrolments he had adopted a policy from 2006 to 2007 of reducing the number of nights for some weekend courses in agreement with the tutor. Learners would arrive on Saturday morning instead of Friday evening. This arrangement did not suit all learners particularly those that lived some distance away from the college. For those people, the college would provide bed and breakfast for the Friday evening but those taking up this option would not be counted in the bed occupancy figures. This is confirmed by a decrease in bed occupancy of 12% (2006 – 2007) and for the same period an increase in residential enrolments of 9%.

***Interview Question 2: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.1.6: indicates an overall decrease in day course learners attending an open course of 16%. In the second period an increase of 16% was achieved.

The reasons for the first period decrease of 28% can be attributed to the reasons given for the bed occupancy rate above. The same increase in fees of 15% was applied during the period 2004 to 2005 to non residential courses.

The management team implemented a policy decision to increase the number of day courses to encourage learners to attend the college programme in the belief that this would encourage learners back to the residential programme. As can be seen (Table 4.1.6) this policy has had some effect in that for the 2<sup>nd</sup> period (data point 2 to 3) an increase in day course enrolments of 16% has been achieved. This policy is to continue for the foreseeable future. The college has noted that there are more learners attending non residential courses from the local area which to a point satisfies the County Council policy that more learners from the County should be encouraged to enrol albeit for day courses rather than residential courses. When asked if the day course programme might detract from the general ethos of the college, the Principal felt that it might. This would accord with the responses from the focus groups discussed later in Chapter 5. He felt it important to achieve a balance between residential and day course activities

so that day courses did not dominate the weekend programme. He also felt that it was very important to maintain the use of the college and if this meant increasing the number of day courses then so be it. Better that than an empty college.

***Interview Question 3: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses published has increased by 12% over the data period (See Table 4.1.7). This was to achieve a broad curriculum but it was accepted that not all courses would enrol sufficient numbers. The Principal suggested that it was worth trying as some courses might reach enough enrolments to run and his experience was that if a course ran once then it would stand a better chance in future programmes. He was also keen to promote science courses and these had been recently added to the programme with modest success. This was a subject area encouraged by the LSC and as the college received LSC funding he felt that he should include these courses in the programme. He had also observed that not many residential colleges offered science based courses. 'To maintain a broad curriculum and not become stereotypical' was his aim for the future direction of the college.



***Interview Question 4: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses cancelled has over the data period totalled 75 which represent 16% of the courses published over the same period (See Table 4.1.9). A surprising reason given was the unavailability of tutors and not, as might be expected, a course not enrolling sufficient numbers. The example given was of tutors cancelling their teaching commitment due to illness or for personal reasons. This phenomenon was, he felt, on the increase. Confirmation of higher cancellations can be seen at Data Point 3 (Table 4.1.9). He explained that it was difficult to find a replacement tutor with the necessary knowledge and experience to agree to teach the course. It was his experience that tutors did not like teaching other people's courses as they were constrained to follow the advertised content devised by another. If a course has to be cancelled, then a full refund is returned to the learner. If a course does not enrol well then that course would automatically be cancelled. A course would run if the number of enrolments was three or above. He accepted that this was not ideal. The tutor would always be consulted and if it was agreed that a course should continue would be paid at the same agreed fee rate. He argued that three enrolments would cover the tutor's fee and expenses and in turn help the 'bottom line'.

***Interview Question 5: Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Residential course fees have increased by 4% over the data period and day courses by 5% (See Tables 4.1.14 and 4.1.15). An explanation has already been given as to why increases were implemented. The college policy would be to increase all fees by 5% per year unless circumstances dictated otherwise. A 15% increase levied in one year would be an example of a circumstance that would require very careful examination before implementing a further increase in the following year. The college is dependant on the contribution made by the LSC and the level of contribution is not known until after publication of the next brochure of courses. It is however known that the LSC will fund Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) until 2010 but no inflationary element has been built into the budget.

#### **4.1.4 Curriculum**

***Interview Question 6: What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?***

- Use historical data. Courses that have enrolled in previous years will form part of the forthcoming programme.
- Look at trends in other subject areas. There are sometimes 'fashionable' subjects. For example a new medium in art.

- New subjects are programmed twice even if the course didn't enrol in the first instance. Many new courses have succeeded at the second attempt.
- Potential learners contact the college and suggest new subject areas.
- Feedback from learners and tutors. This is one of the most effective ways of keeping up to date with trends and developments in adult education.

***Interview Question 7: Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?***

There has been no change to the criteria for devising a programme over the data period

***Interview Question 8: Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?***

There are no curriculum constraints that have to be observed when designing a programme of courses. There is no interference from the local authority or from the Board of Governors. A curriculum subcommittee of the governors meets once a year to have an open discussion on the proposed programme. It is not convened to approve courses; it is more of a 'think tank'. Members of this group include representatives from the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the County Council and a representative from the local community. Approval for the forthcoming programme does not have to be sought.

***Interview Question 9: Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?***

External funding is received from the Local Skills Council (LSC) via the County Council and covers all courses programmed for the year. Additional funding is gained for Family Learning courses as they are contracted to be delivered by the authority. The assumption is that this funding will be disaggregated from other work undertaken at the college. For example, conferences of private organisations hiring the college usually take place at the same time as Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) courses. However, separating overheads such as heating and lighting is not done as it is difficult and problematic. The level of subsidy is approximately £80,000 (18%) out of a total budget of £450,000.

Family Learning Courses that are organised and run during the college year are contracted and paid for by the authority. The college charge the same rate as for outside organisations.

All open courses are therefore subsidised by the authority.

***Interview Question 10: Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?***

Some individual learners have access to subsidies but only if they are in receipt of certain benefits, for example, income support. This subsidy covers 100% of the tuition element of the course fee. Unlike a number of other authorities there is no subsidy for senior citizens.

***Interview Question 11: Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?***

The college has a wide curriculum but with a bias towards art and science courses.

***Interview Question 12: Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?***

No courses attract a formal qualification

***Interview Question 13: Could you describe how the college is financed?***

The programme is part financed by the LSC as described above and the difference charged to the students. In terms of the Adult Residential Association network the college is about average in what it charges for residential adult education courses. The college does not operate on a full cost recovery basis. The college has autonomy in purchasing any item below £1000, and all internal decoration and kitchen equipment. The college manages all staffing costs, heating and lighting expenditure. The authority assumes landlord's responsibility covering mainly the external fabric of the building. Approximately five years ago the authority built eight new en suite bedrooms which allowed for more seminar rooms due to the closure of eight

bedrooms in the main house. External funding provided an internal lift for those with mobility problems to the new second-floor seminar rooms.

***Interview Question 14: What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?***

All participants complete an evaluation form and 85% of returns fall into the category of good or very good.

Evaluation forms are placed in bedrooms for comment on the accommodation and food.

Observation of teaching and learning is conducted by senior members of staff. All courses are seen at least once every year.

#### **4.1.5 Observations regarding the business position.**

##### **Accommodation**

The bedroom accommodation is very good. At the end of the data period of the 32 bedrooms only 4 did not have en suite facilities and since the data period these bedrooms are in the process of being altered to the standard required by today's learners. Some 15 years ago the college, under the direction of the present Principal, was very innovative by installing a complete en suite 'pod' unit to a number of bedrooms. This idea was adopted by a number of colleges around the country. The en suiting of bedrooms was relatively inexpensive and satisfied the minimum

requirements of many of the learners attending the college. The Local Authority funded the addition of eight new bedrooms attached to an established bedroom complex. This enabled a number of bedrooms in the main house to be altered for teaching purposes. The College has sufficient teaching space to accommodate weekend residential courses and in addition several day courses at the same time.

The college is available for adult education courses 254 nights per year. It is therefore surprising that the actual bed usage is extremely low and in fact reduced over the data period. The data was collected after the completion of the additional bedrooms and the alteration to others. The figures would suggest that accommodation is not a reason for the decline in bed occupancy over the period the data was collected. The figures would also suggest that lack of accommodation for non residential courses is not a reason. The dining room, one of the largest in the national college network, would easily accommodate an increase in residential and day course enrolments. Teaching spaces are extremely well equipped most having interactive whiteboards and other modern teaching aids.

## **Closed courses**

Venue use hire by other organisations is an important part of the overall business profile of the college. The derived income will represent a significant contribution to support the running costs of the college and maximise the use of teaching spaces.

Table 4.1.16 shows a decrease of 26% in bed occupancy over the complete data period. Table 4.2.17 shows an increase in day course enrolments of 22% over the same period.

The Principal suggested that the decrease in bed occupancy was due to outside organisations demanding facilities that could be better satisfied by the 'conference market'. Although he would claim that the facilities in this college was as good as any other ARCA college, outside organisations were looking for a dining room that could offer more menu choice, swimming pools, internet and televisions in all single en suite bedrooms. His argument was supported by the increase in day use by outside organisations where without too much difficulty a buffet lunch offering a reasonable choice could be provided

The question of the use of residential college facilities during the week is pertinent to this case. Over the past 10 to 20 years the 'conference' market has become very sophisticated. Many hotels have purpose built accommodation, including many 'extras' such as a swimming pool or televisions in bedrooms, to satisfy the demands of businesses to accommodate their staff for training and meeting events. The short term residential college finds it extremely difficult to compete in this market as will be seen in other cases. This may explain the decreasing use made by outside organisations (36%) over the data period although the level of accommodation is more suitable for this type of work than most colleges. The college cannot offer the 'extras' described above which may be acceptable to some organisations for example charities.



Furthermore, as was shown in the literature review, this problem was clearly evident in the early days of short term residential college, a problem that has never been resolved satisfactorily.

### **Residential and Day Course Enrolments**

The residential and day course figures are interesting for each of the data periods. In period 1 the bed occupancy decreased by 20% (See Table 4.1.4) and at the same time day course enrolments decreased by 28% (See Table 4.1.6) with residential enrolments decreasing by 11% (See table 4.1.10). Clearly the policy of shorter residential courses, starting on Saturday morning had some small effect. In period 2 the bed occupancy suffered a further decrease of 12% and at the same time day course enrolments increased by 16%. Residential enrolments increased by 9% but as has been explained the increase was due to some learners opting for one night rather than two. Also in this period the option to attend a day course was a choice that many learners opted for. Another factor will be the cost of both residential and day courses. In period one there was no increase in fees for either but a 15% increase before period 1 and a 4% to 5% in period 2 (See Table 4.1.14 and table 4.1.15). It would seem that the major factor, confirmed by the Principal, was the increase in fees prior to the data collection. The shorter residential course will reduce the fee and it would appear that this strategy halted the decline in residential enrolments. This of course means a reduction in the income to the college which will be difficult to recover. The Friday evening will be very difficult to 'sell' and so the Principal has a difficult decision – suffer lower enrolments for a two night residential courses or

shorten the residential course in the hope of increasing or at least maintaining enrolments but recognising that either decision will reduce college income.

### **Cancellations**

At Data Point 1, 142 courses were published of which 12 were cancelled (9%). At Data Point 2, 163 courses were published of which 22 were cancelled (14%) and at Data Point 3, 159 courses were published of which 41 were cancelled (26%) (See Table 4.1.9). Even though in the second period the numbers of courses published decreased by only 4 courses the cancellation rate rose to 26% (See Tables 4.1.7 and table 4.1.9) . The programme would appear to be failing in its aims. This view is supported by the enrolment analysis as described above. The Principal gave the reason for cancellations as the unavailability of tutors either due to illness or for personal reasons and not, as might be expected, the course not attracting sufficient numbers.

### **Curriculum**

The Principal stated that the curriculum had not changed over the data period. Is this the reason for a programme of courses failing or are there other reasons such as poor distribution of brochures or not enough courses of a higher level that would allow the learner to progress in his or her chosen subject? These are difficult questions that can only be addressed after much detailed research is undertaken and beyond the scope of this study. The balance of the curriculum as advertised can be seen in Table 4.1.1. There is

a concentration in the Art and Crafts category (62%) with a fairly even spread over the rest of the courses apart from Natural History, Writing, and History and Social Science. What is interesting is that there are no courses published in the Languages and Personal Development categories. The Principal highlighted Science as a subject area that is being developed but this statement is not confirmed in the table.

He also pointed out that within the closed course figures adult education courses contracted by the authority, such as Family Learning and Respite Care, took place. These figures do not appear in the residential open courses or day courses.

#### **4.1.6 Summary**

In terms of business position the college is in a precarious state. The evidence would suggest that urgent consideration should be given to why learners are not being attracted to the college the consequence of which is a decrease in income resulting in financial difficulties. As has been shown, the college financial deficit is being covered by LSC contributions through the Local Authority. The Principal has confirmed the contributions are being reduced and within two years may disappear completely.

If the accommodation is acceptable, and this would appear so from the feedback received by the Principal, what are the reasons for the lack of learner enrolments? Are the courses too expensive? Of the five case studies this college offers the cheapest courses and is in the lower quartile of course charging over the ARCA college network. Are the courses of poor quality in

terms of content and teaching? Again the Principal would dispute these suggestions evidencing feedback from tutors and learners.

The curriculum offered does not support the Principal's assertion that it is broad with a specialism in Science. In fact the figures show the curriculum is dominated by Art and Crafts. The availability of accommodation would suggest that the number of courses on offer could be increased significantly.

This college is the only one of the five being studied that produces one course brochure per year. This places an enormous responsibility on the curriculum designer, in this case the Principal, to 'get it right' at the beginning of the year. Very little opportunity is afforded to make adjustments as the year progresses.

An explanation for the level of course cancellations (16%) is the policy of new courses being programmed twice even if they didn't enrol sufficient learner's in the first instance. The Principal claimed that many new courses succeeded at the second attempt.

As has been stated, the literature review emphasised the problem of what college accommodation could be used for during the week. This dilemma is of major importance to this college. Although the LA make some use of the facilities, mainly in the area of 'family learning ' courses, there are many times during the year, as the evidence confirms, when the college is empty or has a small number of closed day courses.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence points to the conclusion that the college lacks clarity of purpose. The college offers a range of residential courses but with little or no focus. What are the college strengths and how

are they being developed? They are not evident and as a result there would appear to be a lack of direction. The future of this college will depend on where the LA positions its future priorities. Does the authority wish residential education to continue? It is of course possible for the authority to determine that the college should enter the conference market more aggressively and for example pursue the wedding reception market as a means of raising income. There has been some investment in this college and it is the only case where the LA has directed funding provided by the LSC. However as stated by the Principal it is very unlikely that this funding stream will continue for the foreseeable future.

Perhaps an indication of the intentions of the LA regarding the college are becoming apparent. At the end of the data analysis period the Principal gave notice that he would take retirement at the end of July 2009. Discussions during his notice period resulted in the LA deciding for the following year at least, a temporary Business Manager would be appointed and the post of Principal be dispensed with. This may well be symptomatic of its commitment to residential adult learning and would counter the thoughts of a number of authors indicating that a Principal, experienced in adult learning, should be appointed to devise and manage the short term residential college curriculum.

## **4.2 Individual College**

### **Case 2**

#### **Description of College**

The Principal lives on site

The house was built in 1805 and purchased in 1947 by a consortium consisting of a City Council, a local University, and five Local Authorities for the purpose of establishing a residential college for adult education.

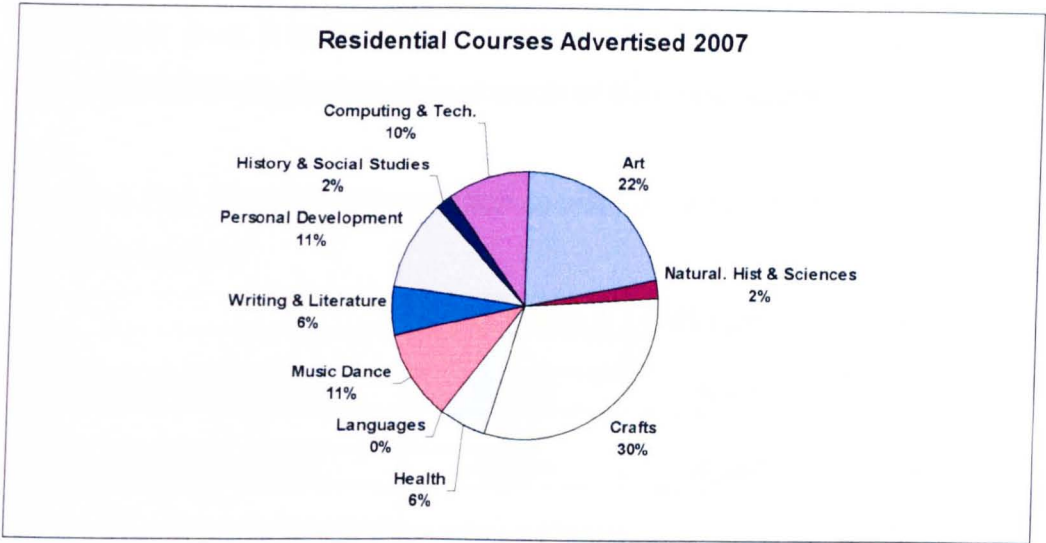
The college residential programme commenced in 1948.

#### **Management Personnel 2007**

- Principal
- Venue Manager
- Development Manager
- P/T Team Leader Administration
- P/T Finance Officer
- 2 P/T Course Administration
- 1 P/T Finance Administration
- 2 Chefs, 1 full time
- Service Staff team

**Residential Adult Education Courses Advertised in 2007***Table 4.2.1:*

*Percentage of residential courses advertised in 2007*



**Accommodation 2008**

- 56 Bed Spaces
- 44 Bedrooms
- 22 En suite rooms

Research questions 1 to 7 refer to adult education residential and day open courses. Research questions 8 and 9 refer to closed courses i.e. those delegates attending residential or non residential courses or conferences

**4.2.1 College Data for Open Courses from 2005 - 2007**

**Accommodation at each data point.**

*Table 4.2.2: Total accommodation at each data point*

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3
Number of bed spaces	61	56	56
Number of bedrooms	47	44	44
Number of 'en suite' rooms	25	22	22

The college is available for residential adult education for 102 nights per year.

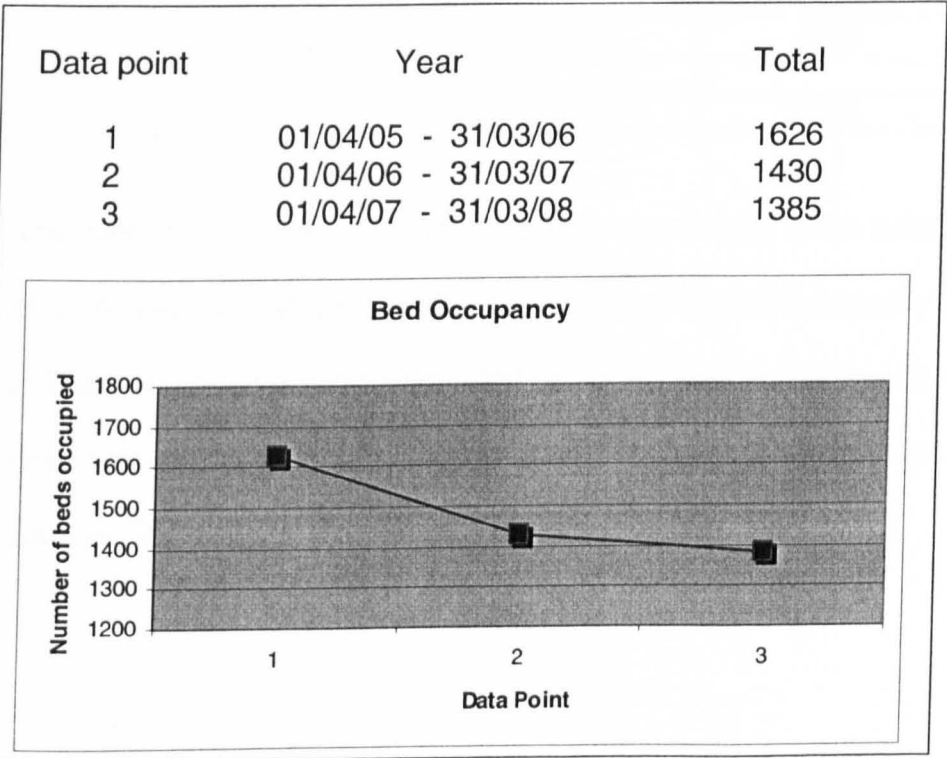
By using the information detailed in Table 4.2.2 and using the number of nights per year, it is possible to calculate the total accommodation available for residential adult education at each of the data points.

Table 4.2.3: Total accommodation available for residential adult education at each data point.

	Data point 1	Data point 2	Data point 3
Number of bed spaces	6,222	5,712	5,712
Number of bedrooms	4,794	4,488	4,488
Number of 'en suite' rooms	2,550	2,244	2,244

**Research Question 1: At each of the data points what was the total number of beds occupied per night?**

Table 4.2.4: Total number of beds occupied at each data point





From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in bed occupancy of 12% and from 2006 to 2007 a further decrease of 3%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 15%. To put the above figures into context, it is possible to calculate the percentage of usage by adult education participants at each of the data points. However some assumptions have to be made. These assumptions are supported by the Principal and evidence from the focus groups.

Assuming that learners would opt for in order of preference, a single en-suite bedroom, a single bedroom or a bedroom with single occupancy, by calculating what was actually used with what was available for use, it was possible to determine percentage usage.

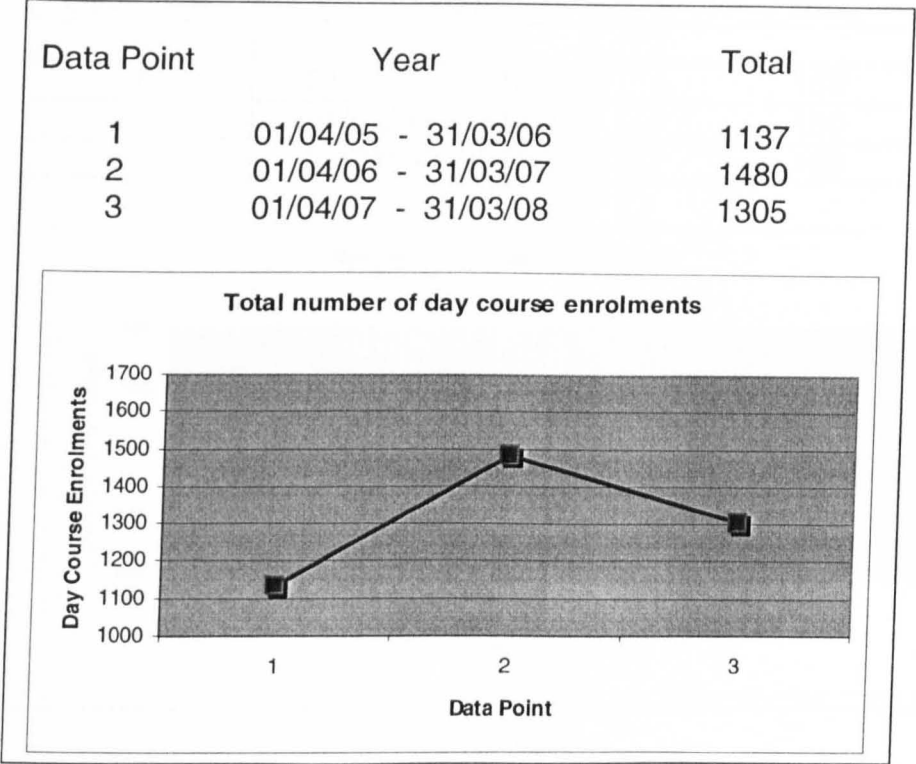
*Table 4.2.5: Percentage of usage in relation to what was available.*

Data point	Beds	Bedrooms	Single 'en suite'
1	26%	34%	64%
2	25%	32%	64%
3	24%	31%	62%

The data for the type of rooms used, beds, bedrooms or en suite is not collected by the college. To give some idea of available capacity the figures in Table 4.2.5 have been calculated using the total number of bed nights used and applying the totals to the number of beds, bedrooms or single en suite rooms giving a theoretical percentage of use .

**Research Question 2: At each of the data points what was the total number of day course enrolments?**

*Table 4.2.6: Total number of day course enrolments at each data point*

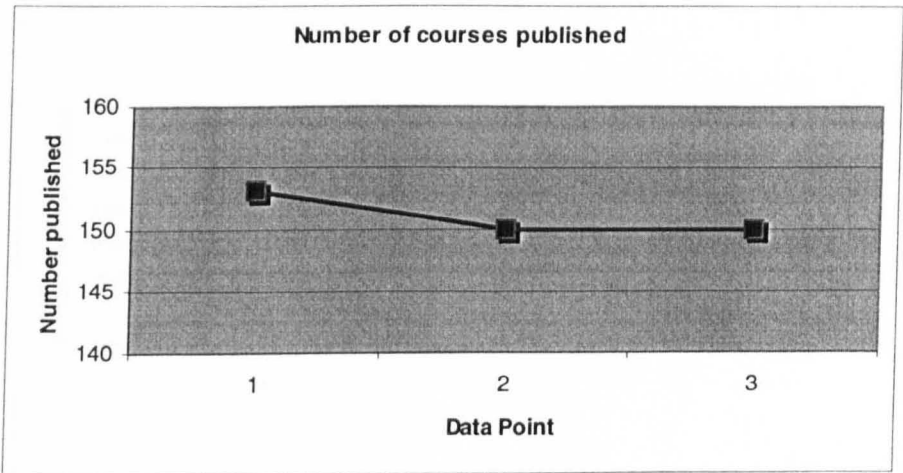


From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of day course enrolments of 30% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 12%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in day course enrolments of 14%

**Research Question 3: At each of the data points what was the total number of residential courses published?**

*Table 4.2.7: Total number of residential courses published at each data point*

Data Point	Year	Total
1	01/04/05 - 31/03/06	153
2	01/04/06 - 31/03/07	150
3	01/04/07 - 31/03/08	150

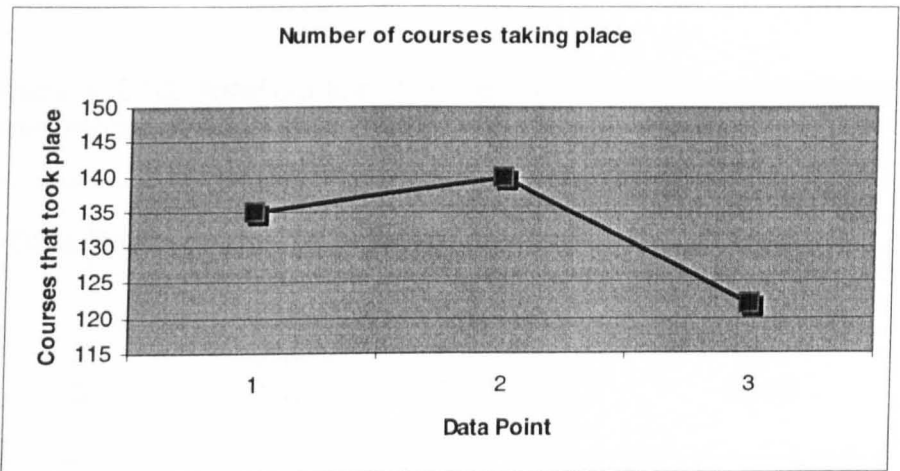


From 2005 to 2006 there was an decrease in the number of residential open courses published of 2% and from 2006 to 2007 no change. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of residential open courses published by 2%.

**Research Question 4: At each of the data points how many residential courses took place?**

Table 4.2.8: Total number of courses that took place at each data point

Data Point	Year	Total
1	01/04/05 - 31/03/06	135
2	01/04/06 - 31/03/07	140
3	01/04/07 - 31/03/08	122



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of courses that took place of 4% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 13%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of courses that took place of 10%.

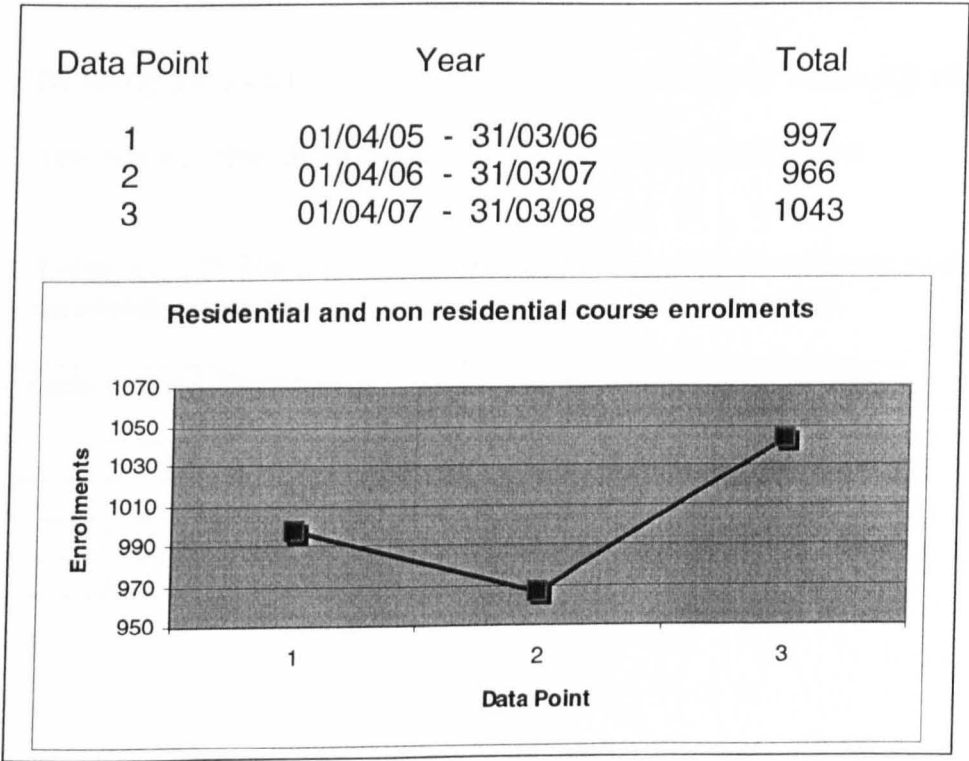
From the data in Table 4.2.7 and Table 4.2.8, it is possible to calculate the percentage of course cancellations at each data point and the percentage of courses cancelled over the data period.

Table 4.2.9: The percentage of residential course cancellations at each of the data points and over the data period

	Cancelled	%Cancelled
Point 1	18	12%
Point 2	10	7%
Point 3	28	19%
Overall	201	12%

**Research Question 5: What was the total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each of the data points?**

Table 4.2.10: Total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of residential and non residential course enrolments of 3% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 8%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of enrolments of 5%.

**Table 4.2.11: The number of learners participating in adult education courses. i.e. combining residential, non residential and day course learners.**

Data Point	Residential Enrolments	Non Residential Enrolments	Day Course Enrolments	Total
1	719	278	1137	2134
2	652	314	1480	2446
3	675	368	1305	2348

From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of combined enrolments of 15% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 4%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of combined enrolments of 10%.

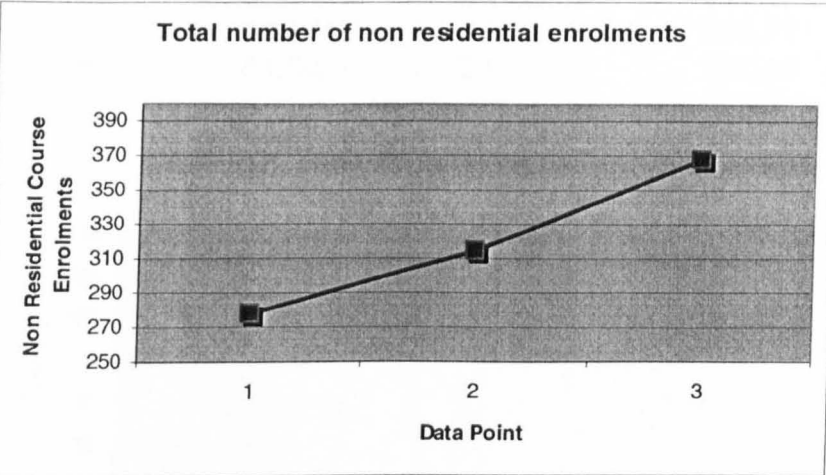
By using the information detailed in Table 4.2.8 and Table 4.2.10, the average number of students per course can be calculated.

**Table 4.2.12: The average number of residential enrolments and non residential enrolments for each course at the data points.**

Data Point	Enrolments	Courses	Average no. learners per course
1	997	135	7
2	966	140	7
3	1043	122	9

Table 4.2.13: The number of non residential learners attending a residential course at the data points.

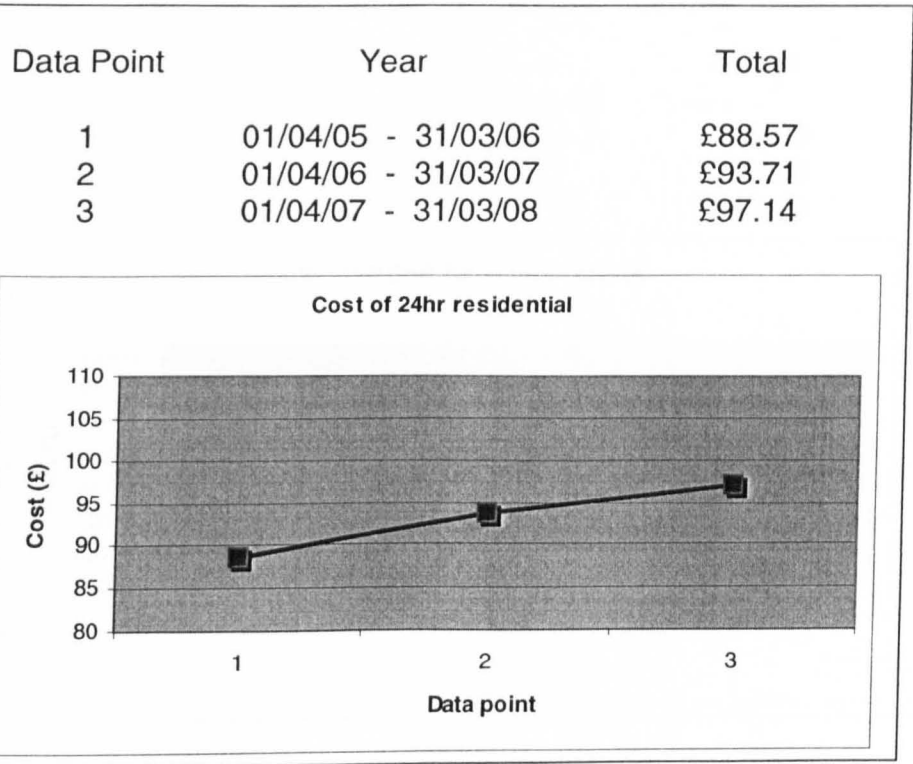
Data Point	Year	Total
1	01/04/05 - 31/03/06	278
2	01/04/06 - 31/03/07	314
3	01/04/07 - 31/03/08	368



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of non residential course enrolments of 13% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 17%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in non residential enrolments of 32%.

**Research Question 6: What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course?**

Table 4.2.14: The 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course

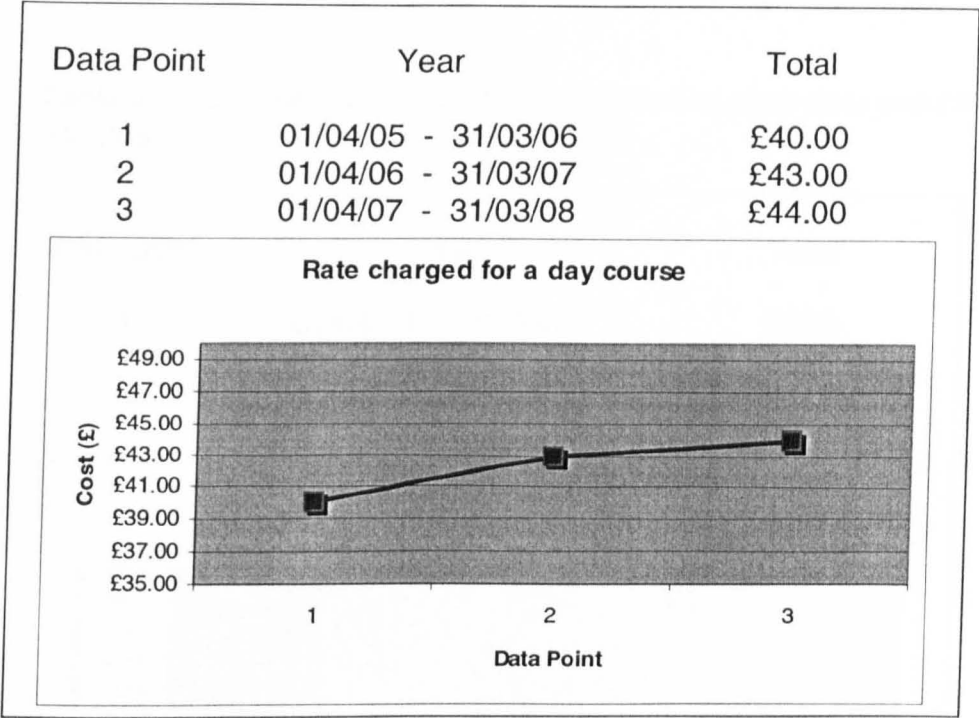


From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the rate charged to learners for 24 hours in residence of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 4% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 10%.



**Research Question 7: What was the day rate charged to learners for a course?**

Table 4.2.15: The rate charged for a day course.

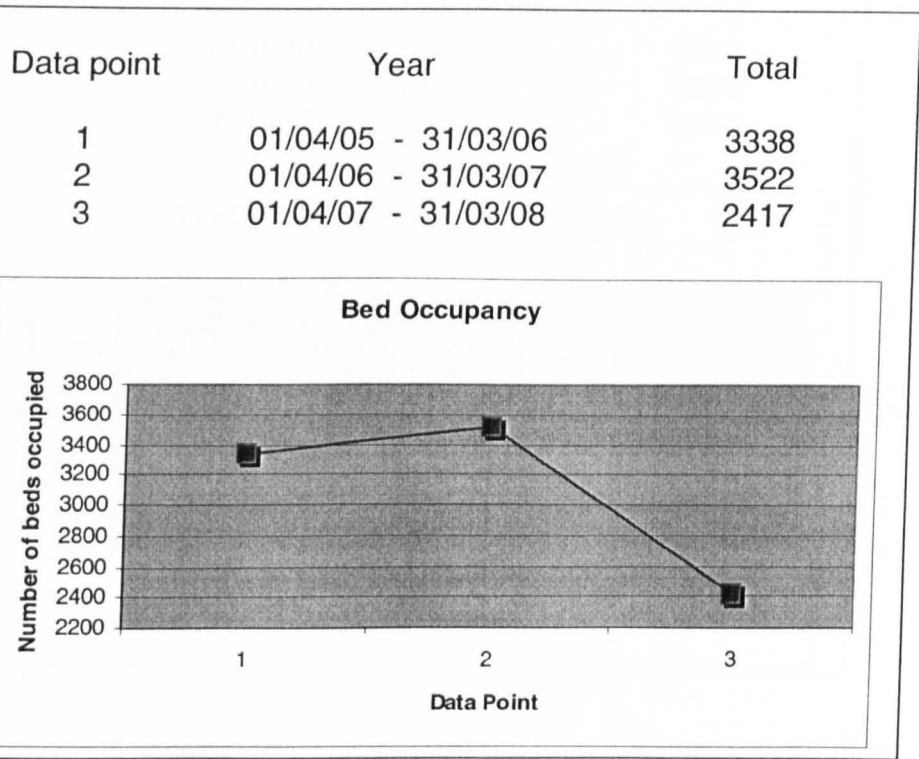


From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase of 8% in the rate charged to learners for a day and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 2% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 10%.

4.2.2 Closed Course Data

*Research Question 8: At each of the data points what was the total number of closed course beds occupied per night?*

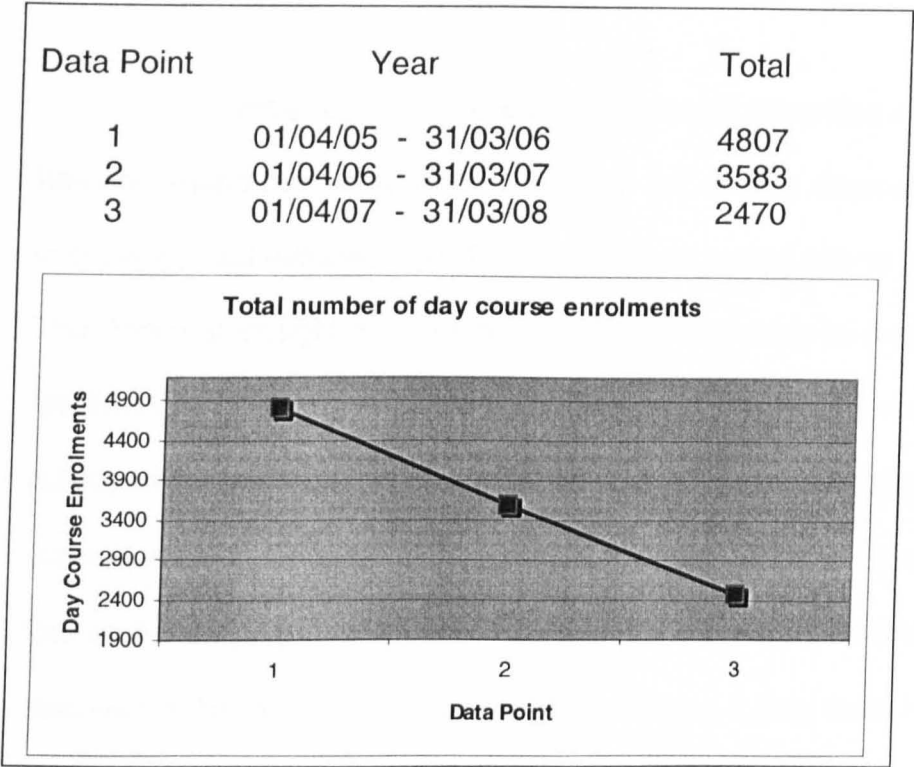
Table 4.2.16: Total number of beds occupied at each data point for closed courses



From 2005 to 2006 there was a increase in bed occupancy of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 31%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 26%.

**Research Question 9: At each of the data points what was the total number of day closed course enrolments?**

*Table 4.2.17: Total number of day closed course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of day closed course enrolments of 26% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 31%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in non residential closed day course enrolments of 49%.

### **4.2.3 Interview with the Principal**

#### ***Interview Question 1:***

***Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of beds occupied for learners attending an open course has decreased overall by 15%. (See table 4.2.4). The decrease in bed occupancy had reduced from 12% to 3% from period one to period two. The Principal thought that this decrease was very easy to explain. From feedback he had received from both tutors and learners he realised that the quality of the bedroom accommodation was below today's standards. As a consequence in a course of 12 learners it would not be unusual to have only four or five staying in residence. Examining the reasons for this trend he discovered that most learners would travel home if they were in travelling distance and if not would find themselves bed and breakfast accommodation in the area. He was however of the opinion that over the past 5 years the number of residential and non residential enrolments had increased slightly. Table 4.2.10 shows that overall there had been an increase of 5% confirming the Principals' opinion.

The main reason for the figures was attributed to the poor standard of residential accommodation. The quality of the residential accommodation was something all members of staff were aware of and although every effort was being made to make small improvements only significant financial investment would address the problem.

The Principal stressed that apart from occupying a bedroom, non residential learners experienced all elements of a residential experience, such as group dynamics, mealtime discussions and learning outside the classroom. Some learners were working until 10pm and then travelling home. The profile of learners coming to the college had not changed over the time he had been in post. Research undertaken by the college determined that the majority of students travel from within a 50 mile radius of the college and it was quite rare to have learners travelling greater distances. The college also suffers from a poor road network making travelling difficult particularly on Friday evenings.

Another factor connected to the decrease in residential enrolments has been the steady increase in fees over the last few years. Over the data period the residential fee for an open course has increased by 10%. (See Table 4.2.14). The Principal is aware that within the association of residential colleges this college has always been, in terms of fee level, in the upper quartile. This also applies to the day course fee. He would argue strongly that what happens in the classroom is as good, if not better than in any other college but ultimately students require comfortable single en suite bedrooms. Several initiatives have been introduced to try to encourage more residential enrolments. For example, day courses have been programmed alongside residential courses. Also learners are invited to an evening lecture which forms the first session of a residential course as a means of introducing those learners to what is available during the weekend. This has been working well, with numbers consistently above 35, for example in courses in History or English.

The hidden costs of a course may also have affected enrolments as the published price of a course is not always the final cost. Often there are extra costs such as the materials for a course. A recent example was a Japanese embroidery course where the student had to purchase between £50 and £60 worth of materials to participate in the course.

***Interview Question 2:***

***Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Over the complete data period day course enrolments increased by 14%. The arguments given for the increase are largely covered in the answer to Research Question 1. Feedback from non residential learners has focused on the cost of daily travel added to the increase in fees as the main issue. Recently the college enrolled 60 learners for a weekend but only 8 of that number were in residence.

***Interview Question 3:***

***Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.2.7 indicates an overall decrease in the number of courses published over the data period of 2%. The Principal stressed that he felt it important to keep the programme advertised 'fresh' and he had the capacity

to increase the number of courses. He would argue that the programme is innovative but would repeat 'tried and tested' courses.

***Interview Question 4:***

***Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Overall 12% of courses have been cancelled over the data period. (See Table 4.2.9). The Principal pointed to the fact that approximately the same number of students were enrolling for courses over the past five years or so. Table 4.2.8 shows that during the data period there had been a 10% decrease in enrolments despite the number of courses published over the data period decreasing by only 2% (See Table 4.2.7).

What criteria are used to cancel a course? The Principal had discussed with the Governing Body this question and it was agreed that the cancellation of a course should not rest solely on financial determinants. The college approach was to examine the total income for a particular weekend and vire the enrolments. One course with higher enrolments could be used to support another course with lower enrolments. The target number would be 11 learners. The total income for a weekend is matched against the total expenditure for that weekend. Occasionally a course with only four enrolments had been allowed to take place. There are of course other factors to consider. Computer courses could not enrol more than eight learners because there are only eight computers available. The type of course is also a consideration. Lower enrolments on a craft course can be advantageous for the learner – much more individual attention. His experience was that if a

new course was run for a first time on low numbers it was likely that the same course a year later would probably enrol sufficient numbers.

Cancellations are always considered very carefully and if possible options are considered to reduce the cost of a course to the college. For example, if the course required a mini bus, could the tutor or learners be asked to use their own transport? He is aware that it is possible for a college to 'get a name' as a college that cancels courses and the result is that potential learners will look elsewhere for a course to avoid disappointment.

***Interview Question 5:***

***Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.2.14 indicates that from 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the fee charged to learners for 24 hours in residence of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 4% resulting in an overall increase of 10%. A full cost apportionment analysis was completed which showed that whilst attendant prices e.g. food cost, energy etc had increased, fees had not been kept in line. The Governors determined that if possible the increase in the annual fee rate should be in line with inflation. Table 4.2.14 would suggest that this requirement has largely been satisfied. The decline in enrolments is probably due to a significant increase in fees prior to the data collection period. His opinion is that people do not mind paying a little more if they can see, for example, small improvements in the décor of the college.



## 4.2.4 Curriculum

### *Interview Question 6:*

***What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?***

- Deliberately look at the mix. Always try to broaden the curriculum.  
Try to run courses that represent the old Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) headings.
- Have a target of at least 80 new courses from over 350 offered each half year
- Aware that new courses may not enrol but if they are not offered there would be no chance of success.
- Would not want to specialise in a particular area. The college is proud of the fact that it is a generalist college offering a wide curriculum.
- Care has been taken when offering a new course with a new tutor.  
New tutors want to get their name known in the adult education sector and offer courses to a number of colleges. The result can be that all colleges recruit few learners and therefore no college starts the course.
- Try to be aware of trends in adult education. For example a tutor suggested a course for 'buskers' which was not an obvious course that would enrol sufficient numbers. In the event the course was very successful
- Repeat courses that have been successful in the past.
- The programme is driven by educational criteria.

***Interview Question 7:***

***Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?***

There has been no change to the criteria for devising a programme over the data period

***Interview Question 8:***

***Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?***

The constraints are more to do with the resources and facilities. The college does not have any purpose built rooms unlike many other colleges. Rooms have to be adapted for the particular course. An example is the library that has to be used for practical courses necessitating book shelves having to have sheets of plastic placed in front of them to avoid damage. The Principal is proud to say that the college offers courses espousing learning for learning's sake.

***Interview Question 9:***

***Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?***

The college does not receive any external funding.

***Interview Question 10:***

***Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?***

In general learners do not receive any external funding. A small number however may receive external funding for vocational development.

***Interview Question 11:***

***Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?***

No. The arts are however well represented.

***Interview Question 12: Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?***

There are a few courses, for example, painting and drawing and ceramic restoration that attract an Open College Network qualification.

***Interview Question 13:***

***Could you describe how the college is financed?***

The College operates on a full cost recovery basis. Unlike many colleges who claim to be operating on a full cost recovery basis the college has to cover every aspect of its operation including HR, finance and grounds maintenance. The main difficulty is keeping the College occupied during the week and over the years this has become increasingly difficult. The college is running at a significant operating deficit.

**Interview Question 14:**

***What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?***

Immediate post-course evaluation. The evaluation reports are confidential and tutors are given a summary at a later date. If the evaluation is poor or if there is a disparity in the responses from the learners then a member of staff will contact the tutor and discuss the evaluations. The evaluation forms are confidential because of one instance when a tutor stood over the learners and more or less dictated what they should write. Members of the management team who are on duty over the weekend will overhear discussions about the course or discuss with learners their learning experiences and it is not difficult to determine whether a course is successful or not.

#### **4.2.5 Observations regarding the business position:**

##### **Accommodation 2008**

During period two the college has reduced the number of bed spaces (8%), bedrooms (6%) and single en suite rooms (12%). The figures have been calculated using the information detailed in Table 4.2.2. The main reason for the reduction was building alterations required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and to take out of use bedrooms that were not fit for purpose. The college is available for residential adult education for 102 nights per year. The remainder is promoted to outside organisations, training facilitators and to the conference market.

As the number of bed spaces, bedrooms and en suite rooms have decreased, the total amount of accommodation available throughout the year has fallen. The percentage occupancy at each data point has been calculated and shown in Table 4.2.3 by using the total recorded bed nights. Table 4.2.3 indicates that even if all the 'beds nights' counted were concentrated only in en suite rooms approximately two thirds would have been used. There is clearly enough capacity over the two data periods to accommodate more residents and therefore lack of accommodation cannot be a reason for a decrease in bed nights. Other factors could be considered for example whether the dining room could accommodate more learners? Are there enough teaching spaces or are the teaching spaces large enough to cater for more learners? Will tutors accept more learners on their courses? The Principal did not put forward any of these reasons to explain the decrease in bed occupancy. A follow up telephone call discussing these points with the Principal did not confirm that these reasons were valid. Very few courses would stipulate a learner student ratio lower than 1:12 and if so it would be for practical reasons. For example computer courses where the number of computers for teaching purposes is eight.

It is worth mentioning that during the telephone conversation mentioned above the Principal reiterated the problems of attracting business to the college. There has been only very limited capital investment in the building over the last 30 years. Whilst the College is an attractive building, it is in urgent need of refurbishment and significant capital development. This is particularly relevant to the residential accommodation which is mostly inadequate and inappropriate for current usage. In addition, the state of the

facilities is undoubtedly contributing to current difficulties in attracting new learners. It is significant that the inability to generate income to meet modest targets and subsequent decreases in that income can be attributed to two key 'products' i.e. venue use hire by others and the selling of residential places on the adult education programme.

## **Closed courses**

Venue use hire by other organisations is an important part of the overall business profile of the college. The derived income will represent a significant contribution to support the running costs of the college and maximise the use of teaching spaces.

Table 4.2.16 shows a decrease of 26% in bed occupancy over the complete data period. Table 4.2.17 shows an enrolment decrease of 50% over the same period.

The Principal repeated his assertion that poor day and residential accommodation due to a serious lack of investment in the college was the main reason for the lack of venue hire.

## **Residential and Non Residential Enrolments**

Over the data period the number of residential enrolments has stayed fairly static as shown in Table 4.2.10 (increase of 5%) and yet the bed occupancy numbers have fallen by 15% (See Table 4.2.4) over the same period of time. This would suggest that learners are enrolling on courses that are shorter in length having fewer overnight stays. These figures would agree with the strategy adopted by the Principal to reduce, because of the poor

accommodation, the number of overnights and yet still attract learners to the college.

The Principal stated that non residential enrolments had increased again due to the poor accommodation. Overall this is certainly true as the number increased by 32%. (calculated from the data shown in Table 4.2.11). These figures apply to those learners undertaking a complete residential course but not staying overnight. They do not include those who attend for part of a course, for example, just the Friday evening session.

#### **Day course enrolments - open courses.**

The use of the college for open day adult education courses has increased over the data period by 15%. (calculated using the data shown in Table 4.2.11). This accords with the Principals' aim of encouraging learners to enrol on a day course in order to attract them to socialise with learners who are participating in residential courses even if they are non residents.

#### **Course Cancellations**

Over the data period there was an increase in the number of courses published of 5% but a decrease in the number that took place of 7%. Overall 20% of courses were cancelled. There is a financial impact from courses being cancelled, for example administrative costs, engaging of tutors, accommodation including classrooms that is not going to be used, preparation, printing and distribution of course brochures. The main concern highlighted by the Principal is the image of the college as a college that cancels courses which deters potential learners from enrolling in the first

instance. In terms of enrolments the Principal stated that there were approximately the same number of learners enrolling each year for the past five years. In fact over the data period the number of learners attending residential courses and day courses shows an increase of 10%. What would be interesting, if the figures are available, would be to examine the course cancellations and calculate the numbers of 'new' course cancellations against 'established' course cancellations. The Principal was very determined to keep the programme 'fresh' and used the argument that if a course is not offered there would be no chance of success.

## **Curriculum**

There has been no change to the criteria used to devise a programme of courses over the data period. The Principal claimed that the college was a 'generalist' college in terms of its wide curriculum but that the 'arts' are well represented. Table 4.2.1 would support his analysis if he had included 'crafts' in his statement. Other course categories are spread fairly evenly across the range. This would also hold true for day courses with the only exception being computer courses. Learners do not receive any financial support either from the college or authority. No courses are certificated.

### **4.2.6 Summary**

The college is experiencing serious financial difficulties. There is a significant operating deficit that is accrued to the City Council owners as an accumulated debt from one year to the next. The situation described offers very little opportunity for the deficit to be reduced. The actual deficit cannot



be stated here as the figure is considered commercially and politically sensitive.

Although the Principal is constantly working to develop a future for the college he does not appear to have the support or commitment of the City Council. It is interesting that of all the colleges being studied this college had a clear purpose from the outset. In the memorandum of agreement drawn up by the participating authorities it was proposed that a programme of courses for adults be introduced lasting from a weekend to a maximum of three months.

During the 1970s and 1980s, for a variety of reasons, four of the five authorities withdrew from the agreement leaving one City Council and the local University. This is the arrangement at the present time.

The situation the managers find themselves in today is very different. As there is little or no support from the owners it is difficult to see how a future direction can be determined.

The Principal's view of the business is supported by the data collected over the research period. From the interview and from subsequent conversations he is a passionate believer in the value of studying in residence and is trying to determine a way forward that will safeguard residential adult education.

The Principal has presented to the College Board of Governors business and development plans. The college has engaged full consultancy services, examining benchmarks and comparators engaging in the process all stakeholders: governors, partners and current and potential users of services. As a result, the college has undertaken a business planning

programme containing unique components, such as contributions to the capacity building of communities, contributions to Rural Development, engagement with local and regional heritage areas and culture and skills development. The problem is that if the Principal does not have the interest and support of the owners, he is fighting an uphill battle which cannot result in a satisfactory conclusion.

One possibility the Principal is pursuing is an arrangement with a University in the locality. Discussions are ongoing regarding the management and governance of the college site and the treatment of issues including capital investment, rental arrangements, and meeting associated lifecycle costs. A draft document setting out these proposals was presented to and endorsed by the College Governors at their meeting in December 2006. In essence, the proposal is that an operating protocol be agreed between the City Council and the University, which would see the University take over the management and operation of the College site for a period of no less than 30 years. The agreement would see the University act as a 'sole operator', providing a single source of management and administrative arrangements and taking financial liability for the operation of the site. These discussions are in their early stages and are being conducted by the Principal alone. The City Council has shown very little interest in what might possibly be an answer to the future of the college.

The business position of the college is to say the least, precarious. The research has shown that the owners display a lack of purpose, a consequent lack of direction and a serious lack of financial investment. It is difficult to see how this college can survive without consideration by the City

Council of the three elements listed even though the Principal is working hard to address the situation and offer the authority alternatives for consideration.

# 4.3 Individual College

## Case 3

### Description of College

The Chief Executive lives off site

The College is a registered charity

Adult education courses started in 1929 and the house developed as a residential college from that date.

### Management Personnel 2008

- Chief Executive
- Operations Manager
- Course Administrator
- Catering Manager
- Accounts Administrator
- Finance and General Purposes Committee (7 Trustees)

### Residential Adult Education Courses advertised in 2007

Table 4.3.1: Percentage of residential courses advertised in 2007

SUBJECT	RESIDENTIAL	OTHERS
Specialist Courses	93%	7%

## Accommodation 2008

- 55 Bed Spaces
- 42 Bedrooms
- 14 En suite rooms

Research questions 1 to 7 refer to adult education residential and day open courses. Research questions 8 and 9 refer to closed courses i.e. those delegates attending residential or non residential courses or conferences

### 4.3.1 College Data for Open Courses from 2005 - 2007

Accommodation at each data point.

*Table 4.3.2: Total accommodation at each data point*

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3
Number of bed spaces	55	55	55
Number of bedrooms	42	42	42
Number of 'en suite' rooms	14	14	14

The college is available for residential adult education for 327 nights per year.

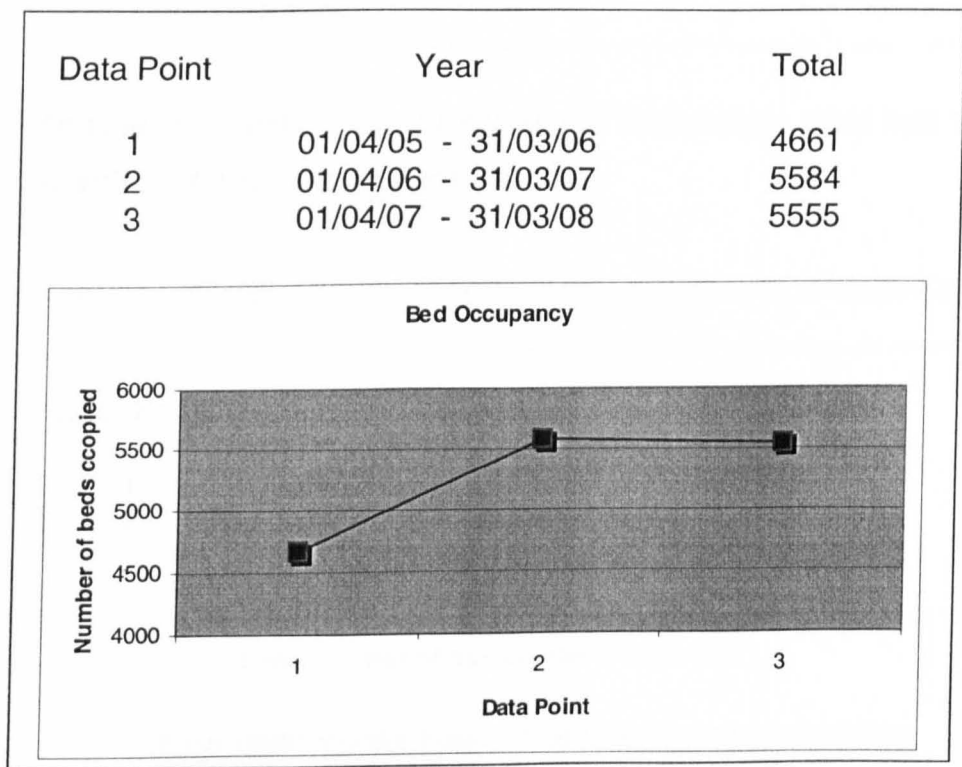
By using the information detailed in Table 4.3.2 and using the number of nights per year, it is possible to calculate the total accommodation available for residential adult education at each of the data points.

Table 4.3.3: Total accommodation available for residential adult education at each data point.

	Data point 1	Data point 2	Data point 3
Number of bed spaces	17,985	17,985	17,985
Number of bedrooms	13,734	13,734	13,734
Number of 'en suite' rooms	4,578	4,578	4,578

**Research Question 1: At each of the data points what was the total number of beds occupied per night?**

Total 4.3.4: Total number of beds occupied at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in bed occupancy of 20% and from 2006 to 2007 a small decrease of 0.5%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 19%. To put the above figures into context it is possible to calculate the percentage of usage by adult education participants at each of the data points. However some assumptions have to be made. These

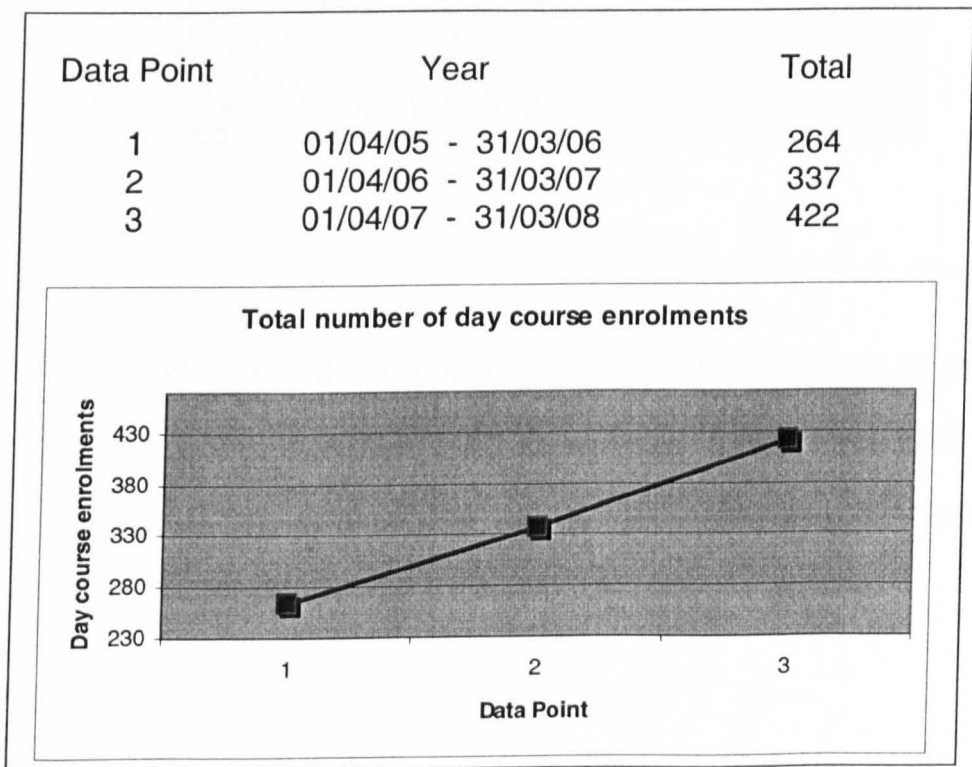
assumptions are supported by the Chief Executive and evidence from the focus groups. Assuming that learners would opt for in order of preference, a single en-suite bedroom, a single bedroom or a bedroom with single occupancy, by calculating what was actually used with what was available for use, it is possible to determine percentage usage.

*Table 4.3.5 : Percentage of usage in relation to what was available.*

Data point	Beds	Bedrooms	Single 'en suite'
1	26%	34%	100%
2	31%	41%	100%
3	31%	40%	100%

**Research Question 2: At each of the data points what was the total number of day course enrolments?**

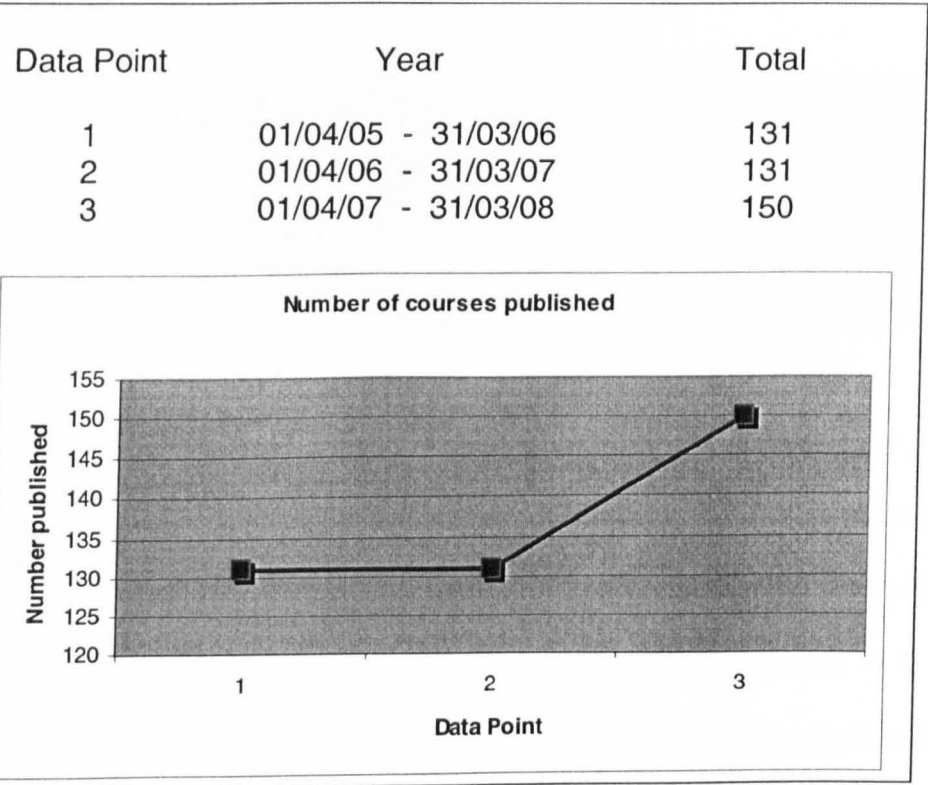
*Table 4.3.6 : Total number of day course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of day course enrolments of 27% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 25%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase day course enrolments of 60%.

**Research Question 3: At each of the data points what was the total number of residential courses published?**

Table 4.3.7 : Total number of residential courses published at each data point

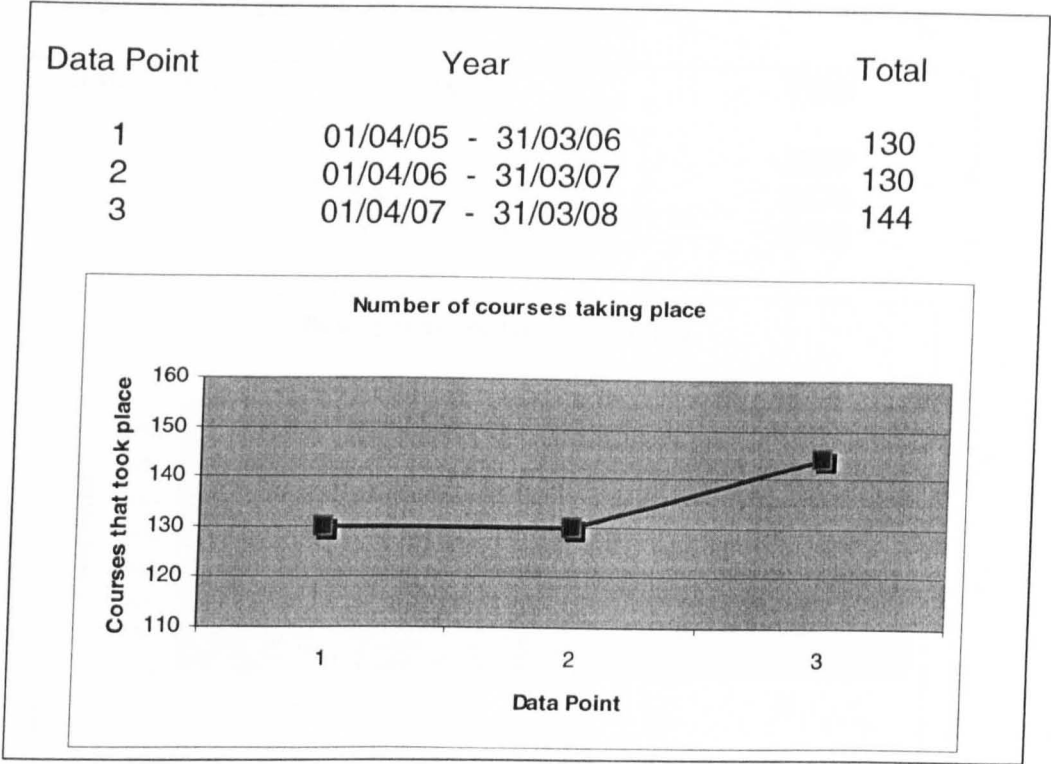


From 2005 to 2006 there was no alteration in the number of courses published and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 15%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses published of 15%.



**Research Question 4: At each of the data points how many open courses took place?**

Table 4.3.8: Total number of courses that took place at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was no increase in the number of courses that took and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 11%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of the number of courses that took place by 11%.

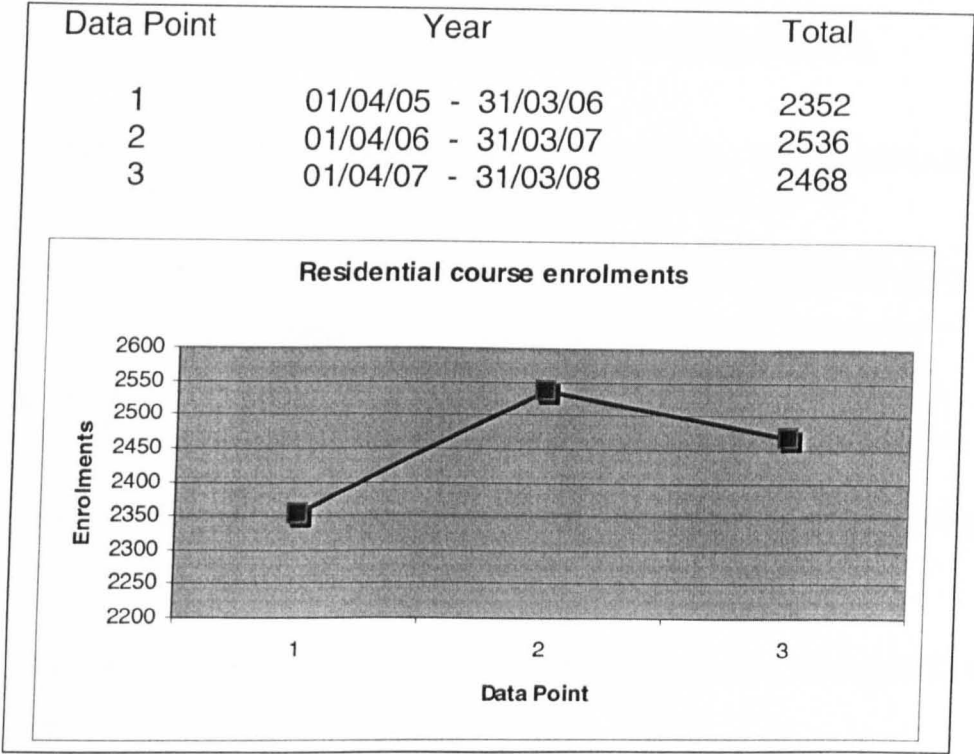
From the data used in Table 4.3.7 and Table 4.3.8, it is possible to calculate the percentage of course cancellations at each data point and the percentage of courses cancelled over the data period.

Table 4.3.9: The percentage of residential course cancellations at each of the data points and over the data period

	Cancelled	%Cancelled
Point 1	1	0.8%
Point 2	1	0.8%
Point 3	6	4%
Overall	8	2%

**Research Question 5: What was the total number of residential course enrolments and non residential at each of the data points?**

*Table 4.3.10: Total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of residential course enrolments of 8% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 3%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of enrolments of 5%.

*Table 4.3.11: The number of learners participating in adult education courses i.e. combining residential, non residential and day course learners*

Data Point	Residential Enrolments	Non Residential Enrolments	Day Course Enrolments	Total
1	2088	N/A	264	2352
2	2199	N/A	337	2536
3	2046	N/A	422	2468

The college does not have data for non residential enrolments and so the percentage increase or decrease in the number of learners will remain as in Table 4.3.10.

By using the information detailed in Table 4.3.8 and Table 4.3.10, the average number of learners per course can be calculated.

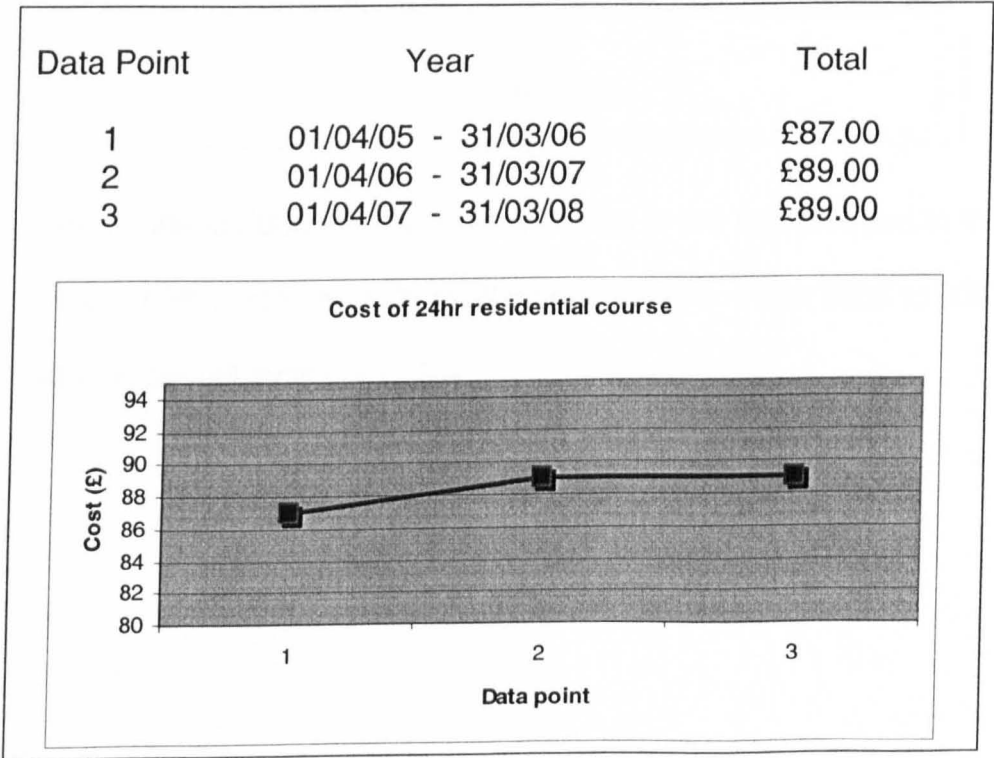
*Table 4.3.12: The average number of residential enrolments and non residential enrolments for each course at the data points.*

Data Point	Enrolments	Courses	Average no. learners per course
1	2088	130	16.06
2	2199	130	16.91
3	2046	144	14.20

The number of non residential learners attending a residential course at the data points - data not available for this college.

**Research Question 6: What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course?**

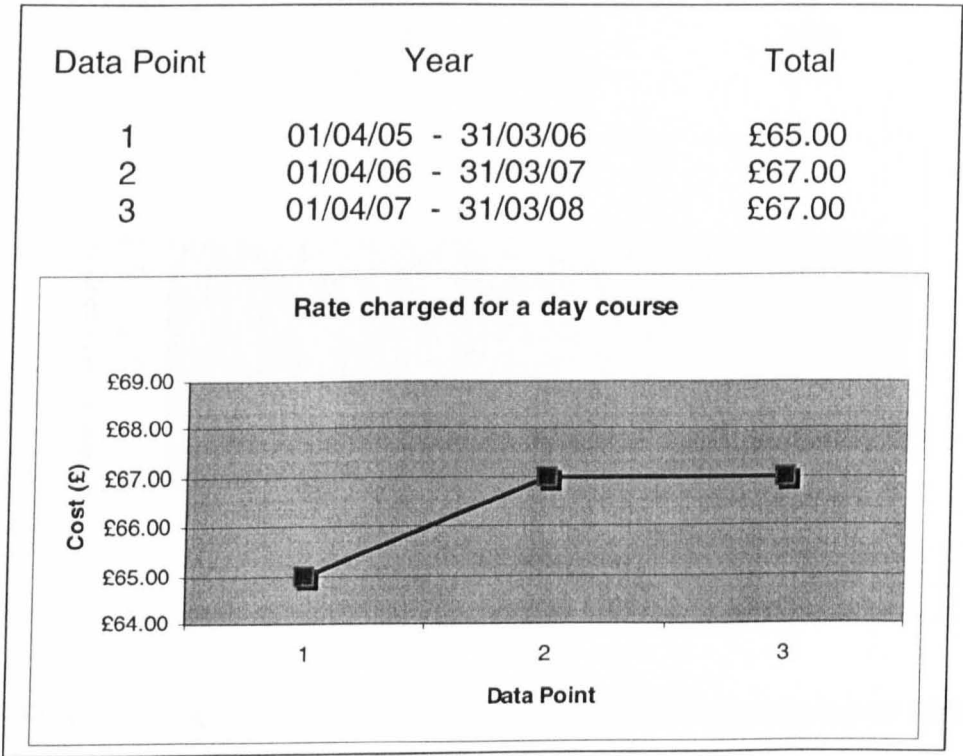
*Table 4.3.13: The 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase of 2% in the rate charged to learners for 24 hours in residence and from 2006 to 2007 no increase in the rate charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 2%.

**Research Question 7: What was the day rate charged to learners for a day course?**

Table 4.3.14: The rate charged for a day course.

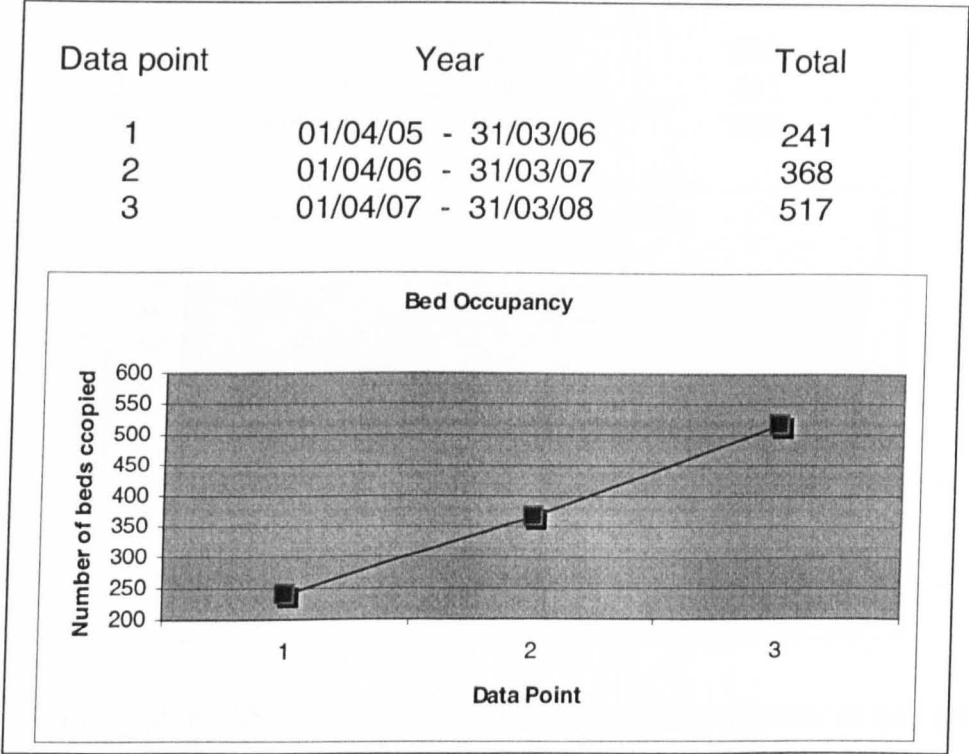


From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the rate charged to learners for a day of 3% and from 2006 to 2007 no increase. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 3%.

4.3.2 Closed Course Data

*Research Question 8: At each of the data points what was the total number of closed course beds occupied per night?*

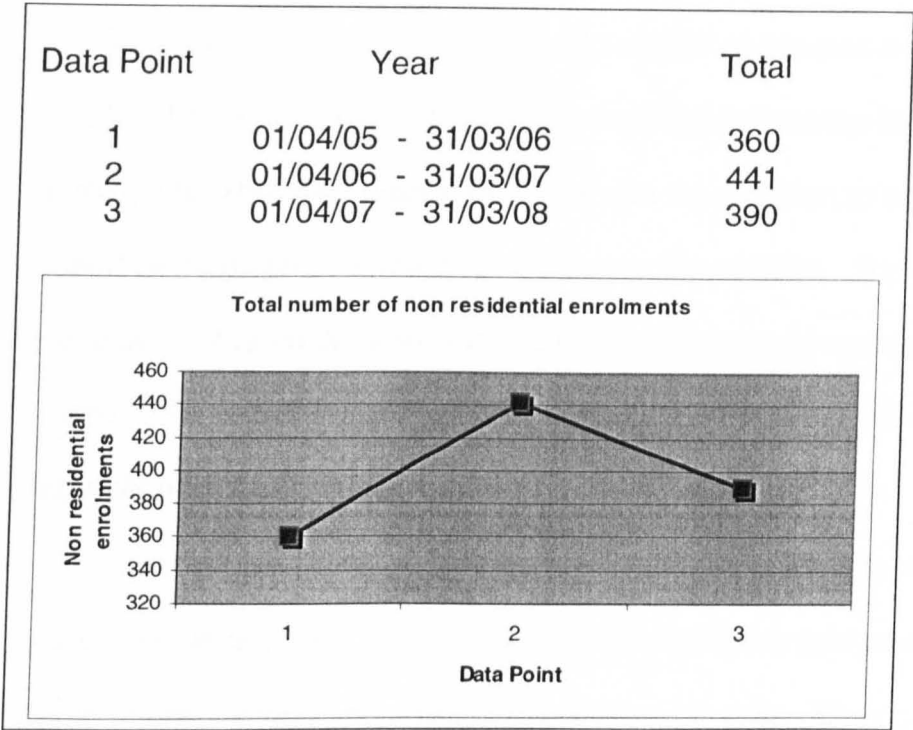
Table 4.3.15: Total number of beds occupied at each data point for closed courses



From 2005 to 2006 there was a increase in bed occupancy of 53% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 41%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 115%.

**Research Question 9: At each of the data points what was the total number of day closed course enrolments?**

*Table 4.3.16: Total number of day closed course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of day closed course enrolments of 23% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 12%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in non residential closed day course enrolments of 8%.

**4.3.3 Interview with the Chief Executive**

***Interview Question 1: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The data collated and shown in Table 4.3.4 indicates an increase overall in the number of bed nights by 19%. This was achieved in the first

period (20%) with a very small decrease in the second period (0.5%). In terms of residential enrolments Table 4.3.10 indicates an 8% increase in the first period and a very small decrease in the second period (3%) resulting in an overall increase (5%). Several reasons were given as an explanation by the Chief Executive for the increase. A number of courses are longer in duration hence the greater increase in bed nights than the increase in enrolments. The main reason however was the decision to adopt an assertive marketing campaign at the beginning of 2005. The college management team devised and designed a strategy to update the college image. Prior to this the college had a reputation for being 'fuddy-duddy' and a reputation for being rather formal.

The course brochure was completely redesigned with vibrant colours, the use of silhouettes and the college produced flyers and posters with the same brighter image and a better distribution process. The college placed advertisements in specialist magazines. Every effort was made to target the publicity much more accurately. This of course increased the marketing costs but the team tried to spend money much more wisely than in previous years. The strategy was considered to be a good investment.

***Interview Question 2: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.3.6 indicates an increase overall in day course learners attending an open course of 60%. In the first data period an increase of 27%

was achieved and in the second period an increase of 25%. In comparison with residential enrolments the numbers of day enrolments is relatively small. Many, if not all, of the reasons given for the increased bed occupancy can be applied to the increase in day course enrolments. Targeted marketing was given as the main reason and the results are considered by the management team to be extremely satisfying. The college has a strong local market for the public events and it is these local people who have been attracted to day courses. There is also a strong association with local groups and similar specialist organisations.

***Interview Question 3: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses published (See table 4.3.7) overall has increased by 15% over the data period which represents 19 courses over a one year period. There was no increase over the first data period. The reason for the increase was to satisfy a perceived demand for extra specialist courses. The decision to increase the course programme is guided by a very detailed analysis of ongoing enrolments which gives an insight into trends and course popularity. The analysis is conducted on a weekly basis and informs the management team.



***Interview Question 4: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses cancelled has over the data period totalled 8 which represents 2% of the courses published over the same period. (See Table 4.3.9).

At Data Point 3, 6 courses were cancelled which represents 4% of the total number cancelled overall. Deciding whether or not to cancel a course is extremely difficult particularly in a college that specialises in a subject area. The staff are very aware that potential learners are leaving it much later than they did in previous years to enrol for a course. Whether a course is viable or not is a difficult decision to make as the courses rely on particular groupings of learners. For example if the course relies on groupings of four learners then the total number enrolled on a course must be divisible by four. Other courses require two or three tutors during a weekend and are therefore required to be financially viable. A balance of experience is essential for many courses to achieve the desired outcomes of the course and maintain a high standard of quality. Where individual people wish to join a particular group they submit their names to the college and the college endeavours to form another group. Tutors also play an important part in helping to attract new learners to join courses and to achieve the balance required in many groups.

***Interview Question 5: Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Residential course fees have increased by 2% over the data period and day courses by 2%. (See Tables 4.3.13 and 4.3.14)

The Chief Executive explained that there has been a slight increase in the basic fee rate for a residential and day course. The college has a policy of increasing fees by around 2% per annum. Individual courses are being looked at with a view to increasing fees on an individual course basis to reflect the difference in the cost of some courses. For example the difference in tutor fees or the number of tutors required to tutor a particular course.

#### **4.3.4 Curriculum**

***Interview Question 6: What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?***

The curriculum is devised by a team of people. The college has a Director of Programmes and a Programme Administrator who is responsible for constructing the brochure. There is never a clean sheet, as some courses are repeated on a yearly basis. These tutors know that they will be asked to come twice a year and they will be informed later in the year of the exact date. The brochure has a lead time of about five-months with the last few months being spent trying to fit in the final courses. New courses are devised by potential tutors sending in curriculum vitae and suggestions. Students also recommend tutors and courses. During the year, two

weekends are reserved for lettings which, to all intents and purposes, are lettings to outside organisations. Lettings are also encouraged during the week. In reality it means that during the year 28 weeks are used for 'in the week' courses. The rest of the time is used for other lettings which are not necessarily connected to the college specialism. The college is however a charity and this activity has to be declared to the Trustees.

***Interview Question 7: Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?***

There has been no change to the criteria for devising a programme over the data period

***Interview Question 8: Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?***

The objects of the charitable organisation state that the college is primarily a specialist college. Some art courses have been included as a result of a successful lottery bid. If the Trustees are interested they are encouraged to attend a programme planning meeting. If they are not given the opportunity they feel that the process is being taken away from them. This is useful and it is encouraging that Trustees take an interest in the curriculum.

***Interview Question 9: Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?***

In the main all the income is generated from courses advertised in the brochure. Exceptionally there is a private fund for one particular course that takes place off site and is, as a result, very expensive. Occasionally the college receives bequests and donations.

At the present time the college is seeking funding through national trusts and organisations for a major development project.

***Interview Question 10: Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?***

The College operates a bursary for the benefit of learners. The fund is added to by donations directed at the bursary. Three to four years ago the bursary stood at around £30,000 although this has diminished due to the rules for applications being relaxed. Also the college has introduced scholarships to encourage young people to participate in Summer School courses which are part funded by the bursary.

***Interview Question 11: Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?***

The college is a specialist college.

***Interview Question 12: Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?***

No courses attract a formal qualification but the experience and knowledge gained from a residential course can help in a student gaining a formal qualification elsewhere.

***Interview Question 13: Could you describe how the college is financed?***

The College operates on a total full cost recovery basis. The college runs at an operating deficit of approximately 3% which the management is endeavouring to reduce. The deficit is covered by donations, bequests and investments which annually result in a small surplus. In the near future the college is hoping to recruit someone responsible for fund-raising.

***Interview Question 14: What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?***

All students complete an evaluation questionnaire at the end of their course. The questionnaire covers the learning experience, general administration, food and accommodation. All responses are recorded on a database which is interrogated by the management team. A traffic light system has been developed to indicate any problems. All areas have shown

marked improvement over the past few years. The quality of tutors is particularly encouraging in that they are rated as 'excellent' in all evaluations.

#### **4.3.5 Observations regarding the business position:**

##### **Accommodation**

The college accommodation is being steadily improved. During the data period the number of bedrooms with en suite facilities did not alter but during this period alterations were underway to increase the number of en suite bedrooms. The figures shown in Table 4.3.5 indicate bed and bedroom capacity but not for en suite bedrooms. However the college is a specialist college and as such requires specialist rooms with specialist equipment. This can be, and often is, the determining factor of how many learners can be accommodated at any one time. Because of the specialist nature of the college many of the courses offered cannot be found in any other college in the country and the learners are often prepared to forgive the lack of facilities. Nevertheless the management are aware that single en suite bedrooms are today's minimum standard and are actively seeking funds to address the problem. The Chief Executive reported to the Board of Trustees in 2007 that the college is falling behind other ARCA colleges both in terms of bedroom accommodation and catering facilities.

## **Closed courses**

In this college venue use hire by other organisations is relatively small due to the college being used extensively for adult residential courses. There is very little capacity available to outside organisations. The derived income represents a contribution to support the running costs of the college and maximise the use of teaching spaces.

Table 4.3.15 shows an increase of 115% in bed occupancy over the complete data period. Table 4.2.16 shows an increase of 8% for day course enrolments over the same period.

## **Residential and Non Residential Enrolments**

The college clearly achieved an increase in business over the data period. Bed occupancy, residential and non residential enrolments have increased. What is significant is the fact that bed occupancy has increased over the two years by 20% and residential enrolments by 8%. Clearly learners engaged on a residential course are enrolling for longer courses. The college programmes 1 day to 6 day courses and the figures support the Chief Executive's assertion that courses over two nights are steadily increasing.

How has this been achieved? The marketing programme described by the Chief Executive would appear to have had beneficial results not only in

residential courses but also non residential. Day course enrolments are very impressive at a 60% increase over the data period.

## **Cancellations**

Whether a course should take place or not is a difficult decision to make due to the specialist nature of the college. Group numbers, balance of experience and the balance of specialist skill areas have to be taken into account. Invariably waiting lists have to be formed with the administrative team working hard to accommodate all those who wish to join a course. It is impressive that overall only 8 courses were cancelled out of a possible 412 (2%) over the data period. Fees have been kept to a very modest increase, namely 2% over the same period.

## **Curriculum**

Over the data period there was no change to the criteria for devising an annual course programme. In terms of courses the programme has been kept up to date by reflecting and accommodating any changes in the specialist subjects.

### **4.3.6 Summary**

The college is an example of implementing the four P's of marketing, namely:

**Price:** Modest annual increases.



**Promotion:** Continually looking at why, how, and when the college promotes the programme. The managers are not afraid to look at different styles of brochures and coordinating the brochure with other forms of publicity.

**Placement:** Where and how potential learners are made aware of the programme.

**Product:** A specialist product being continually updated and adapted to learners' demands.

As a charitable organisation the college must operate as a full cost recovery business and this it has in the main been able to achieve even though the accommodation does not completely satisfy the demands of today's residential learners.

The college has a clear purpose which was determined when the college was purchased and the charitable organisation created. The objects of the charitable organisation state the purpose of the college is to promote specialist education for the public benefit in its social and cooperative form. The direction that the college will take in the future is determined by the purpose the fact that the business must pay its way. As has been shown, the college managers have adopted a defined marketing policy and in so doing are continually looking for course ideas to satisfy the changing needs of learners. In terms of investment this college is one of the very few that have made a successful national lottery bid of £1.1 million which enabled the college to build a complex of teaching rooms and en suite accommodation. The business position looks positive. There is a clear purpose, direction and financial investment. Nevertheless the Management and Trustees have to

continually seek funds to achieve their objects and adopt strategies to attract new learners to the college.

## **4.4 Individual College**

### **Case 4**

#### **Description of College**

The Curriculum Manager lives off site.

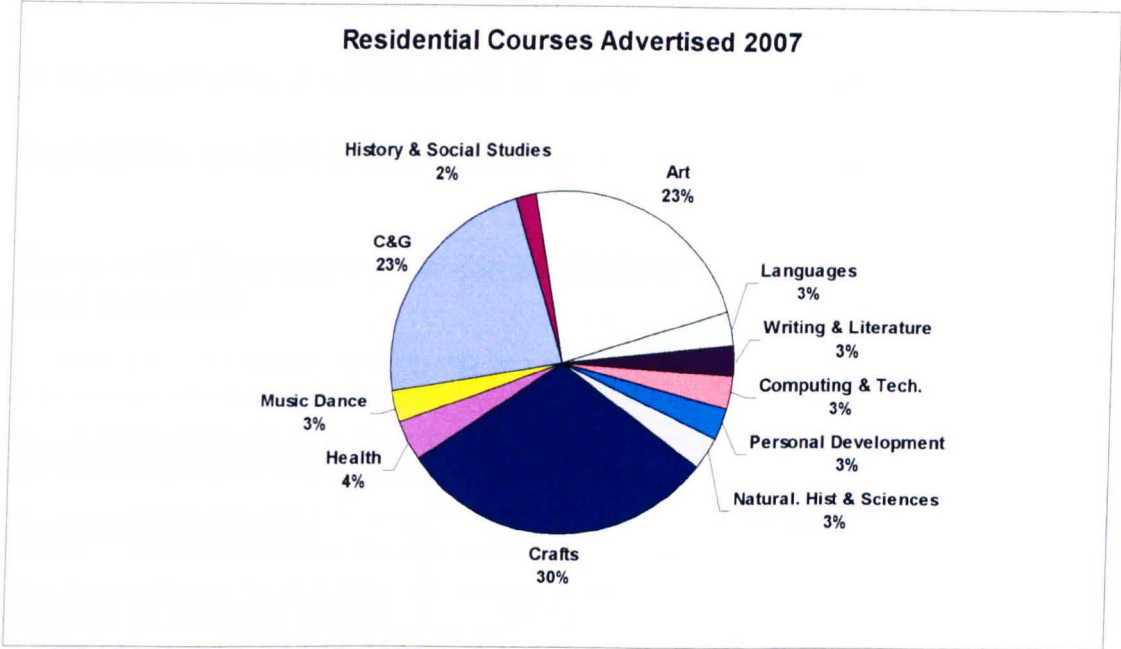
The first residential course took place in June 1947

The County Council sold the college to a College of Further Education, now a 'New University', in the mid 1990s as a Conference Centre. As a condition of the sale it was agreed between the two parties that the County Council would have contractual access to the college for an agreed number of days throughout the year for the purposes of adult residential education. The programme of courses would be under the auspices of the County Council's Adult Education Department.

#### **Management Personnel 2008**

- Curriculum Manager
- 2 Tutor Co-ordinators
- Centre Co-ordinator
- Centre Administrator

Table 4.4.1: Percentage of residential courses advertised 2007



**Accommodation 2008**

- 58 Bed Spaces
- 57 Bedrooms
- 57 En suite rooms

Research questions 1 to 7 refer to adult education residential and day open courses. Research questions 8 and 9 refer to closed courses i.e. those delegates attending residential or non residential courses or conferences

**4.4.1 College Data for Open Courses from 2005 - 2007**

**Accommodation at each data point.**

Table 4.4.2: Total accommodation at each data point

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3
Number of bed spaces	64	64	58
Number of bedrooms	57	57	57
Number of 'en suite' rooms	57	57	57

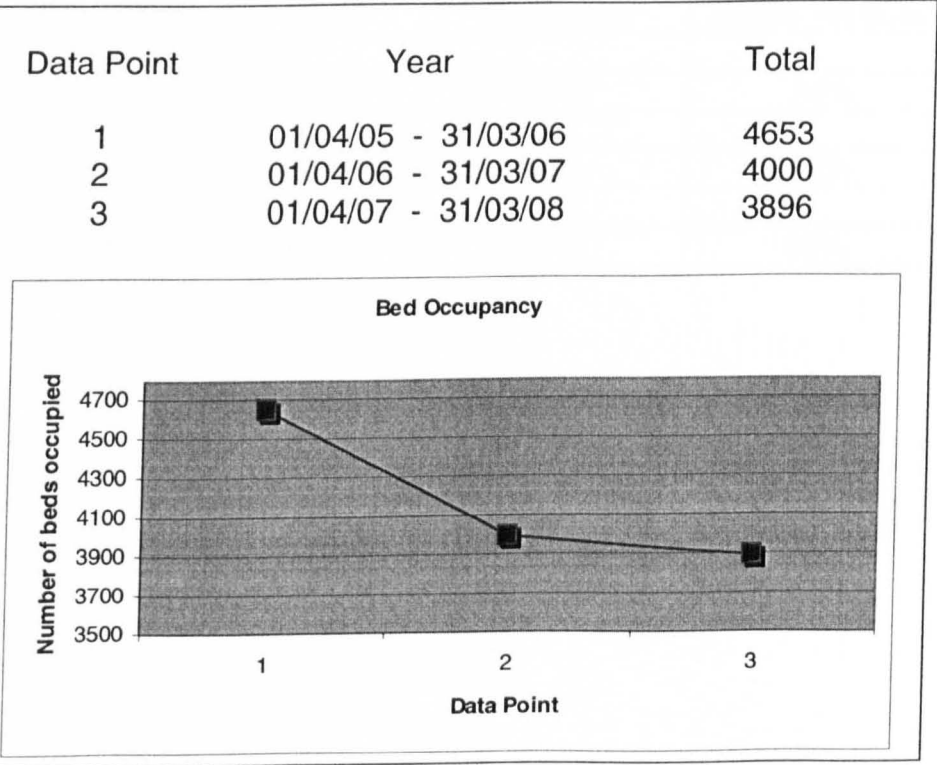
The college is available for residential adult education for 110 nights per year. By using the information detailed in Table 4.4.2 and using the number of nights per year, it is possible to calculate the total accommodation available for residential adult education at each of the data points.

Table 4.4.3: Total accommodation available for residential adult education at each data point.

	Data point 1	Data point 2	Data point 3
Number of bed spaces	7040	7040	6380
Number of bedrooms	6270	6270	6270
Number of 'en suite' rooms	6270	6270	6270

**Research Question 1: At each of the data points what was the total number of beds occupied per night?**

Table 4.4.4: Total number of beds occupied at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in bed occupancy of 14% and from 2006 to 2007 a further decrease of 3%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 16%. To put the above figures into context it is possible to calculate the percentage of usage by adult education participants at each of the data points. However some assumptions have to be made. These assumptions are supported by the Curriculum Manager and evidence from the focus groups.

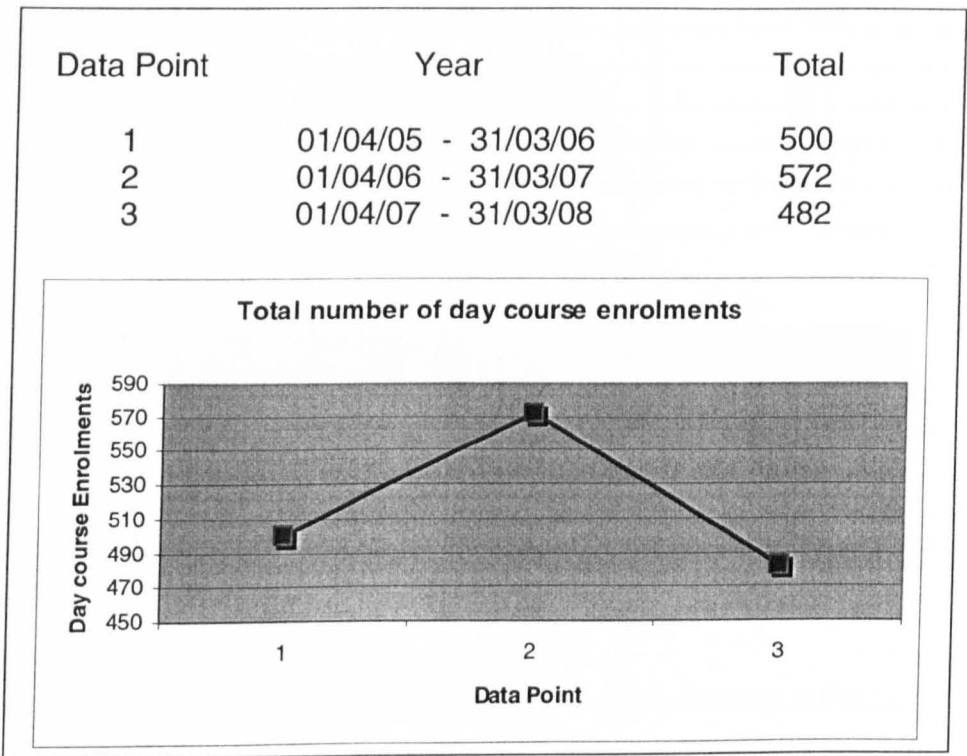
Assuming that learners would opt for in order of preference, a single en-suite bedroom, a single bedroom or a bedroom with single occupancy, by calculating what was actually used with what was available for use, it is possible to determine percentage usage.

*Table 4.4.5: Percentage of usage in relation to what was available.*

Data point	Beds	Bedrooms	Single 'en suite'
1	66%	74%	74%
2	57%	64%	64%
3	61%	62%	62%

**Research Question 2: At each of the data points what was the total number of day course enrolments?**

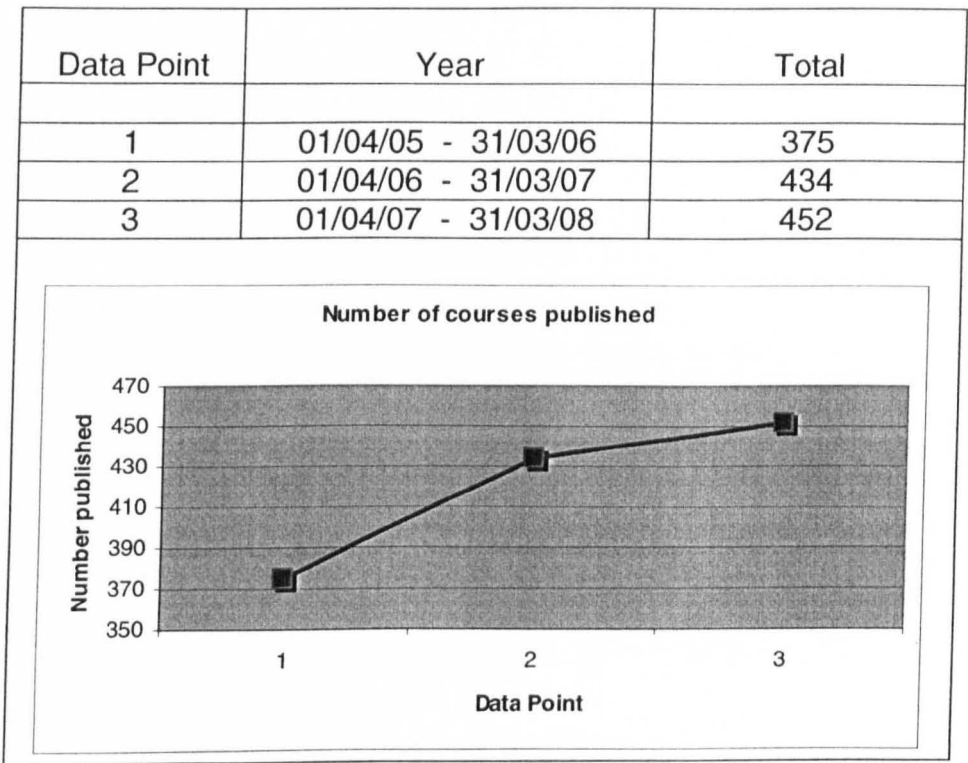
*Table 4.4.6: Total number of day course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a increase in the number of day course enrolments of 14% and from 2006 to 2007 an decrease of 16%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in day course enrolments 4%.

**Research Question 3: At each of the data points what was the total number of courses published?**

*Table 4.4.7: Total number of courses published at each data point*

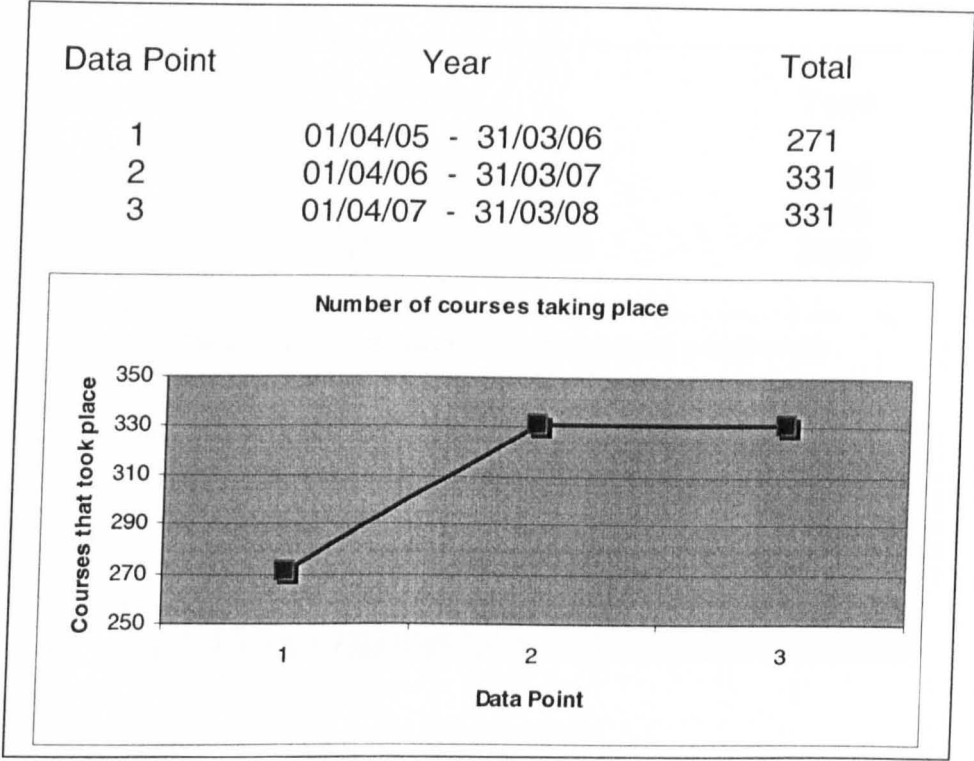


From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of courses published of 16% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 4%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses published of 20%.



**Research Question 4: At each of the data points how many courses took place?**

*Table 4.4.8: Total number of courses that took place at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a increase in the number of courses that took place of 22% and from 2006 to 2007 no change. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses that took place of 22%.

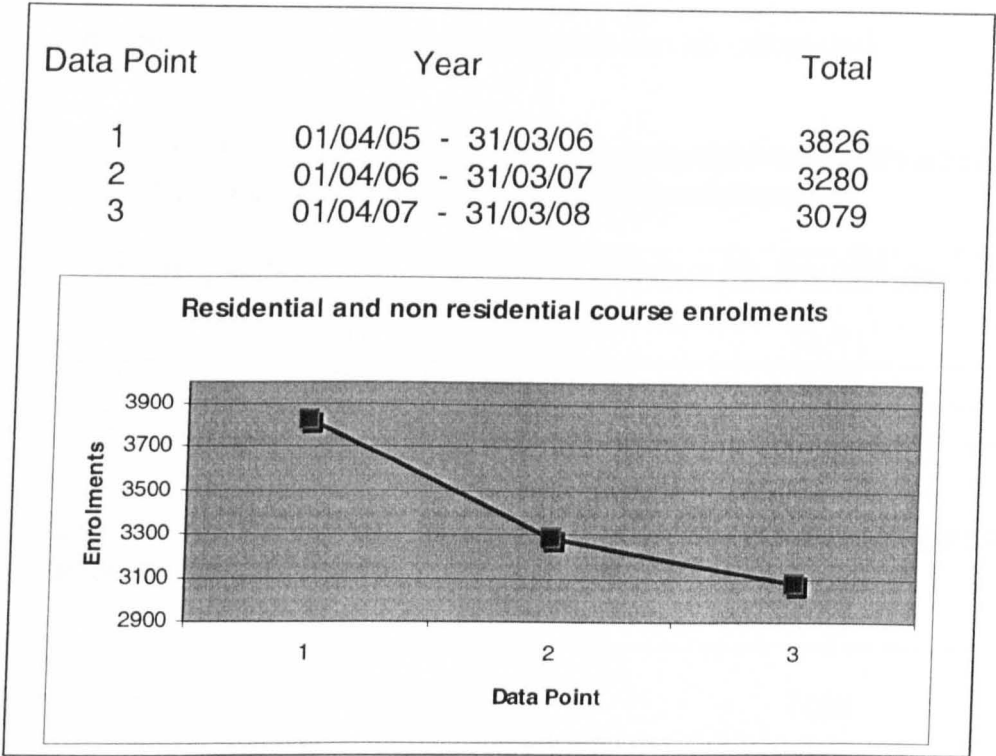
From the data used in Table 4.4.7 and Table 4.4.8, it is possible to calculate the percentage of course cancellations at each data point and the percentage of courses cancelled over the data period.

*Table 4.4.9: The percentage of residential course cancellations at each of the data points and over the data period*

	Cancelled	%Cancelled
Point 1	104	28%
Point 2	103	24%
Point 3	121	27%
Overall	328	26%

**Research Question 5: What was the total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each of the data points?**

*Table 4.4.10: Total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of residential and non residential course enrolments of 14% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 6%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of enrolments of 21%.

*Table 4.4.11: The number of learners participating in adult education courses, ie combining residential, non residential and day course learners.*

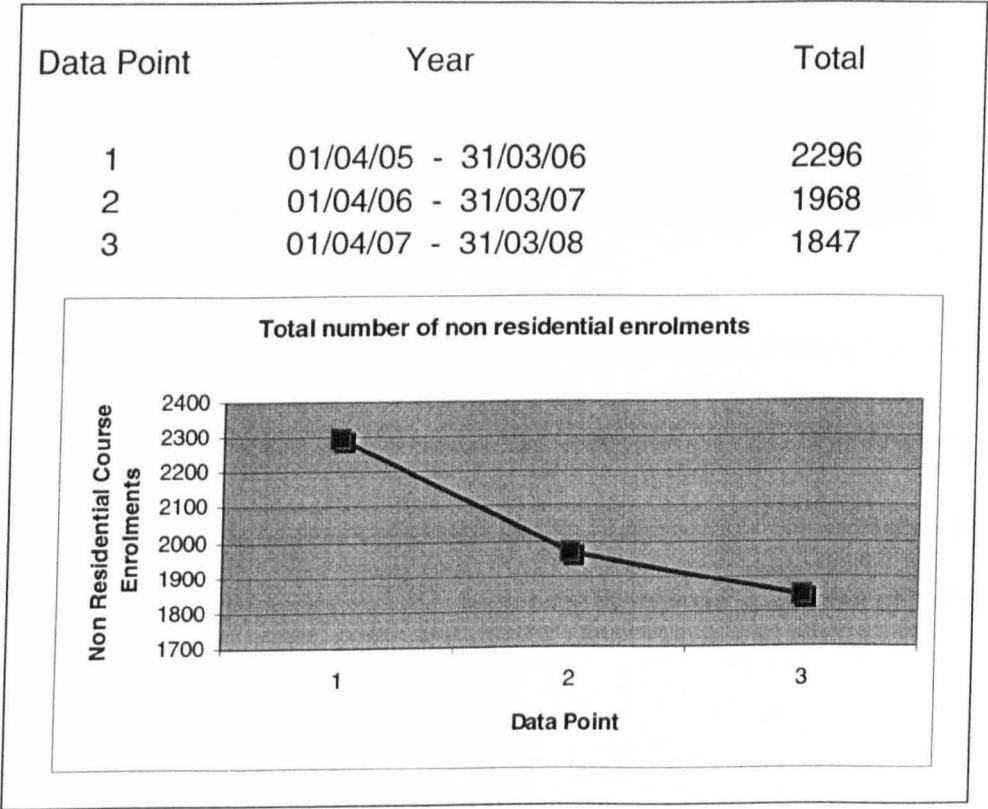
Data Point	Residential Enrolments	Non Residential Enrolments	Day Course Enrolments	Total
1	1530	2296	500	4326
2	1312	1968	572	3852
3	1232	1847	482	3561

From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of combined enrolments of 10% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 8%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease in the number of combined enrolments of 18%. By using the information detailed in Table 4.4.8 and Table 4.4.10, the average number of students per course can be calculated.

*Table 4.4.12: The average number of residential enrolments and non residential enrolments for each course at the data points.*

Data Point	Enrolments	Courses	Average no. learners per course
1	3826	271	14.11
2	3280	331	9.90
3	3079	331	9.30

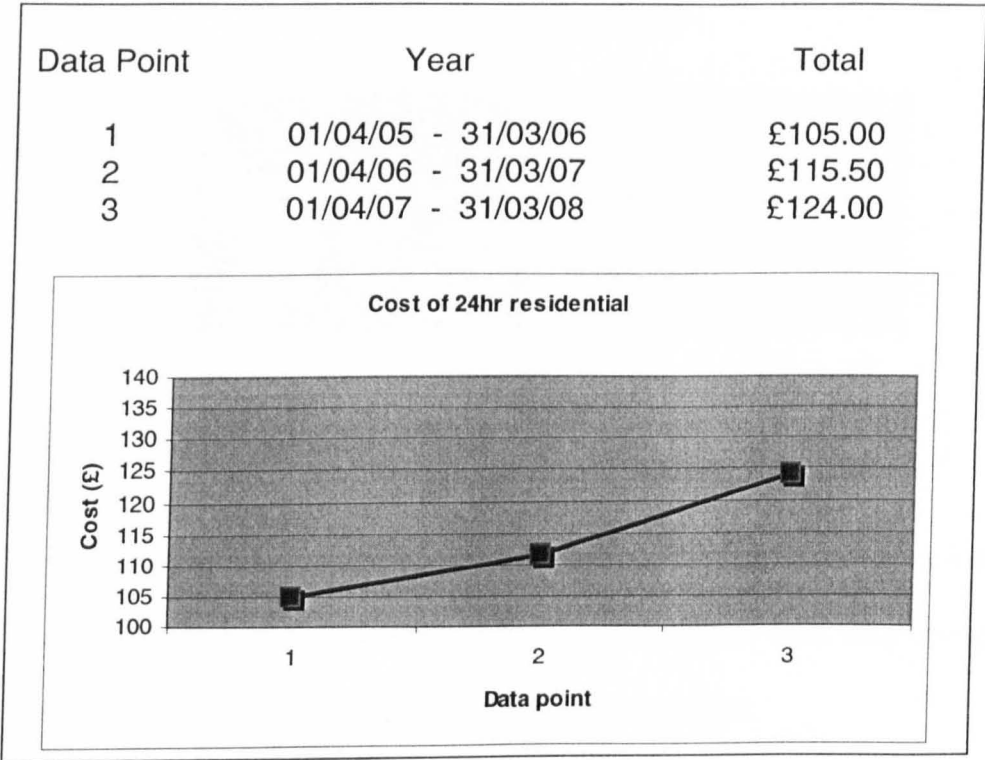
*Table 4.4.13: The number of non residential learners attending a residential course at the data points*



From 2005 to 2006 there was a decrease in the number of non residential course enrolments of 14% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 6%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of non residential enrolments of 20%.

**Research Question 6: What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course?**

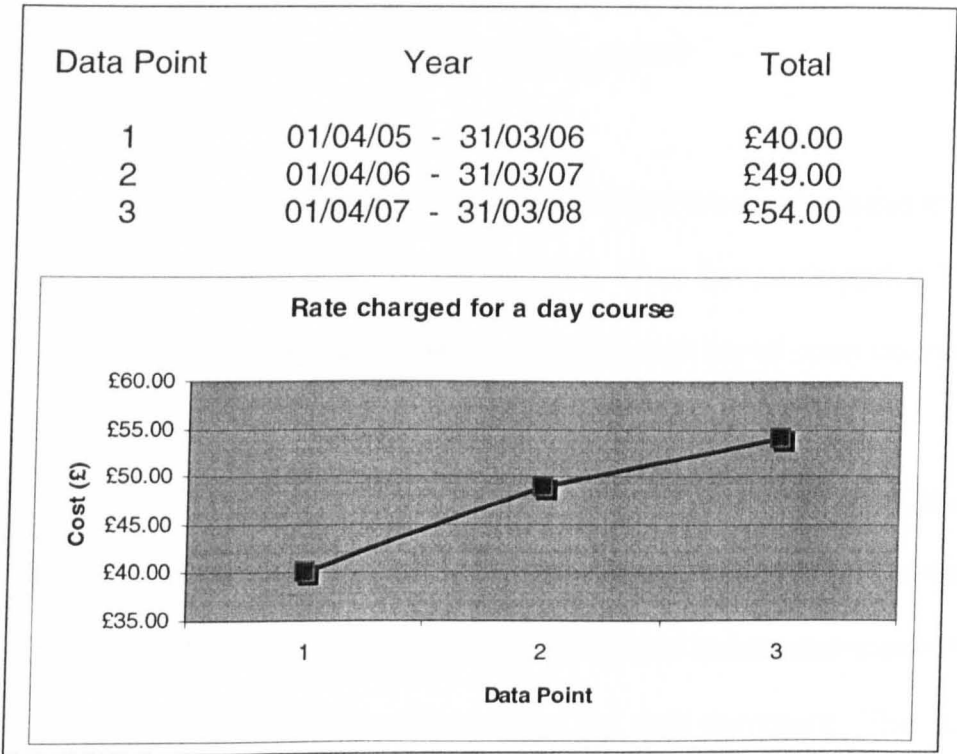
*Table 4.4.14: The 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the rate charged to learners for 24 hours in residence of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 11% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 18%.

**Research Question 7: What was the day rate charged to learners for a course?**

Table 4.4.15: The rate charged for a day course.



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the rate charged to learners for a day of 23% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 10% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 35%.

**4.4.2 Closed Course Data**

Due to the organisation of this college as explained in the introduction to this section this college does not provide facilities for any closed courses.

### **4.4.3 Interview with the Curriculum Manager**

***Interview Question 1: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.4.4 indicates that overall there was a decrease in bed occupancy over the data period by 16%. Over the same period Table 4.4.10 indicates that there was a decrease in the number of open course enrolments by 21%.

The Curriculum Manager commented that overall adult education enrolments were disappointing but there were marked signs of improvement in both the bed occupancy (decrease 3%) and residential enrolments (decrease 6%) in the second period of the data summary. The converse applies to day course enrolments. The first data period saw an increase in enrolments (14%) and in the second period a decrease of 16%. Overall a small decrease of 4% (See Table 4.4.6) indicates that more learners were opting for the day course option. 'Strange things were going on'. The Curriculum Manager was pleased with the 2008 – 2009 enrolments which were indicating growth both in residential and day course enrolments but these figures lie outside the data period.

The amount of advertising had increased and there were certain aspects that were encouraging. For example during the Easter period of 2006 enrolments had held up well but Summer School enrolments had fallen due to a substantial increase in fees. Typically fees have been increased in

the past by 2% to 3% but at the beginning of the 2006 financial year (1st August) fees were increased by 10% and would do so each year for the foreseeable future. The management team conducted a small survey at the end of the 2006 Summer School to determine why students of previous years had not attended this year and the main reasons given were the steep increase in fees and 'personal reasons'. The team however felt that 'personal reasons' included financial reasons but the respondent did not want to admit to financial difficulties. The Curriculum Manager pointed out that the level of fees (See Table 4.4.13) was determined by the Local Authority and not by the college management team.

***Interview Question 2: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.4.6 indicates a small decrease in day course learners attending an open course of 4%.

The decrease in day course enrolments has been given in answering the previous question. The figures for only non residential enrolments are not available separately but over the years bed and breakfast accommodation in the local area for those learners enrolled on residential open courses has increased and these figures are included in the totals for residential enrolments.

Another factor which may have influenced enrolments, particularly in the second period, has been the increase in courses of 22% (See Table

4.4.8) and the increase in venues particularly during the Summer School. It takes at least a year for new venues and new courses to become established. Learners find it difficult to accept change.

***Interview Question 3: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses published has increased by 22% over the data period.

Seventy-seven more courses were published over this period and were concentrated on the Summer School period. The weekend course numbers were broadly the same as in previous years. The added venue, in period 1, was during the Summer School weeks explaining the addition of courses (See Table 4.4.8) in this period. In period 2, and again during the Summer School weeks, another venue will be added. The extra venues and the increase in courses do not appear to have increased enrolments over the complete data period. (See Table 4.4.10)

***Interview Question 4: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses cancelled over the data period totalled 328 which represent 26% of the courses published over the same period. (See Table 4.4.9)



The number of courses taking place has, over the data period, broadly stayed the same. The Curriculum Manager explained that more courses had been published and as the number of cancellations was fairly static the individual courses ran on lower numbers of learners. This is confirmed by the data shown in Table 4.4.12. The average number of learners per course shown in this table includes non residential enrolments as well as residential enrolments and again confirms the Curriculum Manager's statement that the number of learners per course is reducing.

***Interview Question 5: Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Residential course fees have increased by 18% over the data period and day course fees by 35% (See tables 4.4.13 and 4.4.14)

Fees are calculated by the finance director of the authority to be implemented at the beginning of the financial year. The reason there has been an 18% increase in residential fees over the last three years is due to the fact that the authority has determined that the college should reach a financial position of full cost recovery. The Manager has no input into how much is to be charged to learners. She can only offer an opinion as to what the effect might be. This college has a significant number of non residential students. (See Table 4.4.11). Approximately 40% of learners reside in the college with the remainder staying overnight in local bed and breakfast or travelling home. This college has many more non residents than the majority of short term colleges and unlike other colleges this fact is irrelevant in terms

of fee income. The fee for the residential aspect of the course is credited to the Conference Centre and plays no part in the profit and loss account of the Adult Learning Service. An analogy would be residential courses being held in a private hotel.

Certain courses seem to attract more residential students than others. For example a recent history course had nearly all students in residence. The reason given was that the tutor of this course is extremely popular and learners are prepared to travel distances that would be difficult on a daily basis and that much discussion will take place outside the classroom and therefore local bed and breakfast would not be satisfactory.

#### **4.4.4 Curriculum**

***Interview Question 6: What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?***

There are various constraints on the college when it comes to devising its programme of courses. There are thirty dates available which is the total number of weekends contracted by the authority with the university available for adult education plus a week for Easter and five weeks for the Summer School programme.

All City and Guilds courses have to be fitted in first. These courses may last for one, two, or three years and must be spaced reasonably. Over the past few years City and Guilds have made many changes and small

centres in the county have closed and as a result the college has benefited. Students come for quality and cannot get these courses residentially elsewhere.

The next course to be programmed will be day course photography as this course has a specialist room and will be required one day most weekends through the year. Once these courses have been programmed the room is then available for the other day courses. After that the programme includes new courses and established courses. The 'tried and tested' courses, as well as new courses suggested by tutors and students, will be fitted in. The aim is to programme 12 courses every weekend on the assumption that in total 120 enrolments will be achieved with 50 in residence. For the purpose of college finances, enrolments are the most important part of the equation – as has been explained it doesn't matter whether learners are resident or non resident. For residents the adult education section collects the residential element of the fee that has been determined by the management of the University which owns the building. This fee is then credited to the Conference Centre administration. There can be no virement whatsoever. Two pounds is added to the enrolment fee for the administration of this financial transaction by the adult education section.

***Interview Question 7: Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?***

The main criteria when devising a programme of courses is financial. Will the course make a financial return? This requirement has not changed

over the data period. The Curriculum Manager is always looking for income generating courses which will include any additions to the City and Guilds programme. There has been a change over the data period with the introduction of different levels of City and Guilds courses to enable progression in the subject. For example level 2 courses are working particularly well – this is a 120 hour course which takes place over one year requiring the learner to attend the college for six or seven weekends.

***Interview Question 8: Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?***

There are no curricula constraints. The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service trusts the Curriculum Manager to devise a suitable programme for the forthcoming brochure. She will discuss certain aspects of the programme with her line manager, the County Curriculum Manager, but basically the decision on what to include in the next brochure is left to the college team. The team is considering producing a brochure of top-up programmes to help fill the gap as a result of cancellations. City and Guilds are now giving its entire staff half the cost of an adult education course. It is the intention of the management team to devise a programme to attract those staff to the college.

There is no funding at all for accredited courses. 'Creative courses are not flavour of the month' and yet 23% of courses programmed are accredited.

***Interview Question 9: Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?***

The college does not receive any external funding to enable courses to be subsidised.

***Interview Question 10: Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?***

Learners do not receive any grants and the college does not have bursaries. The ACL Service operates an authority remission policy for those learners in receipt of certain benefits such as income support. The college is not reimbursed for remissions. In the forthcoming year there will be an alteration to this policy so that instead of 100% remission of the tuition element of the course it will be changed to 50%.

***Interview Question 11: Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?***

The curriculum reflects creative arts and creative crafts as specialisms. This has always been the curriculum emphasis since the college opened and has developed over the years. This is why the City and Guilds courses have developed over time. Over the data period these courses have increased and no funding at all is received for these courses the detail of which has already been described.

***Interview Question 12: Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?***

All City and Guilds courses as described above.

***Interview Question 13: Could you describe how the college is financed?***

The operating costs are covered completely by the income derived from enrolments. As shown in Table 4.4.13 there has been an increase in fees of 6% in period 1 and an increase of 11% in period 2. The financial policy of the ACL Service with regard to the college is that a 'break even' point is to be achieved in as short a time as possible. To enable this to happen there will be a 10% increase in fees every year for the foreseeable future. The Curriculum Manager understands this to mean that the college income must contribute to all the overheads incurred by the authority. For example, the Finance Department, Legal Department and the Department of Human Resources must be supported by a financial contribution from the college.

All salaries of the staff employed in the college adult education service are covered by enrolment income. The service does not have to contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the fabric of the building as this is covered by the fee charged to the enrollee for the residential element of a course.

***Interview Question 14: What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?***

An individual evaluation is completed at the end of a course and the results collated and discussed at Management Team Meetings. The 'accommodation' element is evaluated by leaving a form in the bedrooms. Discussions will take place between the management of the Conference Centre and the Curriculum Manager if there are issues of common concern. Occasionally the college conducts surveys to seek learner opinion on certain issues. As has been mentioned, a survey was conducted to seek views from past students as to why they did not attend a recent Summer School. Views ranged from, 'did not like the courses on offer', 'the course was cancelled', 'dates conflicted with personal arrangements', 'the course was expensive' and 'did not want to attend a course at another venue'.

#### **4.4.5 Observations regarding the business position:**

##### **Accommodation**

The accommodation is excellent. All rooms (57) excepting one are single en suite, in excellent decorative order, equipped with telephone, internet connection and television. The main accommodation block, attractively designed, has a number of large teaching spaces with a number of rooms specifically equipped for specialist subjects such as art and photography. However the majority of rooms are used during the week for

the conference market and on Friday evening throughout the year the adult education department staff prepare rooms for the weekend activity. This has to be reversed on Sunday afternoon. As has been described in the previous section there can be upwards of 12 courses per weekend making preparation of rooms a daunting prospect.

There is an attractive dining room with a choice of meals using a self service system.

As has been explained in the previous section this college is much nearer to an hotel arrangement in the way residential education is delivered. The adult education programme is completely divorced from the accommodation aspect of the college. In fact one might ask whether it is appropriate to use the term 'college' in this instance. The residential adult education programme is delivered in a conference centre. As a result adult education staff are available to learners and teaching staff throughout the day every day of the week, but apart from the welcome to staff and learners when weekend courses begin, usually on Friday evening, they are not available after 6.00pm.

## **Residential and Day Course Enrolments**

In the interview the Curriculum Manager used the phrase 'strange things were going on'. Over the two data periods the decrease in the first period of bed occupancy was 14% (See Table 4.4.4) but a marked decline in decrease in the second period to 3%. This is reflected in residential enrolments with the first period decrease of 14%, and the second of 6%.



(See table 4.4.10). In the first period day course enrolments increased by 14% and in the second decreased by 16%. (See Table 4.4.6). It would appear certainly in the first period that as bed occupancy and residential enrolments decreased learners decided to take the day course option. In the second period as some learners moved back to the residential option the number of day course learners declined. What is clear is that although there is movement between the residential option and the day course option the number of learners overall is decreasing despite the number of courses increasing. Table 4.4.12 shows the number of residential courses and the average number of learners per course.

It should be noted that the Curriculum Manager was optimistic about the next period (2008 – 2009) indicating that the number of learners in both options was increasing.

## **Cancellations**

At Data Point 1, 375 courses were published of which 104 were cancelled (28%). At Data Point 2, 434 courses were published of which 103 were cancelled (24%) and at Data Point 3, 452 courses were published of which 121 were cancelled (27%) (See Table 4.4.7). It is interesting to note that however many courses are published the percentage of cancellations remains fairly static. Reasons for cancellations have been discussed but from the statistics and from the perceptions of the Curriculum Manager having conducted surveys, the cost of courses appears to be the dominant factor. Over the data period the increase in fees for residential learners has

increased by 18% and for non residential learners by 35%. (See Tables 4.4.13 and 4.4.14). The concern of the management team is the declared policy of the Authority to increase fees by 10% per annum for the foreseeable future.

## **Curriculum**

The main criterion for the residential programme is financial. This is an overriding consideration for the existing programme and for the inclusion of any new courses. The development of City and Guilds craft courses is of important financial benefit. This is not to say that the Curriculum Manager would not have included these courses, indeed quite the contrary, they add important educational value to the residential programme but also satisfy the drive to break even financially. Learners are committed to 6 or 7 residential weekends per year for possibly 2 to 3 years. There would appear to be few dropouts on these courses.

The college is represented in all the course categories with an emphasis in City and Guilds craft courses and art and craft courses. (See Table 4.4.1). Apart from Computing and Technology courses all others are similarly represented in day course provision.

#### 4.4.6 Summary

The managerial organisation and ownership of this college is unique within the ARCA network and it is interesting to see how this impacts on the business of the college if at all. As has been described the college was formally owned by a Local Authority and in the mid 1990s sold to a 'new university' with a contractual arrangement allowing the Local Authority to promote and manage residential adult education courses for a specified number of days per year. The college has a clearly defined purpose in what is offered in terms of residential education. The staff employed in the college are employees of the Local Authority and are part of the Adult Education Service. What makes this college different from other short term colleges is that the accommodation arrangements including the fee charged per student per course have no connection to the Local Authority or the Adult Education Service. Does the college organisation make any difference to the quality of the learning experience? Are the learners even aware of the differences between this college's organisation and others? These questions will be addressed in Chapter 5 - the responses of learners participating in focus groups. As part of its future direction the college has developed a 'unique selling point' in the provision of City and Guilds courses at all levels.

Furthermore the clear future direction includes to a large extent the provision of residential arts and craft courses from which City and Guilds courses will be developed. At the end of the research period some 76% of all courses would fall into the category of arts and crafts of which approximately 23% are City and Guilds courses. As the Manager explained the curriculum

offered is subject to approval by the Head of the Adult Education Service.

The college has a clear purpose and a clear direction for future development.

The financial arrangements are less secure. There has been some investment in the college infrastructure but the recent financial demands that the college becomes self financing causes uncertainty. As has been shown over the two year period of this research there has been a downturn in the business due, according to the Manager, to a sharp increase in fees set by the Adult Education Service. There is no way of verifying the Manager's assertion that the enrolment situation and as a consequence the financial return has improved post the research period.

The requirement for many, if not all colleges in the ARCA network to become self financing is an important issue and will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The research results highlighted a statistic that is of concern, namely the number of course cancellations. Approximately one quarter of proposed courses are cancelled every year. It is therefore understandable that when surveyed by the college the cost of courses was one of the main reasons for learners not continuing with their studies. Disappointment was expressed by learners when a course did not enrol sufficient numbers and was therefore cancelled. Over the data period the college was experiencing a decline in both residential and day course enrolments and the question must be asked whether potential learners are becoming wary about enrolling because there is a one in four chance that the course will be cancelled?

## **4.5 Individual College**

### **Case 5**

#### **Description of College**

The Principal lives off site

The College is a Registered Charity

The building opened as a short term residential college in the latter half of 1948.

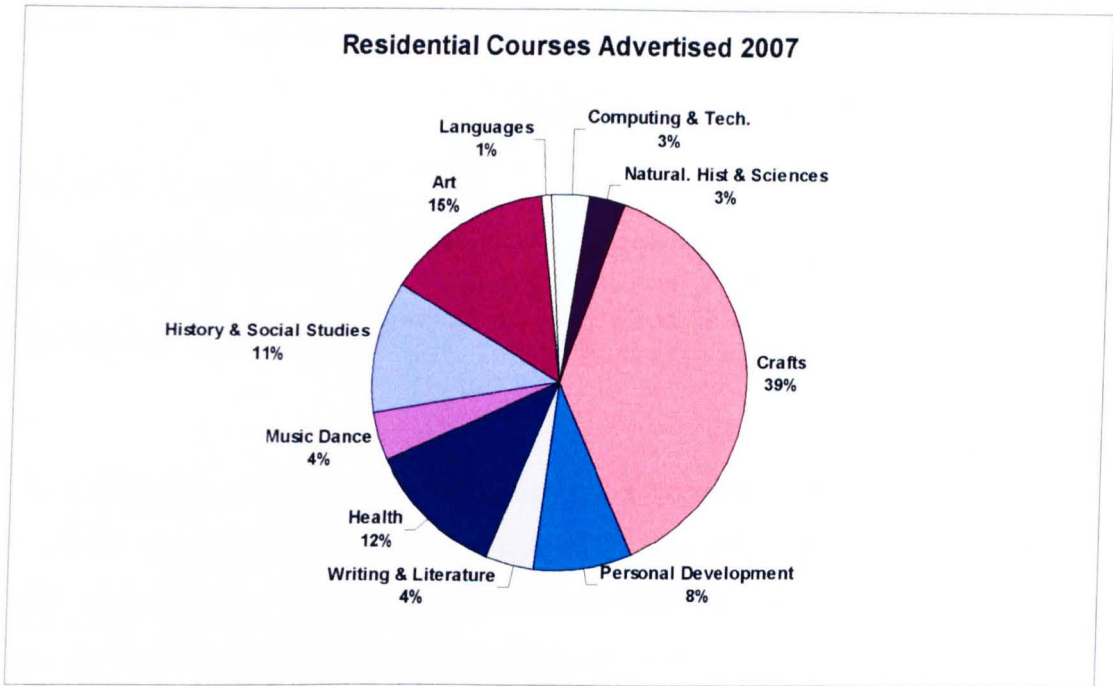
The college is open to members and non members of a national organisation.

#### **Management Personnel 2008**

- Principal
- Deputy Head (Central Services, hospitality, catering)
- Head of Facilities (Estates, maintenance, security)
- Head of Programmes (Programme planning, enrolments)
- Head of Finance.

# Residential Adult Education Courses Advertised in 2007

Table 4.5.1: Percentage of residential courses advertised 2007



## Accommodation 2008

- 78 Bed Spaces
- 54 Bedrooms
- 44 En suite rooms

Research questions 1 to 7 refer to adult education residential and day open courses. Research questions 8 and 9 refer to closed courses i.e. those delegates attending residential or non residential courses or conferences

## 4.5.1 College Data for Open Courses from 2005 - 2007

Accommodation at each data point.

*Table 4.5.2: Total accommodation at each data point*

	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3
Number of bed spaces	84	84	74
Number of bedrooms	64	64	58
Number of 'en suite' rooms	46	46	44

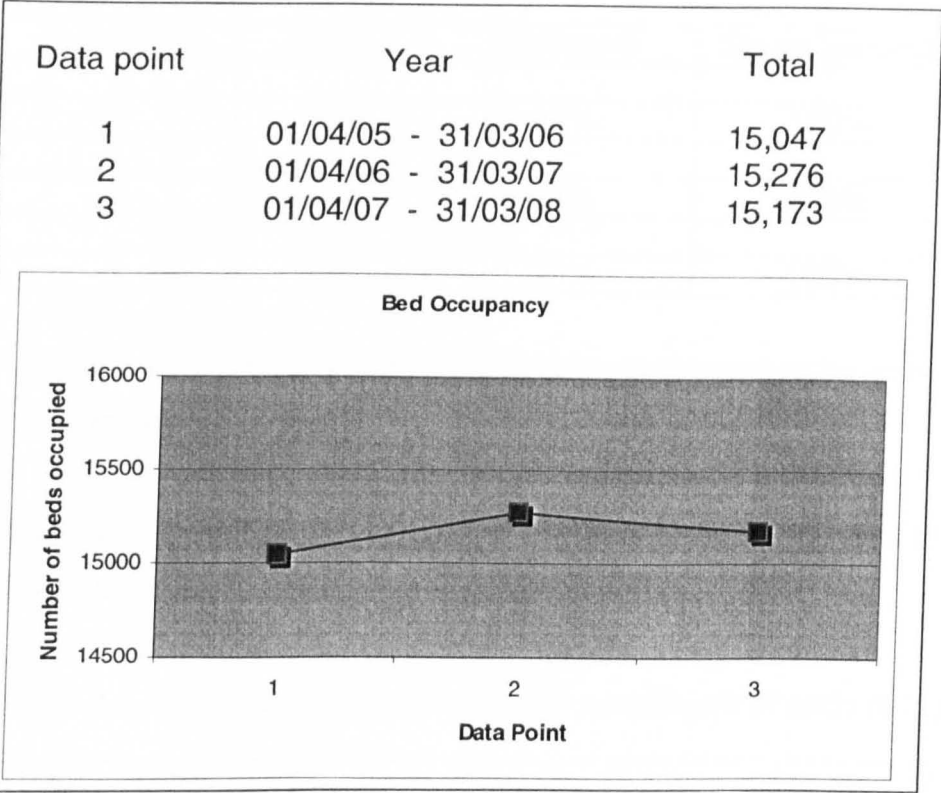
The college is available for residential adult education for 271 nights per year. By using the information detailed in Table 4.5.2 and using the number of nights per year, it is possible to calculate the total accommodation available for residential adult education at each of the data points.

*Table 4.5.3: Total accommodation available for residential adult education at each data point.*

	Data point 1	Data point 2	Data point 3
Number of bed spaces	22,764	22,764	20,054
Number of bedrooms	17,344	17,344	15,718
Number of 'en suite' rooms	12,466	12,466	11,924

**Research Question 1: At each of the data points what was the total number of beds occupied per night?**

*Table 4.5.4: Total number of beds occupied at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in bed occupancy of 2% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 0.7%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 0.8%. To put the above figures into context it is possible to calculate the percentage of usage by adult education participants at each of the data points. However some assumptions have to be made. These assumptions are supported by the Principal and evidence from the focus groups.

Assuming that learners would opt for in order of preference, a single en-suite bedroom, a single bedroom or a bedroom with single occupancy, by



calculating what was actually used with what was available for use, it is possible to determine percentage usage.

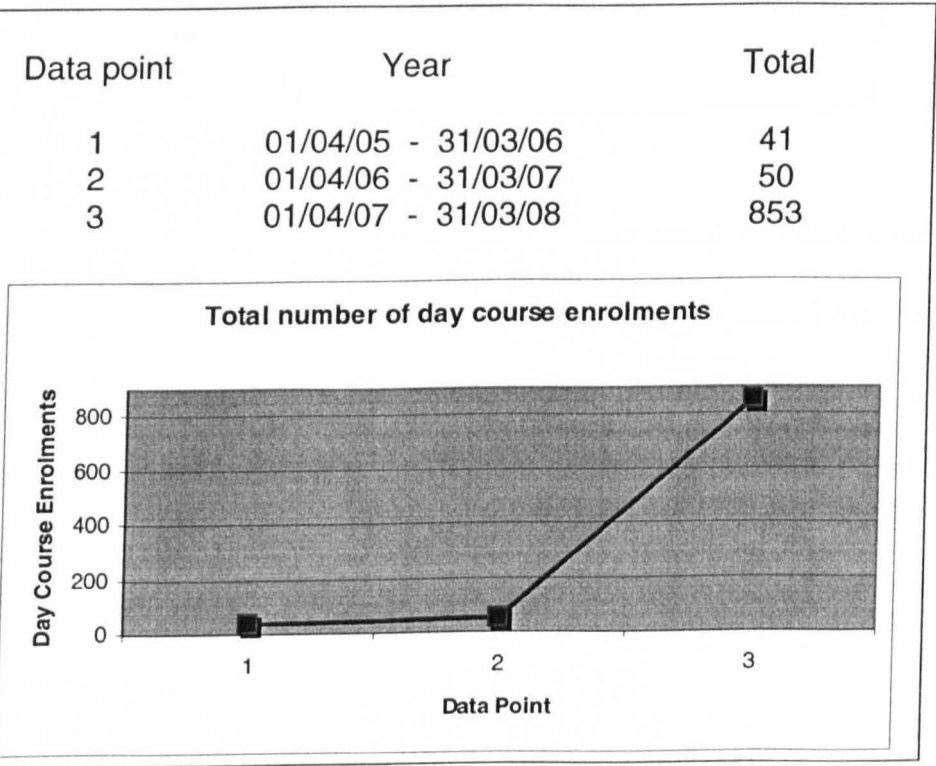
Table 4.5.5: Percentage of usage in relation to what was available.

Data point	Beds	Bedrooms	Single 'en suite'
1	66%	87%	100%
2	67%	88%	100%
3	76%	97%	100%

The data for the type of rooms used, beds, bedrooms or en suite is not collected by the college.

**Research Question 2: At each of the data points what was the total number of day course enrolments?**

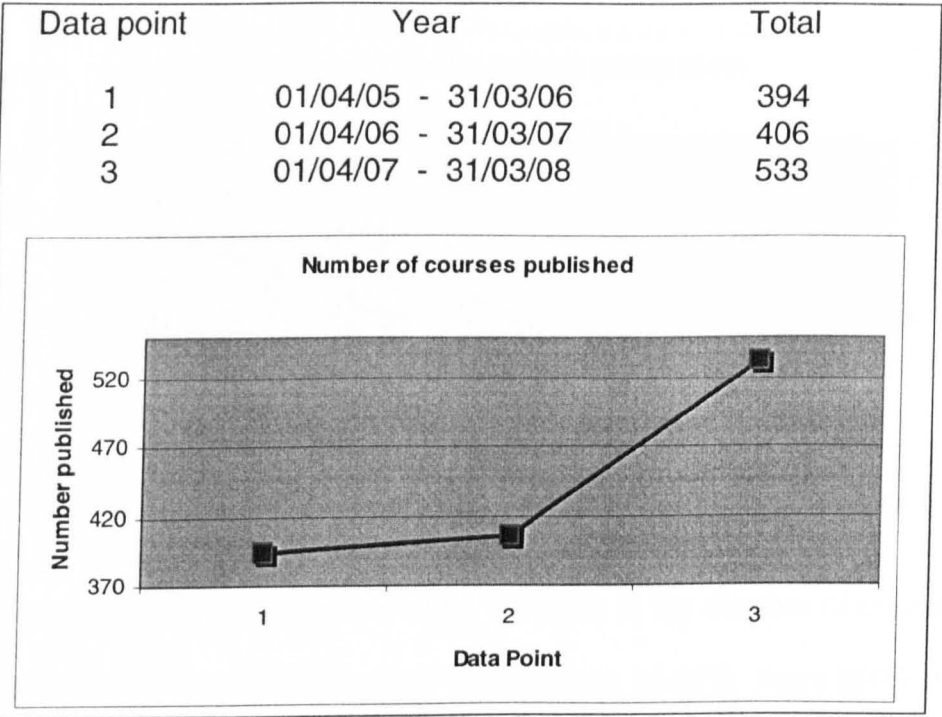
Table 4.5.6: Total number of day course enrolments at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of non residential enrolments of 22% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 1606%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in day course enrolments of 1980%.

**Research Question 3: At each of the data points what was the total number of courses published?**

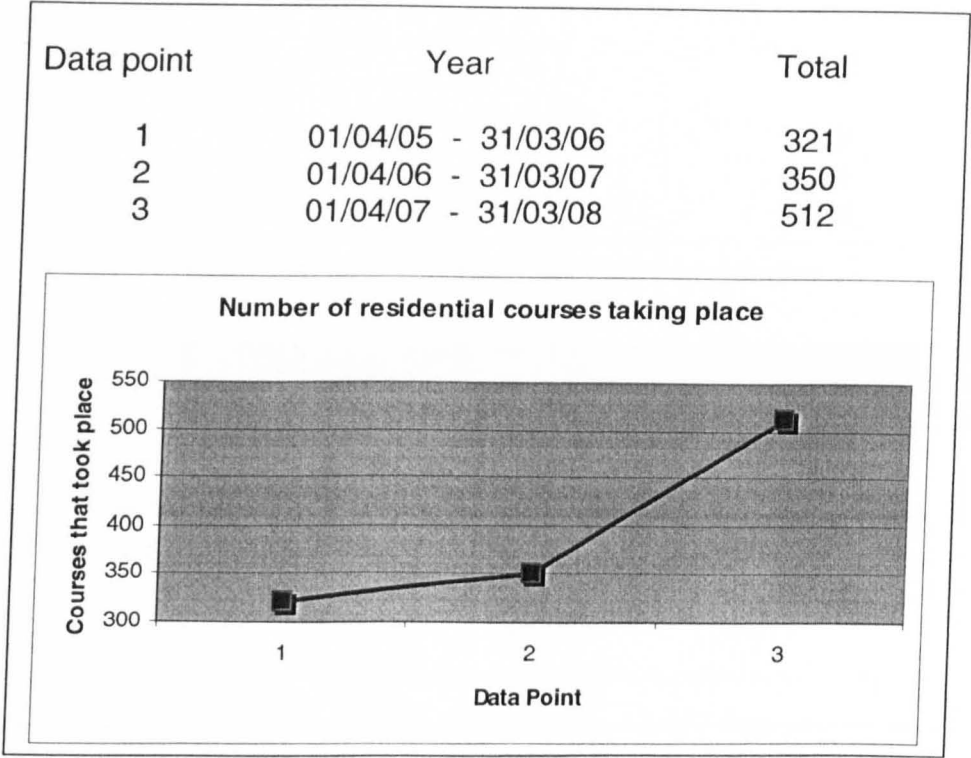
Table 4.5.7: Total number of residential courses published at each data point



From 2005 to 2006 there was a increase in the number of courses published of 3% and from 2006 to 2007 a increase of 31%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses published of 35%.

**Research Question 4: At each of the data points how many residential courses took place?**

*Table 4.5.8: Total number of residential courses that took place at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of courses that took place of 9% from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 46%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of courses that took place of 59%.

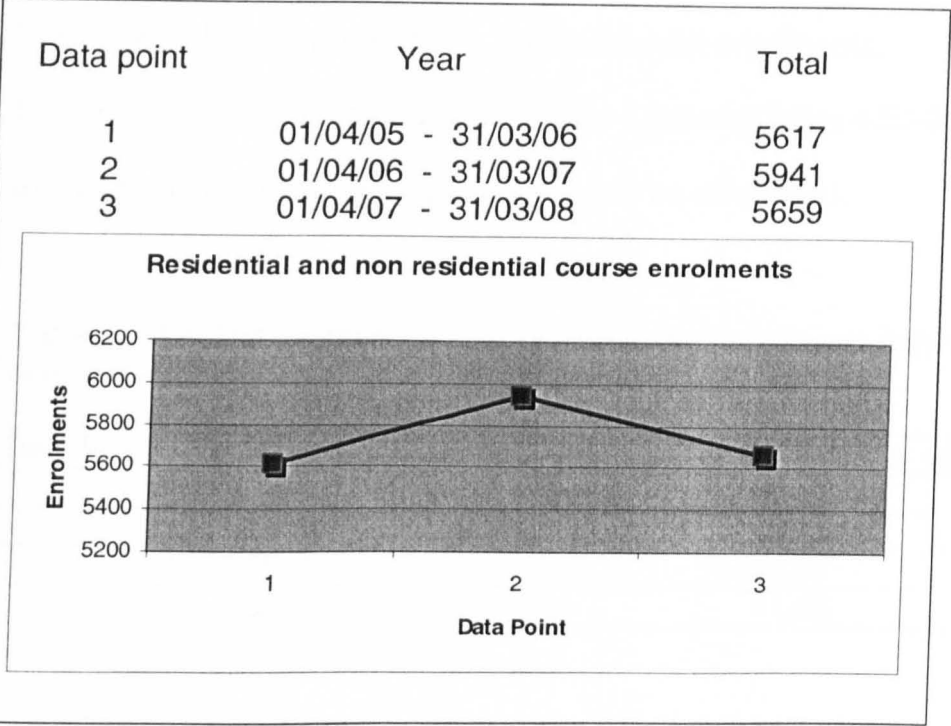
From the data in Table 4.5.7 and Table 4.5.8, it is possible to calculate the percentage of course cancellations at each data point and the percentage of courses cancelled over the data period.

*Table 4.5.9: The percentage of residential course cancellations at each of the data points and over the data period*

	Cancelled	%Cancelled
Point 1	73	18%
Point 2	56	14%
Point 3	21	4%
Overall	150	11%

**Research Question 5: What was the total number of residential course enrolments at each of the data points?**

*Table 4.5.10: Total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each data point*



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of residential open course enrolments of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 5%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of enrolments of 0.7%.

*Table 4.5.11: The number of learners participating in adult education courses. ie combining residential, non residential and day course learners.*

Data Point	Residential Enrolments	Non Residential Enrolments	Day Course Enrolments	Total
1	5617	N/A	41	5658
2	5941	N/A	50	5991
3	5659	N/A	853	6512

From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in the number of combined enrolments of 6% and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 9%. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase in the number of combined enrolments of 15%.

This college has very few, if any, non residential enrolments.

By using the information detailed in Table 4.5.8 and Table 4.5.10, the average number of students per course can be calculated.

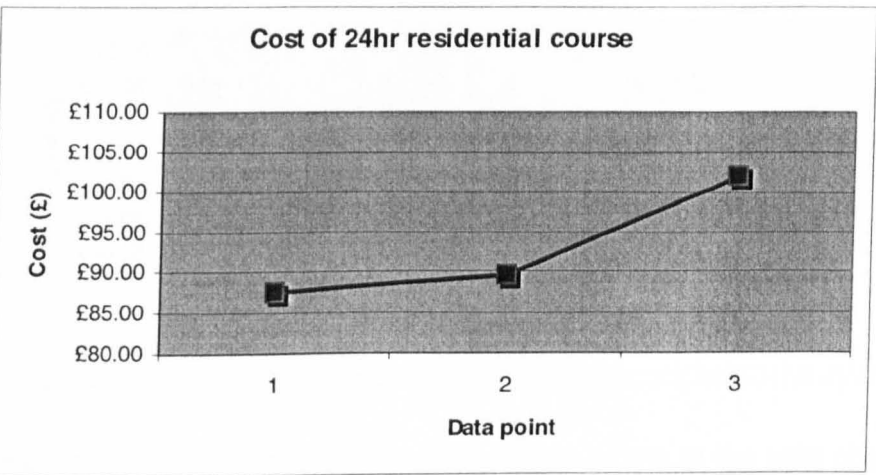
*Table 4.5.12: The average number of residential enrolments and non residential for each course at the data points.*

Data Point	Enrolments	Courses	Average no. learners per course
1	5617	321	17.49
2	5941	350	16.97
3	5659	512	11.05

**Research Question 6: What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential open course?**

*Table 4.5.13: The 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential course*

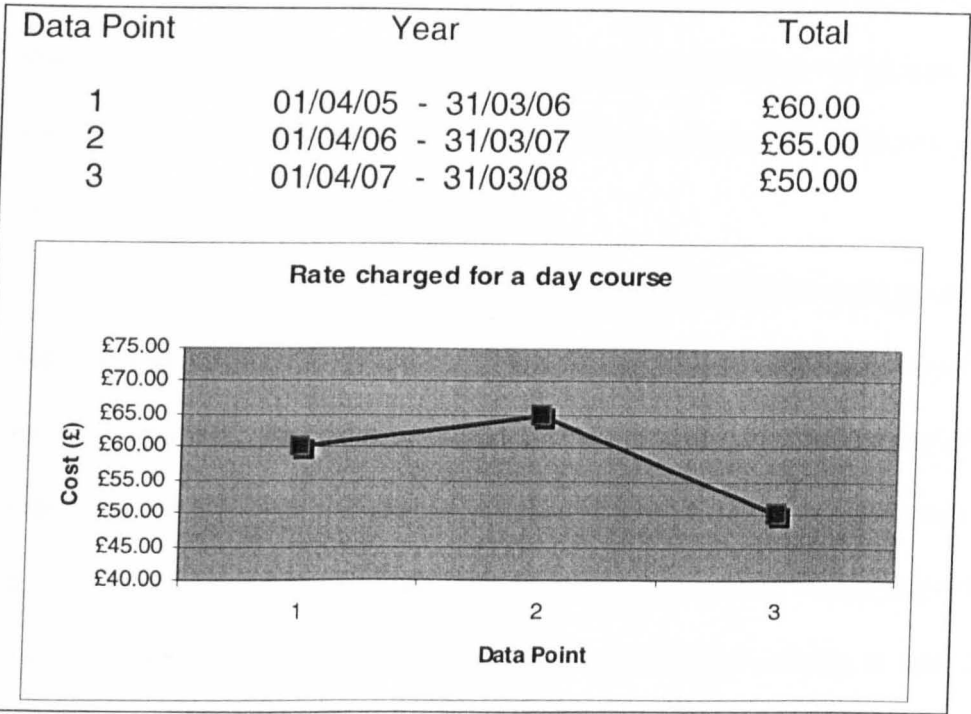
Data Point	Year	Total
1	01/04/05 - 31/03/06	£87.50
2	01/04/06 - 31/03/07	£89.66
3	01/04/07 - 31/03/08	£102.00



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase of 3% in the rate charged to learners for 24 hours in residence and from 2006 to 2007 an increase of 14% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall increase of 17%.

**Research Question 7: What was the day rate charged to learners for a day course?**

Table 4.5.14: The rate charged for a day course.



From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase of 8% in the rate charged to learners for a day and from 2006 to 2007 a decrease of 23% was charged. From 2005 to 2007 there was an overall decrease of 16%.

**4.5.2 Closed Course Data**

This college does not provide any significant facilities for closed courses.

**4.5.3 Interview with the Principal**

**Interview Question 1: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?**

Table 4.5.4 indicates that overall there was a small increase in bed occupancy over the data period of 0.8%. Over the same period Table 4.5.10

indicates that there was an increase in the number of open course enrolments of 0.7%.

The figures are what was expected for the first period in fact and as there had been a decrease in the national organisation membership they were quite pleasing. In the first period the only change in pricing policy was an increase in line with inflation.

In the second period there had been a significant change in the way the college publicises courses. The college course brochure was distributed by inserting it in the national magazine which is distributed to the 205,000 members of the national organisation. In data period one the college brochure was sent to the 7000 local organisations and it was hoped that the organisation would ensure all members had sight of a copy. It was possible that some local organisations were not particularly interested in the College and as a result did not 'spread the word'. It was hoped that the new method of distribution would raise awareness of the existence of the College. As new publicity strategies take time to become established, it is probably too early to determine whether this will be a cost effective method but early indicators, mainly a significant increase in telephone enrolments, are that it has been. Also an important trend that the management team has noted is the increase in the number of 'first time learners' who are coming to the college. The Principal is of the opinion that, as there are between 30% and 50% new learners, they will be 'hugely' beneficial for the future development of the college.

The college plans on the basis of single bedroom occupancy. If any two learners are prepared to share a bedroom then this is seen as a financial



bonus. It is the opinion of the Management Team that the willingness to share a bedroom will gradually diminish.

***Interview Question 2: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Table 4.5.6 indicates an increase in day course learners attending an open course during the first period of 22% and in the second period an increase of 1606%. Overall the increase was 1980%. In actual learner numbers in the first period there were 41 enrolments and in the second 853 enrolments.

In the first period the number of day course enrolments has increased by nine enrolments. The reason is that the college has not, in the past, attracted day course learners. This is an area that the College has developed during period two using the publicity methods as described above. During this period the number attending the college on a day basis has increased by eight hundred enrolments. Prior to this increase the college invited potential learners to visit and to familiarise themselves with the college and what it has to offer. Furthermore the college has very little capacity for more residential courses and to get more people 'through the doors' the college will have to offer day courses. Another benefit of this policy is that there will, as a consequence, be an increase in the use of teaching spaces. The college is building a number of new teaching rooms of which one will be a lecture theatre able to accommodate 120 people. There are not

enough beds for this number and therefore day use will be necessary. The college is in a fortunate position to be able to offer adult residential courses from Monday morning until Friday afternoon as well as the traditional weekend programme.

***Interview Question 3: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses published increased in Period one by 3% and in Period two by 31%. (See Table 4.5.7). The reasons for the increase has been explained above.

***Interview Question 4: Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

The number of courses cancelled has, over the data period, totalled 150 which represents 11% of the courses published over the same period. (See Table 4.5.9). However what is interesting is that at each data point there has been a reduction in the total of cancellations from 18% (point 1) to 4% (point 3).

The Principal gave as the main reason for this reduction better programming and being much more responsive to learner demand. Also being much quicker in establishing filler courses. The minimum number of

learners enrolled on a residential course for the course to take place is six learners. Tutors are not asked to take a lower fee if the numbers enrolled on the course are lower than anticipated.

***Interview Question 5: Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?***

Residential course fees have increased by 17% over the data period.  
(See Tables 4.5.13)

The Principal explained that there are several elements that determine the course fee. First, the fee paid to the tutor for preparing and teaching the course has increased by the rate of inflation over the data period. Second the cost of accommodation and food and third a notional cost for overheads. A surcharge is then levied for any extra costs such as coach travel and this is collected when the student arrives at the course. For practical courses a charge is levied for materials used. Some problems have occurred, for example, when a course required a visit to a Museum and students were asked on arrival to pay for a coach. In the second data period all these extra charges were added to the basic fee and collected when the student enrolled. This of course means the brochure will show different fee rates for different courses. Consequently it may seem that course fees in the brochure have increased substantially. An alternative fee structure would have been to calculate the total cost of all courses and divide by the number of potential students. This suggestion was rejected by the management team as unfair on those learners who enrol on a course that doesn't require extras.

#### 4.5.4 Curriculum

##### ***Interview Question 6: What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?***

The primary criteria are to offer what has worked in the recent past and importantly what people are requesting which may be more of the same or something entirely new.

The management team try to keep the programme up to date and 'fresh'. Also reference is made to what other colleges are doing. In the early days (1940s – 1950s) the college had a programme which was made up of a curriculum which was what one might have expected from a WEA programme, for example literature and current affairs, but at the same time had a wide spread of subjects for example 'How to butcher a pig' and 'The works of T. S. Eliot' appearing in the same brochure. In the future, as the national organisation is very diverse, there will be learners who are interested in the 'life of the mind as well as the life of the hand'. The Principal would therefore like to introduce more reflective courses. In the area of 'arts and crafts' the managers are considering more courses of aesthetic appreciation. In the opinion of the Management Team much of the work is very conventional and so the Team would like to introduce, in a contemporary sense, what the learner can do with their newly acquired skills. There is a desire that the curriculum should not become cosy and old-fashioned, particularly if younger learners are to be encouraged to enrol on courses. Over 90% of learners are over 55 and a quarter are over 65.

Fortunately, at the present time, the college is in a position to be able to devise a curriculum as described above and not have to worry overtly about fee income. The College Committee is made up of members of the National Organisation's Board of Trustees who oversee the work of the college. All its work is delivered through a series of subcommittees and the College Committee is one of them. Five trustees are members of the College Committee as well four other nominees. The College programme is presented to the committee for comment. As the trustees change the focus of the committee could also change.

***Interview Question 7: Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?***

There has been no change to the criteria for devising a programme over the data period

***Interview Question 8: Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?***

Not really. Constraints are more to do with format and timing. There is a strong tradition of promoting courses dealing with home economics which is counted for enrolment purposes, within crafts. (See Table 4.5.1)

***Interview Question 9: Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?***

There is no external funding. There has never been a culture to look for external funding.

***Interview Question 10: Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?***

Learners have access to grants and bursaries and details are published in the back of brochures. Some local and regional organisations have had success in applications for grants from the National Lottery. However, not every lottery region recognises 'educational activity' as a criterion for funding. Also each region will vary in its priorities. In this particular region woman, the older learner, and rural learners are recognized as claimants for assistance.

***Interview Question 11: Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?***

As described above the college has a strong tradition of promoting courses dealing with Home Economics.

***Interview Question 12: Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?***

Very few. A handful of City and Guilds courses under the auspices of a local College of Further Education

***Interview Question 13: Could you describe how the college is financed?***

The College operates on the full cost recovery basis. Up to this point there have been no fund raising activities. All bequests are earmarked for capital expenditure.

***Interview Question 14: What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?***

The learners complete an evaluation form at the end of a course. The tutors and learners receive an evaluation form which is in the process of being redesigned to give more accurate information. The management team regularly observe lessons. The caterers have their own evaluation form due to the fact that catering is an outside contract. The forms are statistically analysed and information fed back to managers and tutors.

## **4.5.5 Observations regarding the business position:**

### **Accommodation**

Over the data period there has been a small increase in bed occupancy of 0.8% (See Table 4.5.4) and over the same period a small increase in residential enrolments of 0.7% (See Table 4.5.10). At data point 3 the bedroom use totalled 97% with 76% of beds in use (See Table 4.5.5). These are very impressive figures highlighting a college that, bearing in mind the desire for learners to occupy single rooms, is to all intents and purposes using all available capacity. The Principal stated in interview that the college policy was to accommodate learners in single rooms and that anyone prepared to share would be a 'bonus'. It is clear that the college policy is being achieved. The number of bedrooms equipped with en suite facilities is 80% of all accommodation and a programme to alter the remaining 20% is always under consideration. An interesting development, connected to the fact that the national membership paid for the college, is that in the regions members take responsibility for the upkeep of one bedroom. Members design, decorate, and furnish 'their' bedroom for the benefit of all residents. Thus, the feeling of belonging to the college is further enhanced.

### **Residential and Non Residential Enrolments**

As stated above residential enrolments match very closely with bedroom occupancy, suggesting that the length of residential courses satisfies the learner's requirements. The only way the college can develop in



terms of increasing enrolments and 'spreading the word' about what the college offers is to increase day provision for which there are excellent facilities.

Table 4.5.6 indicates a substantial increase in day course enrolments from data point 2 (50) to data point 3 (853)

## **Cancellations**

The number of courses being cancelled from data point 1 to data point 3 has decreased from 73 (18%) to 21 (4%) as shown in Table 4.5.9. The Principal gave the reason for the decrease as the management being much more aware of what courses the learner would like to attend, and looking closely at course evaluations and learner feedback.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum has not changed over the data period due to having to satisfy the objects of the organisation. However this does not mean that courses cannot change and the Principal is endeavouring to introduce a broader interpretation of the objects by adding a more academic approach to some subjects.

### **4.5.6 Summary**

The college is another example of the implementation of the four P's of marketing, namely:

**Price:** Over the data period there have been significant increases in the price charged for a residential course (17%) and day courses (16%).

However, looking at the enrolment figures over the data period, the increase would seem not to have deterred learners from joining courses. Chapter 7 will examine the reasons why this should be so.

**Promotion:** Continually looking at why, how, and when the college promotes the programme. The managers are not afraid to look at different styles of brochure and coordinating the brochure with other forms of publicity in particular using the national brochure given to all members of the national association..

**Placement:** Where and how potential learners are made aware of the programme.

**Product:** A product being continually updated and adapted to learners' expectations and demands.

This college has clarity of purpose as defined in the trust's objects stated when the college opened and can be summarised as enabling learners to take an effective part in the improvement and development of the conditions of rural life; to advance their education and training in citizenship, in public questions both national and international, in music, drama and other cultural subjects and to secure instruction and training for them in all branches of agriculture, handicrafts, home economics, health and social welfare.

Not only does the college have clarity of purpose but also a clear direction for the future based on the objects. The Principal and management team are constantly revising and updating the programme of courses to

recognise the differing demands of learners living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A clear example is that the management teams wish to change the nature of some courses from purely practical to an appreciation of the more theoretical and aesthetic nature of the subject.

The data would suggest that this college is attracting learners in increasing numbers for residential and non residential courses. The limiting factor for further residential development is the number of bedrooms, a position that would be the envy of many principals of residential colleges. As has been stated the college, being part of a national organisation, can use a highly sophisticated network to promote and advertise residential courses.

Also the fact that the members own the college and have a direct input into the fabric of the college encourages them, in the Principal's words, to 'participate in residential education'.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

As mentioned throughout this thesis there has been an attempt to explore the widely held assumption that the number of short term colleges in England and Wales is in decline due to a lack of clarity of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of those who own these establishments.

The literature review established that from 1945 some fifty-eight short term residential colleges were established. Of these thirty-four were owned by county councils, thirteen owned by charities, six owned privately and five owned by universities or other further education establishments. The position at the time of writing has changed in that there are now twenty-eight colleges

offering short term residential courses. Sixteen are owned by county councils, eight are owned by charities, one owned privately and three owned by universities. The statement that 'the number of short term residential colleges is in decline' cannot be disputed as the figures show a decline of 52% since they were established.

It would be misleading to suggest that the owners of all residential colleges were unclear as to why they were purchased and what they were to be used for. The literature would suggest however that even if the managers of a residential college were clear as to their purpose and the role they would play in the adult education sector many commentators questioned their rationale and their motives for existence and suggested there was a lack of clarity of purpose as to what they should be used for. This is illustrated in the available literature by questions related to the curriculum on offer, the choice between vocational or non vocational courses, the 'availability' of learners, the length of a short course and what the colleges could be used for during the mid week period. The five case studies illustrate that many of these questions are still to be resolved and for some this lies at the root of their financial difficulties.

Russell (1973) comments that at times a college may seem to lack 'central purpose and direction'. He does however suggest that short term colleges enjoy a freedom to 'experiment and pioneer'. It may be that it was this 'freedom' that was perceived as a lack of direction and purpose which caused 52% to close over the next sixty years.

The five cases exemplify the ongoing need for financial support and investment. All colleges are housed in old buildings situated in delightful

parkland grounds. The cost of maintaining the buildings let alone improving the facilities and accommodation to bring them up to a level fit for purpose expected by today's learner is considerable. As has been shown and will be further examined in Chapter 6, financial reasons are given by the owners in the majority of college closures.

In each of the five cases interpretation of the quantitative data gives an insight into the business position of the colleges being studied

Table 4.6.1. illustrates the involvement in, and attitude of, the owners of the five short term residential colleges in relation to the three areas central to the debate.

*Table 4.6.1. Results of the qualitative and quantitative data collection in relation to the three areas central to the debate.*

CASE	OWNER	PURPOSE	DIRECTION	INVESTMENT
1	LA	X	X	✓
2	LA	X	X	X
3	Charity	✓	✓	✓
4	Part LA	✓	✓	✓X*
5	Charity	✓	✓	✓

Key:

- ✓ Makes a contribution.
- X Does not make a contribution.

✓X\* In this case the LA does not own the residential facilities and has not invested in the residential accommodation. The LA has invested in the teaching facilities.

In all cases, whether in a sound financial position or not, the Principal or Manager displayed a determination that the college should succeed and an enthusiasm for the value of studying in a residential setting.

The enthusiasm for residential study will be examined in the following chapter from the viewpoint of active learners. This study acknowledges the consistent claim that studying in a residential setting enhances the quality of the learning experience. The established fact that the number of short term colleges is in steady decline stands in direct contradiction with the high regard learners have for the residential experience. The five focus groups, by means of discussion, indicate what benefits or disadvantages they perceive from a residential learning experience.

## **Chapter 5: The Learners**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to explore the perceptions of students in respect of the nature and quality of their experience in the residential setting. The findings are used to illuminate issues around one of the central research questions relating to the unique quality of residential learning. Secondly, the data is used to contribute to clarifying the apparent contradiction of the decline of provision in spite of the persistent recognition of the value of such forms of educational experience.

The statement that there is 'clear evidence that studying in a residential setting enhances the quality of the learning experience' is derived from a number of sources. Wardens setting up the first colleges, advocates such as Gruntvig, Kold and Livingstone, principals and managers of today's colleges all support the assertion that residentiality adds quality to the learning experience. This chapter will explore the opinions of active learners by means of five focus groups composed of current students in the five case study providers as well as the comments of students recorded at the conclusion of an ARCA/DfES project, research undertaken by Lacognata (1961), ARCA evaluations and comments made by Open University students at the conclusion of a summer school course.

The Principals or Managers of the five colleges selected as individual case studies provided an opportunity to discuss with a group of learners their thoughts, opinions and experiences of studying in a residential college. As has been shown throughout this study apart from the work of Drews, (1995)

and ARCA, there is little qualitative and quantitative evidence regarding adult short term residential education a feature which also applies to evidence of learner opinion regarding their residential experience.

In order to address this shortfall, learners, as part of this study, were asked to identify the benefits or not of studying in a residential setting from the standpoint of their chosen course and their living experience. As shown in Chapter 2 authors such as Russell, claimed the *raison d'être* for the introduction of residential education:

'The element common to this work is the exploitation of the appeal and advantages arising from a short period of residence, chiefly the concentration of effort and the opportunity for informal group discussion'.

Russell Report (1973, p.45)

Would the responses from learners support these views? It was hoped that the findings would also triangulate with the comments of the professional staff who attributed the decline of provision to poor standards of accommodation and rising fees.

The discussions took place in the college in which they were studying during a break time and lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour although the time allocated for the meeting was thirty minutes. In Case Study 5 three students returned after their session, two hours later, to add further comments to the discussions.



Cohen et al (2000) describe the focus group as a form of 'group interview' with possibly only one topic. In this instance one topic was introduced as a question: (see *Appendix 7 p.368*).

*1. Why have you chosen to study your particular subject by enrolling on a residential course in this college?*

A further two related questions were added at an appropriate time during the discussions:

*2. Have you studied the same subject in a non residential setting, for example an evening class or day school and what were the differences in the learning experience, if any?*

*3. Would there be any difference do you think if the subject you are studying was offered with the same tutor in a hotel?*

In total fifty eight learners took part in the five focus groups of which four (7%) were male learners and fifty four (93%) female. All courses being studied were residential and for two to three nights duration. The courses lasting for two nights took place at the weekend (Friday and Saturday) and the longer courses i.e. more than two nights from Monday to Friday.

Courses being studied were wide ranging and included Art related courses (Water Colour Painting, Chinese Brush Painting, Painting on Silk), Computing (Digital Manipulation, Office Programmes, Digital Camera), Languages (Italian, German), Music (Music Appreciation, Singing, Viola,

Chamber music, Folk music), Crafts (C&G Machine Embroidery, Textiles, C&G Needle Weaving, Patchwork), Literature (The Novel, Shakespeare Plays).

The age of learners ranged from 35 years to 70+ years with the majority somewhere between 55 years and 65 years and from observation only, taking into account previous educational experience, could be defined as the upper categories of socio economic groups.

In terms of attending residential adult learning courses twenty one (36%) learners had attended residential courses in other short term residential colleges and five (9%) had attended residential courses in other colleges (long term) or hotels. Eighteen learners (31%) had attended non residential courses for example evening classes or day schools. Of these, nine (16%) were encouraged to seek courses offered by residential colleges in order to further their studies.

The reason for studying residentially can be divided broadly into two main areas : the first educational, the second environmental.

## **5.2 Reasons for enrolling on a residential course - educational.**

The overwhelming reason for joining a residential course, in fact with no disagreement, was the opportunity to be able to study continuously, with few if any interruptions, over a number of days. Learners felt that they could experience total immersion in their chosen subject and as a result were able to focus exclusively on their work which appears to lead to an intensiveness

and rapid progress. Many respondents commented they were able to 'learn quicker':

*'It is a very efficient and effective way of learning as you are able to focus on the subject totally. You don't have to walk the dog'.*

*Female learner studying Art. (Case 2)*

It was agreed by respondents that the intensity resulting in rapid progress in their chosen subject added quality to the learning experience.

Another reason discussed and unanimously agreed upon was the availability of a wide programme of courses and suitable teaching spaces, adequately equipped. Many respondents commented that their particular interest was not catered for in their 'home' location and as the discussions progressed it was evident that the question of availability depended to a large extent on where learners lived. The majority expressed concerns as to the state of their local adult education service suggesting that the service had all but disappeared and where it was still functioning was not offering subjects that satisfied their needs. This applied particularly to the level of the subject. This was evident in the groups from Cases 3 and 4 where the college offered a particular specialism. Furthermore, if it were possible to study a chosen subject at evening class or day school, respondents felt that in nearly all cases the subject would be suitable only for beginners and with little or no opportunity for progression. They agreed that in many residential colleges courses were available at different levels and often at an advanced level, for example the study of a foreign language:

*'It is becoming increasingly difficult to find classes in many subjects in the traditional evening class provision. Residential colleges are able to fill that gap and their courses are complementary to episodic teaching and learning'.*

*Male learner studying digital imaging. (Case 1)*

Several learners shared their experience of enrolling at one residential college and progressing to a higher level in another college. It was felt that tutors employed in a residential college are of a high standard and often nationally recognised experts in their field. One learner commented that a tutor teaching a 20 week evening class could, if circumstances warranted, be replaced and the course continue, but if the management team discovered an unsuitable tutor teaching a weekend residential course this action would not be possible. The college must be very confident in the ability of their teaching force:

*'The quality of teaching is important. I experienced a course in a Further Education College and my experience was very poor teaching. As a result the younger members of the group dropped out'.*

*Female learner studying Embroidery. (Case 4)*

Many learners follow tutors to other colleges. As one respondent succinctly commented:

*'If (name) was teaching in a scout hut I would be there'.*

*Female learner studying machine embroidery. (Case 4)*

A development of 'levels of study' has been the opportunity for learners to form self programming groups. A number of learners explained how having studied a subject for a number of years, a 'subject interest network' formed and learning continued with a nominated person booking accommodation in a college and studies continuing without input from a tutor. As there was no tutor the resultant cost of the course was reduced to the learner. This option was becoming more popular and a number of learners shared their successful experiences with the group.

The fact that in most situations the tutor was also in residence was perceived to be of great value. Time outside the programmed lesson, for example mealtimes or bar time, was an opportunity for learners to get to know the tutor and vice versa:

*'Dining is a social as well as a learning occasion'.*

*Female learner studying the Violin . (Case 4)*

Many respondents agreed that they were able to learn from each other and that 'knowledge is reinforced by discussion' and being in residence gave more opportunities for 'information exchange'. This would support the observation made by Smith, et al (1919) that a residential college can develop a strong corporate spirit which non residential institutions can hardly expect to attain.

An interesting comment from those studying craft courses was the use of time. A weekend course involves some 13 to 15 hours tutor contact time. A two hour evening class over 10 weeks would not, it was claimed, cover as

much of the syllabus although the contact time was in the region of 25% to 30% greater. Reasons given were in the most part logistical such as the time taken to set out craft materials at the beginning of the evening and the reverse at the end of the evening class. Also the time taken to 'get back' into the subject having had a week's break. The residential course offered completion in a more 'compressed time'.

Three students returned after a focus session (Case Study 5) had finished in order to emphasise a point they felt had been missed during the discussion. Undertaking courses at a residential college had given them confidence to join activities in their home locality. They not only continued their studies by joining self programming groups but also felt able to participate in clubs and societies. One learner explained that she, as a result of her residential experience, had the confidence to stand for election for a Parish Council and another learner the confidence to join the committee of a local charity shop. The point they wished to stress was the self confidence they had gained from a residential experience.

The above would accord with the evidence presented by Woodley et al (1987), although as has been commented on earlier their research focussed on long term colleges:

'.....for residential college students whose main aim was to increase their self confidence. Another individual reason worthy of note was 'wanted an interest to keep my mind active'.

Woodley et al (1987, p.89)

Jackson (2006) in her detailed discussions with learners undertaking courses at Denman College, a short term residential college, makes a similar point but from the aspect of learners wanting to be part of a community:

'For several of the women this was centred on the church; four were parish councillors; and one was a magistrate. Several of the respondents were involved in support work, including working in hospitals; supporting cancer patients and carers; bereavement counselling; and supporting newly widowed people.

Jackson (2006, p.78)

The issue of 'confidence building' is raised in her research project:

'I have met somebody who has been widowed within the previous year and it is the first time she has gone anywhere without her husband ... it's so confidence building'

Jackson (2006, p.81)

It would appear that the educational reasons for studying in a residential setting given by the learners in the focus groups have changed little from the reasons given by principals, managers and authors elucidated some 60 years ago. It is clear that the quality of the learning experience is enhanced due to the intensive nature, a supportive environment, a strong corporate spirit and the provision of space for experimentation and exploration.

### 5.3 Reasons for enrolling on a residential course - environmental

Grimwood in Adult Education (1960 -61 No 4, p.210) spoke of the contribution of residential colleges to the role of the environment in Adult Education as 'contemplative idleness'. He suggested that short term colleges were in a strong position to offer a kind of mental and spiritual 'refreshment' and those attending courses had taken the first step of 'temporary withdrawal' from the pressures of everyday life. The focus group learners would identify with Grimwood's thoughts in that they gave the overwhelming reason for joining a residential course as the opportunity to study away from the everyday pressures of modern life either from work or home. One learner described the residential experience as:

*'studying in a cocoon away from the pressures of everyday living. Someone else has the responsibility for preparing meals. I do not have to think of anything else'.*

*Female learner studying the Violin . (Case 4)*

Others described feelings such as it is like working in a large family or community; an enriching experience meeting people from different backgrounds with similar interests. This feeling enabled learners to get to know other learners and to make positive attempts to return to the same or similar groups. Livingstone (1941, p.50) suggested that by living together learners gain from each other's views and personalities. He suggested that



the power of comradeship gave a strong social element to the residential experience.

Many learners placed importance on the college environment suggesting that ambience assists learning. The residential college was seen as a safe environment. Joining an evening class situated in a city centre or indeed in any conurbation was not an attractive alternative to the residential college. These results would accord with the opinions of Principals and Managers although the issue of poor accommodation, which they felt very important, was not a major issue for all learners. The availability and choice of course was seen as more important.

The work of Drews (1995, p.255) in the area of learner opinion cites the Residential Colleges Research Project undertaken by the Department of Continuing Education, Warwick University as the only in depth investigation by a university into any aspect of short term residential adult education in England and Wales. The aim of the research undertaken by questionnaire during 1989 to 1990 was to establish patterns of participation in six residential colleges. He refers to two other surveys, one undertaken in 1984 (Drews 1995, p.258 citing Oval, 1984) and the other in 1992 (Drews 1995, p.258). In analysing the responses Drews (1995) lists the following reasons why learners have chosen to undertake a residential course which support the comments made by the respondees above:

'55% of the students stated that the value of a residential course for them was in the intensive study, without the distractions of daily routine, in an environment congenial to adult learning. 27% of students commented specifically on studying with like-minded people and that

they value the opportunities for social intercourse, conducive to making new friends. 26% of the students were motivated by the programme offered by the relevant college and by the high standard of tuition. 57% of the respondents said that the main difference for them between residential and non-residential adult education was the concentration on the subject matter and the interaction between students and tutors and students and fellow students. 0.3% gave the reason for attending their residential course purely as a holiday. 25% considered the purpose of their attendance certainly to be for the learning experience and 72% felt that their attendance was a combination of a break from the regular routine of life for the purposes of learning'.

Drews (1995, p. 258).

A project undertaken at Northern College (Long Term) was reported on Radio 4 in June 2008. (Purves 2008 The Learning Curve) in which students illustrated their experiences. The course was designed to encourage learning in the older section of the population. The organiser interviewed during the programme was forthright in her claim that the residential course was a success because of the opportunity that residence provides for accelerated learning and the opportunity for students to leave the worries of everyday life behind. Because the students don't have to do everyday chores they have much more time to spend on learning.

Although the reasons for enrolling on a residential course were made very clear and were very positive, the focus group learners also cited their perceptions of the disadvantages of studying in a residential setting.

## 5.4 Disadvantages of studying in residence

The reasons given were varied and there was not a clear consensus across the focus groups. For example a number of learners complained about the paperwork they were expected to complete before the end of the course. These complaints were from colleges that are county council owned and where the college is part of an Adult Education Service or is receiving funds from an outside source such as the LSC. It would appear that Adult Education Services have produced course evaluation systems that are designed for evening classes and imposed that system on the residential college without any consideration for the type and length of course. A learner described how she was obliged to assess her skills at the beginning of the weekend course, at the end of the course but also bizarrely at the mid-point of the course. For a weekend course she felt that although it was nonsense, she was under pressure not to let the tutor down and completed the form. There was a general feeling that evaluation forms served no purpose and that they were unlikely to be read after collection:

*'The paperwork we have to complete is a complete waste of time and I only fill the forms in so that our tutor does not get into trouble'*

*Female learner studying French. (Case 4)*

Learners felt that they did not need a form to express any shortcomings or excellence of a course as they could make representation to the tutor or management of the college.

The cost of courses was raised by a number of students with varying opinions. A small number felt the upgrading of facilities, such as the provision of en suite accommodation, was not necessary if this resulted in an increase in fees while others, the majority, felt that single rooms and en suite facilities was a minimum requirement. There was general agreement that it was unnecessary to install televisions in bedrooms:

*'the cost of a course does deter some people. I now attend instead of taking a summer holiday; in fact the course is my summer holiday'*

*Female learner studying Patchwork . (Case 5)*

There was a general complaint although not universal, that the enrolment system was unfair in a number of colleges. In some colleges there was a 'race for places'. Courses could be oversubscribed before the college brochure had been published. Other colleges used a preferential enrolling system giving first choice to those learners who had joined a student support group. Several learners suggested that a common enrolling system should be adopted by all ARCA colleges:

*'The enrolment system is a telephone lottery. As a member of the college student support group I should be given preferential treatment in being allowed to enrol before the brochure is mailed to the general public'*

*Female learner studying Wind instruments. (Case 3)*

For those learners undertaking City and Guilds craft courses which may last for between 2 to 3 years the travel element was considered to be a

cost that caused some learners, although very few, to drop out of the course. What was interesting was that the total cost for the qualification did not seem to deter learners even though the cost could amount to hundreds of pounds. It was seen by many that residential courses were good value for money and compared well with the total cost of a traditional evening course but the cost nevertheless was a considerable outlay. Indeed a number of learners indicated that they had joined a course as part of their annual break or had taken time away from their full time employment to participate in a course. Others, as a means of reducing costs had opted to travel from home on a daily basis or sought bed and breakfast in the locality of the college:

*'The decision as to whether to be resident or not is purely down to cost and does not affect the learning experience'.*

*Female learner studying Textiles. (Case 4)*

The above student was in a minority of two (3%) in her view that being resident had no effect on the learning experience.

A number of learners had taken advantage of college or local organisation bursaries and many would have liked to see these schemes extended.

Several learners had undertaken courses in hotels. One person shared her experience which was positive. The course with fourteen enrolled was the only one in the hotel and there were a considerable number of residents attending other functions. Others felt these courses were not as enjoyable as the residential college experience:

*'A course in a hotel is very different. Other residents get in the way and we were not with like minded people'.*

*Female learner studying Lace. (Case 2)*

A majority of those learners who had opted for bed and breakfast accommodation as a means of reducing costs or because the college accommodation was oversubscribed suggested that this arrangement detracted from the residential experience. They felt that they did not fully belong to the group occupying college accommodation.

A very interesting comment made in all the focus groups was the problem of new learners joining a group that had been to the college on previous occasions. How do you break into the class clique? It was felt that the responsibility fell to the tutor to first of all appreciate the situation, which did not always happen, and then to develop strategies to welcome the new learner to the group.

All groups other than Case 5 raised what they perceived as a major problem, that of promotion and publicity. In all cases publicity ranged from poor to not acceptable. They felt that brochures were in the main well produced but many questioned why other strategies were not used. They accepted that advertising colleges on the internet was gaining in popularity and usefulness; many questioned the lack of advertisements in specialist magazines and editorial in local and national newspapers:

*'I only found out about residential colleges six months ago and I have now been three times'*

*Female learner studying Chinese Brush Painting. (Case 1)*

From the comments of the learners detailed above, it would appear that Russell (1973) was accurate in his assessment that the residentiality adds quality to the learning experience by learners being able to concentrate their efforts and hold informal discussions. Added to this is the opportunity to study continuously with few distractions, total immersion in the subject, an intensive experience leading to rapid progress and the building of self confidence.

The reasons for declining enrolments stressed by the Principals and Managers were poor accommodation and the increasing cost of courses. This was a factor discussed by learners but proved to be not as important to the majority as might be expected. A number of learners felt the availability of a course and the quality of the tutor to be more important. However a note of caution should be recorded. The focus group membership was made up of learners already enrolled on a course and therefore had previously made the decision to purchase the course. It was also clear that if a course could not be purchased elsewhere the standard of accommodation would be tolerated. As there is little in the way of systematic research into learner opinion of studying in a residential setting the following four examples are worth considering in the light of the findings of this project.

## **5.5 Learner responses – ARCA and DfES project**

Reference has been made to the small number of authors who have contributed to the discussion of the effectiveness of learning in residence by conducting similar focus groups, Jackson (2006), or conducting questionnaire

surveys, Drews (1995), Oval (1984). The findings of the most recent survey conducted by Winterton et al (2002) compare favourably in terms of learner experience of residentiality, with the focus groups previously described. The project, funded by The Department for Education and Skills and coordinated by ARCA, ran from April 2000 to April 2001. The project was based on the premise that not only is it necessary to increase participation in learning but also, crucially, to widen participation. The project focussed on attracting individual hard-to-reach learners and groups of hard-to-reach learners through specifically designed courses for those without prior experience of adult residential learning. As part of the project, participants were asked to identify the specific benefits from studying in residence. A summary of the benefits of residence identified by learners has been taken from the ARCA project report and is listed below. Winterton et al (2002. pp.56 – 66)

- Getting away from home and the 'everyday routine'.
- Being able to concentrate without outside diversions.
- Facilitates continuity of learning.
- A more focused and intensive learning experience.
- Studying in a relaxed environment.
- The right kind of atmosphere for effective learning.
- 'Group bonding' would be more likely and there would be companionship and greater opportunities to make friends.
- At the end of the programme learners confirmed they had felt free from outside pressures and influences in the residential environment.
- The development of teamwork was directly attributed to residential study.
- Learners were asked to rate the importance of the residential aspect of the course on a scale of one to five and of those responding (88%)



94% believed the residential aspect was highly important rating it one or two on the scale. The college provides an inspirational environment for its learners and the residential experience is qualitatively different from any other form of learning.

- Learners explained that they commanded a good deal of individual attention, which is not always available in college classrooms.
- The participants were able to chat to tutors at mealtimes, exploring issues raised in class in greater depth.
- Social interaction between group members outside classes and courses was more effective and group members were encouraged to discuss things they didn't understand.
- Non-residential learning was regarded as disjointed and learners liked the continuity of their programmes, something that is missing from the conventional college course.

Although the participants were carefully selected for the project the most important aspect was that none of the learners had previously experienced studying in residence. This is in marked contrast to the respondees of the focus groups in this study. As this was their first experience, the benefits and value of the learning experience compare well with the focus group experiences many of whom were seasoned residential learners.

## **5.6 Learner responses – ARCA survey evaluations**

Until recently the ARCA Management Committee conducted an annual evaluation of all participants in ARCA colleges. Learners were asked to complete a questionnaire which sought to discover learner opinion as to their experience of studying in a short term residential college.

### **Reasons for enrolling on a residential course - educational.**

- An excellent learning experience - very enjoyable.
- A very good course and pleasant weekend. Will come again... and again, and again
- So enjoyable - I have gained so much.... Too much to list.
- An excellent creative experience.
- I have loved every minute. Learnt a great deal and am hungry for more!
- Thoroughly enjoyed the course...it makes learning a pleasure.
- What was "curiosity" has now become a mission. Far better than I imagined it would be.
- The vitality and enthusiasm of the tutor inspired exploration of the subject
- Interesting & illuminating. Motivating me to do something positive!
- I have never attended a course before anywhere. I enjoyed it all very much and would love to come again.
- Very well delivered course — the tutor managed to deal well with a very mixed ability group with ease.
- Excellent — will use the skills gained today for ever.
- Thoroughly enjoyed my first course — totally hooked.

### **Reasons for enrolling on a residential course - environmental.**

- Overall - fabulous experience. Great welcome, friendly a relaxed, great hospitality - a refreshing change.
- A great tutor, a thoroughly enjoyable course in great surroundings with excellent hospitality from the staff.
- This was an excellent learning experience and relaxing break in good company.

- Long may the college continue to deliver the quality of service we have learnt to expect!
- Courses like this not only keep my brain working but also widen my social circle.
- The whole experience was a joy. The food, accommodation and atmosphere was superb.
- A pleasant weekend with good company, excellent food and hard work — I am happily worn out!
- I benefited greatly in terms of relaxation, well-being and friendship.

## **5.7 Learner feedback from the Open University Residential Schools**

The OU accepted its first 25,000 students in 1971, and residential schools were introduced as a vital part of the Open University learning experience. In recent promotional literature it is stated,

‘Their [residential schools] continuing success depends on people who can share their expertise and enthusiasm with a diverse group of highly committed students. A residential school not only gives you a better understanding of your module it also boosts your confidence, gives fresh impetus to your studies and provides great opportunities to make new friends and study partners.

Open University Residential Schools (2010)

The Open University (OU) student will have different learning experiences from those learners attending a short term residential college. It is probable that OU students will have studied their subject at home before attending a residential school, may have attended tutorials and day courses and the

course will have some form of examination at the end of the study period. However similarities between the OU residential school and the short term residential course can be seen. Highly committed learners, expertise, enthusiasm, boosting confidence, fresh impetus and making new friends are all terms that resonate with the experiences of the focus group learners. Furthermore individual comments made by OU students support the argument that a residential setting adds value to the learning experience:

- 'The residential school for this module was an unforgettable event as one gains great insight into areas of psychology. I can highly recommend this module
- I found the short summer school philosophy module stimulating and exciting. The opportunity to engage in philosophical discussion on a face-to-face basis was particularly useful in a wider philosophical study
- The summer school was absolutely fantastic, the pace and variety of work being interesting and fun, a good mix of group classroom work and going out into the community.
- Entertainment, stimulating and well worth the effort. The programme was full, but everything is well organised in the enthusiasm of tutors and staff adds to the experience.
- I would also recommend the residential school experience to anyone who isn't certain of it. It is a great opportunity to meet other students and to get away from your everyday stresses and really focus on the subject.

- What a fantastic week. I felt like a full-time science student. Experimental work and field trips gave a taster of all fields of science really well. Excellent tutors were an inspiration'

Open University Residential Schools (2010)

## **5.8 Results of learner feedback from research undertaken by Lacognata (1961)**

There are two important reasons why the results of this research are not directly applicable with the work undertaken by the short term residential college. The research focused on students enrolled on two similar vocational courses given by the same instructor, one in residence and the other non resident. These vocational courses were of the same length and with the same objectives leading to a national qualification

The courses studied in a short term residential college are in the main non vocational. Secondly the control group, non-residential, studied over a period of eight days and not, as frequently happens in an Adult Education service in this country, over a number of weeks for typically two hours per week.

Nevertheless it is interesting to look at the Lacognata results to see how far similarities exist between the findings of his research and the focus groups, discussed earlier in this chapter. In summarising his findings Lacognata determines four points as significant:

'First, residential participants viewed their learning experiences in a more positive framework than non-residential. Secondly, interaction with fellow students and instructors was more frequent among the

residential. Thirdly, in the evaluation of fellow students, the residential participants expressed opinions indicating closer ties and companionship than the non-residential. Finally, the mostly distinct difference as related to the learning process was the exchange of viewpoints. Residentials viewed the exchange of ideas and opinions on insurance fundamentals as central to their learning. The informal group discussions provided the occasions for such exchanges'.

Lacognata (1961, p.19)

Another point of interest was what Lacognata termed 'self orientation' (1961, p.11) The residential students at the end of the course viewed themselves as 'professionals' whereas the non residential group saw themselves more as businessmen and salesmen. Lacognata draws the conclusion that effective changes in self perception are more likely to occur in social environments afforded by residential instruction (1961, p.11).

## **5.9 Conclusion**

Faithfull (1991) then Principal of Braziers Adult College, a short term residential college, poses some thought provoking questions in his report to a discussion paper Residential Adult Education Trends and Perspectives (Field and Normie 1991):

'There is a mystery which hangs over residential adult education: it is the question of why it is so successful. All those who have experienced it, whether as purveyors of it or as consumers, know that it does normally work well and that frequently it works outstandingly well. Rarely, however, are attempts made to bring into consciousness and to understand how or why it works to the satisfaction of many people. The

two main benefits that accrue from it are clear and confirmed again and again from experience. Firstly, there is, both in the group and in individuals, a raising of morale with an attendant gain of renewed energy and mental alertness. Secondly, there is –again both in the group and in individuals - an increase in human creativity and a growth in inventiveness and new responsiveness to challenge'.

Faithful (1991, p.58)

There would appear to be a consensus emerging from the five focus group discussions, the ARCA Dfee project, ARCA evaluations and comments made by Open University students at the conclusion of a summer school course, that the learning experience in a residential setting is an enriching and developmental process. It is interesting to examine the special advantages of residential adult education as set out in the Educational Settlements Association (1943) 'Memorandum on Post-War Residential Adult Education' (p.3 section V). and make comparisons with the comments of today's learners. The authors suggest advantages that resonate with the opinions of the focus group learners. Study is undertaken undisturbed and the learner is able to give the subject his/her full attention and in addition enjoys the company of other learners from different backgrounds. The learner has the stimulus and advantage of sharing an educational experience in a community with pleasant surroundings.

It would appear that, although the short term residential college may have undergone many changes over the past 60 years the experience and opinion as to the quality and value of studying in residence has not altered to any significant extent. However once again a note of caution should be

restated. The focus group learners were invited to discuss their experiences at the time they were undertaking a residential course. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that they were in the main very positive about their period of study. They were committed to residential education and as has been described, for many, this was not a new experience. It would be interesting is to undertake a comparative study of the learning experience of those engaged in a non residential course of study with those undertaking a residential course.

As has been shown the number of opportunities afforded to adults wishing to study in residence has declined significantly over the past 60 years due to the closure of short term residential colleges in England and Wales. What is disturbing is that this trend is continuing. Chapter 6 will examine the number and reasons given for recent college closures.



## **Chapter 6. Purpose, Direction, Investment in the early years**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, explored the reasons why the short term residential college came into existence and the benefits to the learner of studying in residence. Very few authors dealt with the more practical and extremely important aspects of how learners could be attracted to the college, how it should be financed, including the maintenance of the buildings and the development of a business model that would take the college forward. There are two or three authors mentioned in Chapter 2 who give some idea of their approach to the business of a short term college and particularly the financial problems that the early colleges faced. A number of authors quoted have during their careers managed a short term residential college and bring 'hands on' experience to the debate and this chapter will examine in more depth their experiences of managing the first of the 'new' colleges. In particular, this chapter will seek to justify the thesis arguments that even in the early days of the introduction of the short term residential college there appears to have been a lack of clarity of purpose in a number of cases, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction.

### **6.2 The Business Strategy**

A detailed account of the 'business' strategy of the newly emerging short term residential colleges is described by Hunter (1952) Warden of Urchfont Manor, Wiltshire 1947 to 1951. His approach is characterised firstly by what

should be taught and secondly by how long each course needed to be to have educational value in a residential setting. He immediately recognises that to attend a residential course for anything more than a few days the potential learner will have great difficulties in finding the time.

'The central, inescapable problem appears at once. How is the ordinary adult, man or woman, to find time to attend a residential course? The pattern of industrial life involves, the great majority of men, continuous paid employment for 50 or 51 weeks in the year, with three or four short public holidays and either one or two weeks of paid holiday, usually taken in the late summer.

Hunter (1952, p.23)

As has been recognised by today's colleges if programmes are constructed mainly for weekends this only accounts for two sevenths of the year even if it were possible to occupy all weekends. Hunter (1952) offers two solutions; the first is that the working person must be seconded by the employer or secondly the potential learner must give up work. He acknowledges that it is very unlikely that a potential learner will give up paid employment.

'If there is one major criticism of the founders and administrators of the new colleges, it is that, in this zeal for a new idea and a passionate belief in its value, they would not face this sharp issue squarely and continued - as they do to this day - to offer most attractive courses which unfortunately no one in normal employment could attend'.

Hunter (1952, p.24)

It is here that the Scandinavian model for residential education differs from the British model of short term colleges and is more allied to the long term residential model. Courses of several months' duration were already being delivered by the long term residential colleges at the time of the introduction of the short term college. Hunter reluctantly accepts the inevitable by promoting the 'short course' as a learning activity lasting for about two weeks' duration for which he would expect employer co-operation. None of the case study colleges offer courses of this length even during the summer period. Case study 4, as has been discussed, achieves around 100 hours of course time by means of accredited courses over a number of linked weekends.

Hunter (1952) observes a parting of the ways: some colleges adopting week courses (Monday to Friday) plus weekend courses with others offering 'hobbies' courses at the weekends and encouraging 'lettings' during the week including local authority use, for example, the training of teachers. It is clear that Hunter saw the 'lettings' route as a betrayal of his residential values and described how some wardens engaged in a 'vigorous' onslaught on employers to grant short periods from work.

'After four or five years of experience and experiment it is becoming clear that almost all the colleges have gravitated or been driven to a compromise position. The "weekend" colleges, seeing the success which could be achieved in semi-vocational midweek courses, have increasingly adopted them, running programmes of which the usual pattern is a four-day vocational course from Monday evening to Friday morning, followed by "cultural" course for the general public running from Friday evening to Sunday evening'.

Hunter (1952, p.29)

Hunter based his residential education philosophy on a notion of 'paid education leave' a system that was never achieved. In promoting the short residential course the Educational Settlements Association in a Memorandum on Post War Residential Adult Education (1943) suggests short courses lasting from a week to a month as having certain advantages.

'They in no way disorganise or interfere with the normal life of the individual. They can be taken in a national holiday and do not compel a worker temporarily to give up his employment which would have involved him the risk of losing it. They will encourage a taste for longer courses, and test a fitness for them'

The Educational Settlements Association (1943, p.6)

The memorandum supports Hunter's view that there should be a scheme to enable learners to undertake short residential courses. The authors pose a number of questions relating to the organisation and development of residential study.

'Representation to the Government, to Employers, Trade Unions and the Co-operative Movement, on behalf of a scheme under which men and women could be granted leave of absence from employment in order to avail themselves of residential study'.

The Educational Settlements Association (1943, p.9)

Throughout his writings, Hunter describes his ideas and proposals by illustrating the work of many of the short term colleges in existence at the time. In Appendix 1 'Residential Colleges: Some New Developments in British Adult Education' (1952, p.65) he lists 22 colleges and admits that not all colleges were able to differentiate between courses run by the college and

courses run by outside organisations. However he does give detail of the 'business' that each college undertakes and although he admits that his calculations might not be statistically sound the 'business' that colleges undertake is described with passion. What would Hunter have thought of many colleges today offering licensed facilities for wedding receptions?

Hunter (1952) makes an attempt in Appendix II 'Residential Colleges: Some New Developments in British Adult Education' to give some idea of the financial challenges that colleges faced at the time. He experiences the same difficulties that have been experienced in collecting data for this study.

'...attempts to obtain any satisfactory comparison of detailed financial accounts for new residential colleges are defeated by the many variations in method of showing figures and by a very considerable difference in circumstances. Many colleges are administered with the aid of the financial and architect's staff of a Local Education Authority; some show a charge for these services, others do not. In some cases a tutor's salary is carried by a university, or lecturer's fees paid by an outside authority: here again, some show this in their accounts, others do not. Some colleges in their early years make little allowance for depreciation or maintenance: others are involved in heavy non-recurring expenditure in adaptations and equipment'.

Hunter (1952, p.75)

What is revealing about his calculations, even though by his admission the figures are theoretical, is the level of subsidy enjoyed by the 'new' colleges. Hunter was at the time of writing Warden of Urchfont Manor and would have had a great deal of experience in managing a residential college which brought a level of realism to his calculations. For a typical college of 40 bed

spaces or more, he calculates a running deficit of 37% of which 40% will be paid by the Local Authority and 60% paid by the National Exchequer. As a result of these calculations he postulates that a college of fewer than 40 bed spaces is unlikely to be economic.

The Governors of Urchfont Manor published a report on the first 10 years of residential business. (Governors' Report 1957). They concluded that there was scope for courses lasting for up to eleven days but that courses lasting for one week should form the basis of future planning. The programming of courses of fourteen days duration and longer had to be abandoned. They also made mention of letting out the college for conferences (closed courses) and confirmed that the College had been let out as little as possible because the staff dislike such lettings. The conference delegates were outsiders, are were not members of the college family and were prone to making complaints.

Hunter (1952) reveals not only a great deal about the early days of Urchfont Manor but also about the business direction of other colleges at that time. He, together with the Governors of the college, had a purpose and a direction but this was based on an assumption that employers would grant paid leave to allow their employees to join residential courses. He is critical of other wardens who in his words 'would not face this sharp issue squarely' and it is evident that there was tension between the early managers. He gives an insight to the divisions between the wardens in not only the purpose but also the future direction of the 'new' colleges. The question of how colleges should be financed is detailed by Hunter and again it is clear that there were difficulties in balancing the income generated by the educational purpose of

the college with the need to generate income from other non educational activities. The implication from Hunter's description of how a college should be financed is that there would not be much finance available for investment. He observes that many colleges make little allowance for 'depreciation or maintenance'.

### **6.3 Purpose, Direction and Finance**

Harris-Worthington (1987), Warden and successor to Hunter, some 35 years later considers the paid educational leave issue. He writes;

'It was, and probably always will be, dependent upon people's attitudes (particularly those in power) towards the value of adult education and the willingness of employers to release workers for reasonably long periods without any real incentive or impetus from government to do so.

It was not altogether surprising that, given no national Paid Educational Leave policy, employers needed continually to be convinced of the merits of release for even short residential periods of study'.

Harris Worthington (1987, p.17)

Harris-Worthington concludes that the idea was unrealistic and more importantly that the short term college's role and remit changed before it started. The short course of a month's duration for most colleges was doomed due to the reluctance of employers to release potential learners for that length of time to study 'humane' subjects.

Shearman (1944) cited in Harris-Worthington (1987, p.16) comments

'If the educational aim of these projects appears as yet to need more thought, and if the distinction between a residential college and a holiday course is not always firmly drawn, it remains true that centres like these

are to be warmly welcomed. It is necessary that the aim of any such college be defined, and it is not apparent that the necessary thinking has yet been done on this'.

Harris Worthington (1987, p.16)

In his thesis Drews (1995) charts the opening of many short term residential colleges from an historical perspective and in so doing makes reference to the business the college expects to develop in the early days of operation. For a number of colleges he gives details of the length of courses and the level of business in the first years. For example in his description of the founding of Wedgwood Memorial College he speaks of Summer School courses, the desire of the WEA to provide weekend courses, linked weekend courses, study groups, in service training for adult tutors and that it was the first residential college to offer pre-retirement courses. Drews (1995, p. 125) suggests that 'the climate was right in North Staffordshire for an experiment in residential adult education' but goes on to explain that courses were held mainly at weekends because workers could only get away at that time. It is clear that Wedgwood Memorial College had a clear purpose and due to the cooperation between North Staffordshire, the WEA and the Oxford Extension Movement had a strategic direction.

During its first three months Pendley Manor was filled to capacity due to some fortuitous editorial in The Times Educational Supplement, but according to Drews (1995, p.130) this level of business did not continue due to difficulties in filling the house during mid week periods. Although Drews mentions that Dorian Williams, the owner of Pendley Manor was familiar with



the writings of Livingstone, he suspects that the driving force behind the development of the Manor was to find a means of saving the family home.

In terms of securing residential enrolments an experience recorded by Drews (1995, p.141) befell Westham House: 'the eight week courses, which were to be the backbone of the educational programme and then develop into one term and even six month courses, did not materialise'.

What is clear from the literature is that many colleges (if not all) required some form of subsidy in the form of an annual grant from sponsoring organisations or county councils to sustain their business.

'Westam House in common with other short-term residential colleges required from its inception additional funding beyond that received from individual students' fees and conference income in order to provide an acceptable but basic standard of accommodation and food as well as a good standard of education'.

Drews (1995, p.142)

In the case of county councils, this was in the form of financial support that had to be raised from the rates causing comment, usually derogatory, from rate payers. An example would be the opening of Urchfont Manor. When the ratepayers in the locality saw smoke emitting from its nine chimneys, 'scandalous extravagance' comments did not endear the college to the local community.

The same experience is recorded by Drews (1995) for other colleges. He describes similar instances at Attingham Hall, Wilton Park College and Urchfont Manor College all facing the same problems of finance and the ambition to run courses longer than a weekend.

There were however one or two exceptions. Wansfell College recognised the problems of access to courses and offered shorter courses from the outset allowing learners to join courses in cultural subjects and courses for citizenship. Wansfell College was established with a clear purpose and a clear strategic direction.

Burton Manor College, another example, was the result of six local authorities and a university coming together under the direction of an Educational Council. The operational costs were dispersed among the 'partners'. Furthermore the college could accommodate fifty students allowing at least two courses to be run in tandem with six partners contributing to the recruitment of learners and promotion of courses.

'These courses were of one week's duration, but more often lasted a fortnight, and after only one year's operation some sixty employers, mainly on Merseyside, were supporting the college by sending their staff on full pay and in the company's time'.

Drews (1995, p.142)

As has been shown it would be incorrect to suggest that in the early days of the 'new' short term residential college there was a lack of clarity of purpose in all cases. However it is clear that there were many reasons, particularly in the case of county councils, given for establishing a short term residential college. It is evident in a number of cases that there was a lack of strategic direction and in many more cases a serious lack of investment. How the wardens of the time viewed their colleges will be examined in the following section.

## 6.4 The Perspective of Wardens and Managers

A source of information examining the business mix of the early colleges can be found in the articles written and published in Adult Education as discussed in Chapter 2. An analysis of Adult Education over a period of 60 years reveals interesting comments relating to residential adult education particularly in a regular contribution entitled 'News from the Field'..

Knuston Hall.

'The courses on the whole are short; one day, two day, three day; one week, two week, three week; so that it is possible to make a fleeting impression on many people'.

Smith (1954, p.51)

Unfortunately Smith does not give any indication of how many courses took place in the categories listed. All the examples of courses listed in her article are weekend courses.

Benslow Music Trust

'Certainly, those who come to stay in the comfortably and attractively furnished house either for a weekend or a longer stay – alone or in groups – are not asked to make more than a token contribution to the upkeep of the house and amenities'.

Haynes (1953, p.300)

## Grantley Hall

'It seemed reasonable to suppose that the weekend, and, at any rate throughout the holiday period (from Easter to mid October), the one or two week course, should be held'.

Hopkinson (1951, p.296)

'Between Easter 1951 and the end of March 1952 our courses are planned, so as to conform to a 7:4:2 ratio'.

Hopkinson (1951, p.297)

The planned courses were programmed as Open Courses (7), Special Courses – connected to special spheres of work (4) and Closed courses - conferences of outside bodies (2). Longer Open Courses were planned for early January, Easter, Whitsun, most of July, August and September. Weekend open courses were arranged over the whole year.

## News from the Field

'...sessions were devoted to a detailed discussion of organisation, relations and finance, dealing with such matters as, for example, academic, administrative and domestic staff, buildings, equipment and grounds, courses for the public, course fees and expenditure, and lecturers and tutors fees'.

Carmichael (1957 -1958. p, 238)

'...the executive committee had been anxious to extend the scope of the conference beyond purely administrative or organisational questions, although an exchange of views on such problems was clearly useful to those attending'.

Carmichael (1957 -1958. p, 238)

## Dillington House

'...should colleges, in planning their courses, aim to provide all things for all people, or should each develop a special line of its own (as Westham House in Warwickshire, for example, had developed its Shakespeare courses), to be emphasised although not to the point of excluding courses on other subjects?'

Carmichael (1957 -1958. p, 222)

## The Hill College

'The Hill was designated an in-service training college for teachers, pupils and local government personnel; when opportunities arose it would also provide a residential centre of adult education in its widest aspects. This could best be done by ensuring that, throughout the year, courses in a wide variety of subjects appealing to the general public could be held there most weekends. It is hoped also that during the summer, and perhaps at Easter, the college will be available for 'schools' of a longer duration, particularly in the visual arts, music and drama'.

Strand Jones (1967 -68, p, 370)

## Maryland College

' although Maryland was purchased by Bedfordshire Education Authority with the idea that teachers' courses at all levels should form an important part of the programme, the Authority has wisely taken the line that the centre in its early days should simply grow, like Topsy, so that a picture emerges of the way in which county interests in adult education can best be served'.

Milnes (1967 – 68, p. 373)

The business direction taken by the early residential colleges is illustrated by the quotations given above. Overall there appears to have been

little in the way of a common strategic direction and how colleges should be financed. This is perhaps not unexpected as the colleges were owned in most cases by individual authorities and managed by wardens who appeared to have had a free hand in determining the direction the college should take. Some colleges were founded on a premise that employers would release employees to undertake a residential course lasting for; it was hoped, some months. When the business did not materialise, colleges were forced to be pragmatic and design courses that the general public could access mainly at the weekend or during holidays. Increasingly the problem of how to attract learners for the other five sevenths of the year became a major issue which has lasted to the present day.

Sandford (1964 -65) makes a heartfelt plea to the wardens for access to the short term colleges for sandwich students. The reasons and explanations for his entreaties give an 'outsider's view of how colleges were being perceived at the time. He is clearly convinced, as discussed in Chapter 2, that residentiality offers educational value to a course but laments the fact that he has difficulty, due to prevailing 'attitudes', in finding suitable residential accommodation.

'...it has proved very difficult to obtain bookings of adult colleges, whose Governors give precedence to 'in county' over 'out county' organisations and 'public' over 'private' courses'.

Sandford (1964 – 65, p. 184)

Sandford criticises the public course by suggesting that the short weekend course has little educational value. He raises an interesting question by

asking if the adult residential college should be linked formally to the structure of Further and Higher education in support of his case for more access to residential accommodation. He develops his argument further,

'Can regional technical colleges, lacking residential facilities of their own, expect any assistance from the adult residential colleges?'

Sandford (1964 – 65, p. 185)

His final suggestion is to suggest a national enquiry to remove ignorance which shrouds the 'stately mansions housing adult colleges'.

'Pending such an enquiry, some re-appraisal by the wardens and governors of residential colleges seems to be called for'.

Sandford (1964 – 65, p. 185)

## 6.5 Summary

Chapter 2 examined the evidence for the establishment of residential colleges from the 'living in residence' perspective. Was there a business perspective? The literature would suggest that in the case of county council owners the need for facilities to train emergency teachers can be identified. However if this were the case there appears to be little evidence that this training ever took place. The wardens quoted above and the extracts taken from the journal Adults Learning give no indication of this 'business'. Furthermore if one of the main reasons for purchasing a 'country mansion' was for this purpose it would only have lasted for a short period. Teacher training colleges were well established by the late '50s early '60s.

Leighton (1991, p.43) makes reference to the dramatic decline in short courses for teachers due to the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act which transferred a greater proportion of local authority funding to schools and colleges.

'One product of this has been the dramatic decline of centrally organised short courses for teachers, which was one of the primary functions of many residential colleges. This has resulted in a rapid decline in income from the mainly mid week use by in-service clients. Furthermore, the present economic recession has reduced the demand for in-service courses from a wide range of industrial, commercial and governmental organisations'.

Leighton (1991, p.43)

So it fell to the first wardens to determine the business model for their college. As has been shown some wardens built a model that was based on a false premise; that employers would release employees to undertake residential study for a number of months. It seems incredible today that the purchase of a 'mansion' could have been undertaken without in depth business research into what the college should be used for and perhaps more importantly how long term finance would be secured for the development of courses, secure and permanent employment for staff and the upkeep of a costly building. The wardens were left to their own devices and although there is evidence of an annual conference and 'useful' exchanges of administrative problems there seems to be very little cooperation between wardens

And yet over those years the short term residential college was, it is claimed, recognised in some quarters as having made a major contribution to



the education of adults. As has been shown it is not too difficult to find encouraging statements regarding the value of residential learning but extremely hard to find empirical evidence to support such statements.

'Major contributions to lifelong learning are also made by such bodies as the Workers' Education Association, Adult Residential Colleges and various independent foundations dedicated to promoting adult learning and especially to widening participation. Frequently they exercise a degree of influence and leadership quite disproportionate to their size, number and resources. They attract dedicated and highly skilled staff and demonstrate imagination and sensitivity in reaching out to, and working with, individuals and groups who would not otherwise have the confidence or opportunity to get involved in lifelong learning.

Fryer (1997, p. 76)

It would appear that the owners of many colleges did not have a clear statement of purpose and direction when they were first introduced. It also appears that little consideration was given to how they were to be financed and supported in the future. From the evidence of the Wardens conferences the issue of what business they were in and how to use the 'in the week' facilities was often discussed.

Over the past 10 years a number of colleges have closed and at the time of writing a number of colleges are under serious threat of closure. In order to propose a model for the future the evidence as to why these colleges have been closed will be examined.

## **Chapter 7. Recent Closures**

### **7.1 Introduction**

To understand why over 50% of short term residential colleges have closed since their introduction in the 1940s and to discover the reasons why this trend is continuing, it is useful to seek explanations for closures over the past 10 years or so in order to determine current attitudes toward residential education. In so doing it will be possible to compare these explanations with the thesis suggestion, that owners did not have, clarity of purpose, lacked strategic direction and did not support the college financially.

ARCA as an organisation has been involved in all recent closures and threats of closure. As part of its opposition to individual college closures, ARCA encouraged local MPs, in whose area the college was situated, to ask questions in the House of Commons and as a result achieved an Early Day Motion (EDM) that was presented to the House of Commons in October 2004 and signed by 70 MPs.

The Early Day Motion (2004) stated:

That this House recognises the important contribution of residential colleges for adult education in providing learning opportunities through short-stay courses for the general public across a broad curriculum in a unique learning environment in buildings of historic and community significance; congratulates the Adult Residential Colleges Association as a national organisation representing its members on providing over

2,500 residential courses per annum, for more than 40,000 learners, the majority of whom are over 50 years of age; and calls upon the Government to carry out a review of these establishments in order to evaluate the contribution these colleges make to lifelong learning'.

Humble, J. et al. (2004)

It is true to say that at the time there seemed to be political will to maintain the short term residential college as is shown by the following extract from Hansard. (28<sup>th</sup> October 2004)

### **'Adult Residential Colleges**

**15. Mr. David Kidney (Stafford) (Lab):** What assessment has he made of the contribution made by adult residential colleges to lifelong learning? [194106]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Skills (Mr. Ivan Lewis):** These colleges provide valuable opportunities for those who get

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pleasure and personal fulfillment from learning, particularly older people. The publicly funded provision of individual Adult Residential Colleges Association colleges has to be planned and agreed between the college and the local learning and skills councils. At a national level, discussions are taking place between ARCA and the Learning and Skills Council on the future position of the colleges.

**Mr. Kidney:** I share my hon. Friend's high regard for the colleges. Members of the Adult Residential Colleges Association tell me that they are very keen to contribute to the Government's agenda on lifelong learning. Commendably, they are concerned about their fees structure excluding some people who would wish to take part. Is he willing to

meet members of ARCA to discuss a national strategic approach to creating social inclusion in the work that they do?

**Mr. Lewis:** I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's effective advocacy on behalf of the colleges. I agree absolutely that there is a case for looking at them in a national context to recognise the contribution that they make to the lifelong learning agenda. I will be absolutely delighted to meet him and members of the association in the very near future'.

Kidney (2004)

Despite the encouraging remarks the decision whether to close a college or not rests finally with the owners of the college. For example county councils at the time of writing are under pressure from central government to balance their financial books and it is clear from the recent closures that all cost centres, including residential colleges are under close scrutiny.

ARCA has on many occasions sought to resolve the issue of funding by engaging with local and national politicians. ARCA has argued that short term residential colleges should be funded from the national purse as hinted at in the answer given by MP Mr Lewis (Kidney (2004) above. Short term residential colleges are situated across the country and the fact that they have residential accommodation enables learners to travel to locations, in some cases many miles from their homes. Indeed learners have argued that if they intend to spend several nights away from home they would prefer to travel to other locales and destinations. Local politicians however are very concerned with how many local people attend the residential college situated within their area. Many principals responsible for county council owned colleges have been asked by a local politician the question - should local rates support learners from outside the locality?

It would seem to be a forlorn hope that colleges will receive national funding. Funding from the national purse has over the past few years been directed toward vocational training, to adult basic education, and the provision to enable the reskilling of the workforce. Although a number of colleges have provided high quality courses for Adult Basic Education (ABE) the issue of securing funding for the residential element of the course has been problematic, with the consequence that these courses become unsustainable. If a short term college, is financially self supporting in every aspect of its operation, is able to sustain comfortable living accommodation, offers a high quality programme of residential courses and has developed a national reputation, the argument for closure is weakened. This study has examined in detail, by means of five case studies, the elements listed above and at the time of writing those colleges that are maintaining or increasing learner enrolments are not under threat of closure. The same cannot be said for those that are in financial difficulties.

## **7.2 College Closures**

To illustrate this point five recent closures, Maryland College, Bedfordshire (closed 2003), Grantley Hall, North Yorkshire (closed 2003), Wansfell College, Essex (closed 2004), The Hill College, Gwent Tertiary College (closed 2009), and Horncastle College, Lincolnshire (ceased residential courses 2009) will be considered. Reasons for the above closures will be examined as far as the available documentation will allow.

The closure of Wansfell College is very well documented and includes contributions from the local Labour Group, Epping Forest District Council, and the Educational Centres Association (ECA). An adjournment debate in the House of Commons instigated by the local MP, was held to discuss a proposal from Essex County Council advocating the closure of the College. Although the reasons for the closure of other colleges are not as detailed as those for Wansfell College the same theme runs through all the examples listed apart from Horncastle College. The reasons for the withdrawal of adult residential education from Horncastle College were not available at the time of writing.

#### **7.2.1 Wansfell College, Theydon Bois, Essex.**

The arguments for the closure of Wansfell College are set out in a paper debated by Essex County Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and presented by the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Libraries. It is important to state the reasons in full as many of the arguments are common to other closures and threats of closures that are being considered.

The reasons given for the closure of Wansfell College are as follows:

- 'Wansfell College has a long history and tradition of delivering residential adult education. It functions differently from all other adult community colleges, both in its users, the areas of learning it offers and the funding streams available to support it.
- The college has a deficit budget for the past three years and has been supported by funding which should have gone to other parts of the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Service.
- The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will not fund the residential element of ACL and this limits the subsidy available to

learners. It also means that the residential element has to be cross subsidised by other courses.

- The existing college building is not large enough to develop a significant residential programme. It also has limited teaching space.
- The building is currently underused for its main purpose, that of residential adult education, and requires a substantial amount of work in order to maintain the structure and bring the residential accommodation up to an acceptable standard.
- There is not enough funding or income generation to support the management and administration of the college. The business plan does not have firm plans to address the shortfall in the short term.
- The college is not able to monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively, due to the nature of the programme and large number of part-time tutors. This will have an adverse effect on any inspection of the ACL service.
- The county needs to review the use of all properties and the college is not being fully utilised at present.
- Over 60% of students are not from Essex'.

Keeling (2004)

Other arguments put forward by the County Council were that the LSC did not see the funding of residential colleges as a priority and that the sale of such an asset would make a small contribution to the County Council policy of saving £90M over the next three years. Also the savings made by not supporting the college financially would allow funding to be redistributed across the Essex County Council Adult Community Colleges.

The adjournment debate held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004, recorded in Hansard, is interesting in that the proponent of the debate, Eleanor Laing,

Conservative MP for Epping Forest, argued against the Essex County Council Conservative administration by opposing the proposed closure. The central theme of the argument, set out by Laing, was recognition of the 'buck' being passed from one department to another with responsibility being denied by all, apart from Essex County Council:

'Passing the buck is not a reasonable response to such a serious matter as the loss of this unique facility. Wansfell College is unique and it deserves to be treated as such. It has been ignored by everyone concerned: the Government, the Learning and Skills Council and Essex County Council. The fact that it is the only residential college of its kind in an enormous area of south east England has been ignored. There is no alternative; there will be nowhere else for people to go if Wansfell College closes'.

Laing, E. (2004)

Laing is misinformed that Wansfell College is the only college of its kind in the south east of England. Debden House, a short term residential college, owned by the London Borough of Newham, is just a few miles away.

The issue of the college operating at a deficit was attributed to a sudden and dramatic cut in funding which came without warning. Laing's argument regarding the use made of the college by learners from outside the authority she sees as a Government responsibility and therefore believes that funding should be made available by Central Government and not by the authority.

In reply Ivan Lewis, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Skills, acknowledges that Wansfell College had played an important part in the education of a wide range of people. He states:



'I must part company with the hon. Lady over her attempt to pass the buck and to deflect attention and responsibility for this matter from Essex County Council, which has made this decision. I did not make a judgement on whether that decision is right or wrong, but it has been made by Conservative controlled Essex County Council, which the Hon. Lady should surely have had more influence over as the local Member of Parliament'.

Laing, E. (2004)

The debate ran out of time and the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House. On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 'The Guardian' published an article describing the plight of Wansfell College. The arguments were reiterated as were the suspicions that the closure was more to do with the County Council's £90M budget deficit and how the building valued at, according to the author, £3M would go some way to addressing the problem:

'But in closing Wansfell, Essex is hastening a national decline in the number of residential adult education colleges, whose numbers have plummeted from 65 to 30 in the past 15 years. And it is a situation that looks set to get worse'.

Kosviner T (2004)

The supporters of Wansfell College mounted a spirited campaign involving learners, local residents, Governors, Friends of the College, the Local Labour Group and others:

'The Tory decision to close this college is totally unjustified and ignores massive local opinion. A consultation process on this issue was a sham

and to hear an ex-Tory County Councillor describe the actions of his Tory colleagues as “barbaric” sums up the situation better than any words of mine. The Labour Group totally opposed this decision and voted against it, but the Tory majority on the committee voted it through’.

Fegan C (March 2004)

Despite all the representations the college was closed at the end of August 2004 and the building offered for sale on the open market.

### **7.2.2 Grantley Hall, Ripon, Lincolnshire.**

Although the available literature is not as detailed as that for Wansfell College the reasons for closure are very similar. North Yorkshire County Council decided to sell Grantley Hall in 2003.

‘The County Council acquired Grantley Hall and 35 acres of grounds from the former West Riding County Council in 1974. For many years it was run successfully as the county’s main venue for the in-service training of teachers. With the emphasis on that programme changing, however, Grantley has struggled to establish new markets. The County Council doesn’t have enough money to invest in the development of facilities to provide such things as en suite accommodation. ...Councillor Jim Clark, the County Council’s executive member for lifelong learning, said “This is a matter of very considerable regret. We are very emotionally attached to Grantley Hall. Together with the governors we have tried everything in our power over the last few years to try to make it successful and therefore financially viable”. Grantley Hall will now be offered for sale on the open market.....’

North Yorkshire County Council Cabinet/Corporate Policy Committee (2001)

The County Council conducted a best value report and in the preamble to the report stated that the College operated on a self financing basis at no cost to the County Council. Since 1998 the College had eroded small accumulated balances to a position of a deficit of five thousand pounds. Of the yearly bookings residential adult education accounted for 12% and the current turnover, the report stated, was significantly less than other Residential Colleges of similar size. No indication was given, as to how this figure was arrived at and which colleges Grantley Hall was compared with. In the operations section of the report it was stated that there was a low bed occupancy rate of 30% and 35% of adult education courses were filled by people from outside North Yorkshire. There was little support from training organisations as more locally based residential courses with better facilities at competitive prices could be found.

Alternative approaches, other than closure and sale were considered by the best value group. The group reported that Grantley Hall would require significant short term investment to establish appropriate staffing levels and building improvements. Seeking shared ownership and developing a 'younger market' were considered as well as an 'arms length' arrangement from the County Council as a means of securing capital investment:

'The Best Value Group has concluded that a case cannot be made for the retention of Grantley Hall on the basis of it being the best venue for the County Council's Residential Adult Education and Staff Developments programmes'.

North Yorkshire County Council Cabinet/Corporate Policy Committee (2001)

Grantley Hall was sold on the open market.

### **7.2.3. The Hill, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.**

The Hill was owned and managed by Coleg Gwent, the largest Further Education College in Wales. The Hill, Abergavenny was one of six campuses in Newport, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent, and had a student population of 35,000:

'It said it had been forced to find savings of up to £3.5m because of a 7.43% cut for further education in Wales in 2009/10 and a standstill position the previous year'..... Measures to save money include the closure of The Hill Education and Conference Centre in Abergavenny at the beginning of September 2009'.

BBC News Channel (2009)

From the available literature it is not possible to determine the level of financial savings that would accrue from the sale of The Hill alone. The sale was seen as part of an overall package which included other measures such as the closure of some FE courses at Usk, Newport and Ebbw Vale campuses, the closure of both its Stepping Stones Nursery in Ebbw Vale and the Rhadyr Garden Centre. An assumption can be made is that if The Hill was operating at a financial surplus the decision to close would be perverse. The management of Coleg Gwent issued a statement to the press that the financial package would achieve savings of just over £1m in the next academic year (South East Wales News April 2009).

According to press reports Coleg Gwent management team was offered five alternatives to prevent closure of the The Hill but these alternatives were not discussed. One of the options was a bid from a charity to purchase The Hill:

'Trustee of Ty'r Morwydd Environmental Study Centre, Brian James, said "I'm able to confirm we did recently submit a bid to Coleg Gwent to purchase The Hill. Our bid was based on retaining and strengthening the present educational focus, but it also incorporated exploring the development of other exciting and innovative educational and cultural opportunities for the future benefit of local and regional communities"..

Free Press (2009)

The closure of The Hill is clearly a financial decision in order to be able to use the receipts to address the financial problems of Coleg Gwent Further Education College.

The Hill closed at the end of August 2009.

#### **7.2.4. Maryland College, Woburn, Bedfordshire.**

Owned and managed by Bedfordshire County Council. In 2001 the County Council and HBS, a privately owned group of equity investors, commenced a twelve year Strategic Service Delivery Partnership covering financial, information technology, human resources, school support services and contracts management. In June 2002 HBS, as a result of a review,

concluded that the college should be closed and that the adult education programme should be relocated by finding alternative venues:

'But the original plan was to retain and invest in Maryland to create "modern training facilities". HBS evidently thought that Maryland was an asset, which could be transformed into a national conference centre. So how did training provision undertake a complete policy reversal and where are the modern training facilities?'

UNISON Bedfordshire (2005, p.40)

The college closed in March 2003.

#### **7.2.5 Horncastle College, Horncastle, Lincolnshire.**

ARCA received a letter in July 2009 stating that Horncastle College would be ceasing residential courses at the end of 2010 and would therefore not be part of ARCA. The letter gave no reason but did say that the college would continue to provide day and evening courses.

An examination of the current course programme from October 2009 until March 2010 shows twenty-four day courses and three residential courses. (Lincolnshire County Council 2009)

### **7.3 Summary**

The reasons for the closure of the five colleges depicted above raise many questions. It is clear that the main reason explicitly or implicitly stated is that of finance. Apart from Horncastle College the statements; 'deficit budget', 'no funding to support management and administration', 'lack of income generation', 'not enough money to invest in the development of

facilities', 'measures to save money include the closure of the college', are themes running through the examples.

There are other reasons that require further explanation. For example, 'the college is not able to monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively, due to the nature of the programme and large number of part-time tutors'. Is this not the nature of all adult education services? Why has the residential programme and the part-time staffing arrangements of its tutors been selected for this particular comment?

What is not clear is which part of the business mix of these colleges was not financially sustainable. As has been shown and discussed in Chapter 4, some colleges offer programmes of residential education (open courses) mainly at weekends and sell 'in the week' provision to other training providers and organisations (closed courses). It may be that both open and closed courses were not financially viable or that either one was viable and the other not.

The owners of two colleges described above argue that one of the reasons for proposing closure was the number of students joining courses who were not residents in the county in which the college was situated. This view point has been discussed and is a familiar argument expressed by local politicians.

In terms of the arguments within this study, it is clear that the owners have decided not to invest in the college for which they are responsible. Indeed the reverse is true. Colleges are being sold for financial reasons either to invest financially in other projects, to remove a financial liability from the county council books, or simply to reduce county council deficits.

As was shown in the literature review, Maryland College was purchased for the purposes of teacher training and allowed to run, 'like topsy' until a picture emerged as to its future direction. Maryland College aspired to be a conference centre but even this suggestion was overturned suggesting the County Council was not at all clear as to the purpose of the college. Horncastle Residential College was suddenly changed from a residential college to a day course centre suggesting a lack of clarity of purpose. Wansfell College was clear in its purpose which was to deliver residential education of which it claimed 'had a long history and tradition', but this purpose was not recognised as important enough in the minds of local politicians to overcome the need to redress the County Council's financial deficit.

What is not in dispute is that after vigorous campaigns to keep colleges open the owners, in the above examples county councils, took the decision to close the colleges resulting in the loss of residential adult education.

As part of the argument for closure, learners in some cases were assured that the programme of adult education would be transferred to other parts of adult education the service. The monies saved from not servicing a deficit by the disposal of the college would be used to develop adult education in the area. This did not mean that the residential element would be safeguarded or developed. The residential element, in the above examples, has been lost forever.

Is the disappearance of the short term residential college inevitable? What has been shown is that there is validity in the thesis proposals that the



decline of the short term residential college due to a lack of clarity of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of strategic direction on the part of those who own these establishments despite clear evidence that studying in a residential setting enhances the quality of the learning experience. In the next chapter a model of good practice will be proposed, which if adopted, may provide an opportunity to secure the future of these unique establishments.

## **Chapter 8. Conclusion.**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Drews (1995) former Principal of Wansfell College, Epping, (closed in 2004) concludes his thesis with the following paragraph:

'It is my dream that within my lifetime the short term residential colleges will be populated almost entirely, by mature adult students who value residential learning for a variety of reasons, who come to learn liberal and cultural subjects for sheer pleasure and enjoyment and who, in doing so, create a cultural society at almost no expense to the public purse'.

Drews (1995, p.277)

The quantitative, qualitative and anecdotal evidence presented in this study would suggest that it is unlikely that Drews' dream will ever become a reality. He suggests that short term residential adult education has become an integral part of the adult educational provision in this country, a fact that may have had some validity in the 1950s, but sadly would be in doubt today. He claims that over the past fifty years the development of the short term residential college was almost unnoticed by researchers and educationalists, a point that this study would support

It is the aim of this thesis to explore the factors that may have contributed to the current situation and to suggest a model of practice that might provide a secure future for a provision that appears through time to be recognised educationally and to be socially important.

The fact that the number of short term colleges in England and Wales being in decline cannot be disputed. As has been shown in Chapter 2 since the 1950s 52% of colleges have closed with the majority being those owned by county councils. During the period of this study, two County Council colleges have closed and at least three colleges have an uncertain future. This study was written during a period of the worst economic climate this country has experienced since the end of the Second World War and as a means of reducing the national and local debt county councils are being encouraged to dispose of capital assets. Once again the county council residential college will be looking toward the future with trepidation. It is not surprising that during this research there was no evidence to suggest that any county council, or indeed any other organisation in this country, was intending to open a short term residential college.

If a county council is determined to reduce a financial deficit by disposing of its residential college, even if the college is financially sound and has a clear purpose and future direction, it is difficult to see how a sale can be halted, especially if the county council is looking toward a one off receipt. If the college is in financial difficulties the arguments against closure will be considerably weakened. A number of colleges facing the threat of closure have organised campaigns to resist the decision to close being made. In a number of cases threat of closure has not been withdrawn but temporarily halted for political rethinking.

Chapter 2 established that there were a number of authors who were enthusiastic about the value of a residential learning experience. Grundvig, Livingstone, Russell, Bron Field and Drews are examples of those through

time advocating a residential learning experience. They expounded a clear purpose for the 'new' residential college. How to convert a clear purpose into a clear direction which is financially sustainable is, as has been seen throughout this study, much more problematic.

In order to gain an understanding of the 'business' of residential colleges, five colleges were selected each with a different managerial structure and ownership. The methodology adopted was discussed in Chapter 3. A case study approach using qualitative and quantitative data collected over a two year period was used to research the business position of the colleges being studied.

The study sought to address the question of why some colleges were increasing the level of business in terms of learner enrolments whilst others were in business decline. It was hoped that the analysis would reveal the reasons for variable success and to generate a model of sustainable provision based on good practice.

The following sections summarise the business performance of the five case studies.

## 8.2 Summary of the business mix of the five case studies

*Table 8.2.1: The business mix of the five case studies*

Case	Organisation	Open Courses	Closed Courses
1	County Council	✓	✓
2	County Council	✓	✓
3	Trust	✓	Very few
4	County Council ACL	✓	N/A
5	Trust	✓	Very few

The quantitative data collected, evidenced clearly whether enrolments were in decline or increasing for the various elements (see table 8.2.1) of the business and the Principals and Managers offer reasons why this should be so.

The financial detail of those colleges owned by county councils was not available and whether or not the colleges are financially breaking even, in surplus or in deficit is not shown in the data collection. This information was deemed to be commercially sensitive and Principals and Managers were reluctant to supply the information. Furthermore, depending on how the terms 'breaking even', 'in surplus' or 'in deficit' are understood and interpreted could lead to an inaccurate assessment of their financial position. For example one County Council owned college interpreted 'breaking even' as 'above the line'

income matched against expenditure for the college operation whilst another County Council owned college interpreted 'breaking even' as 'above the line' and 'below the line' income matched against expenditure. In this case central services expenditure such as Human Resources, IT, Payroll were taken into account and a financial contribution expected from the college. Those colleges that are charitable organisations are obliged to declare annual accounts to the Charity Commission and financial reports are therefore in the public domain.

### **8.3 Summary of the business performance of the five case study colleges**

#### **8.3.1 Case Study 1: County Council owned College.**

As is shown in Table 8.2.1 the college offers Open and Closed courses.

##### **Open Courses**

The number of learners attending residential open courses either as residents or non residents is in decline although it is true to say that small alterations in programme planning may have slowed the rate of decline. The evaluation of learner opinions conducted by the college indicates a high level of satisfaction with the quality of courses and of the accommodation. It is also clear that accommodation for adult residential courses is underused. The Principal felt that the decline in business was due to the ever increasing cost of a course although during the period of the research there was only a small increase in residential course fees and a similar small fee increase in

day courses. He cited a significant increase in fees prior to the start of this research with the consequent downturn in enrolments taking effect at the beginning of the research. This statement cannot be verified due to insufficient data.

There are other factors affecting the business position that should be taken into account. The college offers a 'generalist' curriculum with a weighting toward arts and crafts with no formal qualifications. Is the curriculum fit for purpose? The Principal indicated that no change to the criteria used for designing a programme had taken place between 2005 to 2008 and over the same period the number of courses cancelled doubled year on year although the number published increased very slightly. The average number of students per course was broadly the same making comparisons valid.

Another indicator of college business is the number of learners participating in adult education whether residential, non residential or day courses. The data shows an overall decline in participation. What is also clear is that although residential enrolments look fairly static, bed occupancy is declining significantly. The shorter residential course strategy is clearly evident but resulting in lower income and difficulty in selling Friday evenings.

The financial position of the college is precarious in that a subsidy is received through the County Council with no guarantee that this will continue after the end of 2010. The college also receives County Council funding to maintain the exterior of the building and assistance toward the major interior costs. For example funding has recently been received to repair the roof of the building and for rewiring the electrical installation.

## **Closed Courses**

The total number of beds occupied is in decline but the number of day course enrolments is increasing. This confirms the Principal's statements that outside organisations are choosing to use the college as a day conference facility rather than a residential facility.

An examination of the 24hr charges made by local hotels for conference facilities showed a range from £85.00 to £160.00. The college rate is £70.00 for the same period. It is difficult to make a direct comparison as the college offers a different product such as a set evening meal at prescribed times. The local hotels offer 'a la carte' menus and although the college bedroom accommodation is good, hotels offer televisions, Wi Fi connection in bedrooms and extensive leisure facilities.

The College is owned by a Local Authority and the authority has over the past few years made a modest investment in the college infrastructure: The financial problem the college is facing is the withdrawal of financial support from the LSC. The college business operation is in deficit and it is difficult to see, given the research data, how this college will manage financially without a radical rethink of its business components. The purpose of the college is to offer residential adult education courses which is in serious decline.

The strategic direction is not at all clear. If the college is failing in its purpose there is no evidence that the Local Authority is taking steps to redress the position.



### 8.3.2 Case Study 2: County Council owned College.

As is shown in Table 8.2.1 the college offers Open and Closed courses.

#### Open Courses

The number of learners attending a residential adult education course and who are in residence is declining although there are indications that this trend may be slowing. The number of enrolments for residential courses has increased slightly indicating, and supported by the evidence, that learners enrolled on a residential course are deciding not to stay in the college but prefer to stay overnight locally or are travelling home, a fact supported by the data shown in Table 4.2.13. The number of bedrooms occupied over the research period supports this fact and indicates surplus bedroom capacity. The nature of the open course is changing from a residential to a non residential experience. The number of day course enrolments has increased. The number of learners enrolling on adult education courses including residential, non residential and day courses has increased over the research period by 10%.

The programme of courses is wide ranging and generalist in nature, a matter of pride for the Principal. He also maintained that the college programme is driven by educational priorities and not solely by financial priorities. Just over half the number of courses fall within the Arts and Crafts category with the other half evenly spread over a wide range of subjects. The number of courses published has remained static but the number of courses

cancelled has increased. This suggests more learners per course which is supported by the data in Table 4.2.12.

The charge levied for residential courses and day courses has increased by 10% over the research period but in terms of the ARCA network this college is one of the more expensive. To illustrate this, the Principal explained that the nearest competitor was an ARCA college that is part funded by a County Council resulting in lower charges for the same course taught by the same tutor. It may be assumed that due to poor accommodation, learners would feel that residential courses do not represent good value for money.

The Principal must be congratulated for his strategies to overcome the difficulties described. Matching day courses with residential courses, shorter residential courses, stand alone evening lectures that serve as the introductory first session of a weekend course but allow other learners to attend the session, have been a particular success. Nevertheless, and the Principal would be the first to agree, these strategies are only 'tinkering at the edges' and cannot hope to overcome the serious lack of investment in the college.

However the Principal has succeeded in securing ring fenced funding to maximise the use of outside buildings that otherwise would have fallen into disrepair and to make the most of the attractive site. A very small number (4) of ARCA colleges have also developed outside buildings for similar purposes although it must be said that this college has taken its development to a much higher level. Studios and workshops are occupied by artists practising and demonstrating crafts such as ceramics, mixed media, stained glass,

woodcarving, sculpting and painting. The Principal, demonstrating a range of entrepreneurial skills that many managers and principals have had to develop over recent years, secured funding from the Regional Development Agency and Heritage Lottery Fund. Experience has shown that encouraging people interested in local crafts to attend the workshops has increased the number of people joining courses particularly if residential courses are linked to a particular craft. The site also includes a coffee shop, art gallery and an internet facility.

### **Closed Courses**

The number of beds occupied over the research period has decreased by a quarter and the number of day course bookings by a half. The Principal asserted that the only reason for this situation was the very serious lack of investment in the college resulting in accommodation which is well below the standard expected in the conference market.

The financial position of the college is precarious. The college has an accumulating year on year deficit. The college is tasked to operate on a 'cost recovery' basis and, given the data interpretation, is unlikely to achieve such a position in the near future.

It emerged from the interview with the Principal that it is very unlikely that the owners, a City Council, will invest in the college. The options are stark, closure of the college and the sale of building or a partnership with another organisation. As has been described in Chapter 4, the second option is under consideration by the City Council but negotiations have been

ongoing for almost six years without, at the time of writing, any resolution in sight.

The uncertain future of the college has, as might be expected, impacted on all the staff in the college. Morale is low and although every attempt is made to put on a 'brave face' when communicating with learners the atmosphere is not conducive to projecting an image of a college with a positive future.

An examination of the 24hr charges made by local hotels for conference facilities showed a range from £75.00 to £125.00. The college rate is £75.00 for 24hrs.

It is clear that in this case the owners have not invested financially in the college. Any investment has been sought by the Principal and has resulted in improvements to the outside building and grounds.

At the time of writing the owners are questioning the purpose and future direction of the college and have charged the Principal with suggesting alternative strategies for the future direction.

### **8.3.3 Case Study 3: The college is a Charitable Organisation.**

As is shown in Table 8.2.1 the college offers specialist Open courses and a very small number of closed courses.

#### **Open Courses**

The college opens for 94% of the year offering courses in a specialist subject area. Over the period studied the college has maintained its level of bed occupancy with a very small decrease in residential enrolments due to a

number of longer courses being added to the programme. The college has bed and bedroom capacity apart from en-suite bedrooms which are full at all times. The college has 30% of bedrooms with en-suite facilities. During the period of this study alterations were being made to add another five en suite bedrooms to the accommodation. With improved accommodation it was hoped that non residential learners would be encouraged to become residents. The number of non residential learners has increased significantly over the period studied due, the Chief Executive thought, to the improved marketing campaign. The number of residential courses published over the period of this study increased by 15% and the number cancelled by only 2%, a remarkable figure considering the complexities of viable course numbers, demonstrating the accurate and targeted marketing of specialist courses. Another impressive figure is the average number of learners per course which is well above the average of twelve learners. The nature of the specialist subject allows on occasion between thirty and forty learners on one course.

The Chief Executive with the support of Trustees has maintained a policy of increasing fees every year but at a level comparable with or lower than inflation. The aim is to increase fees by around 2% per annum and the data would indicate that this policy has been adhered to. The Trustees are considering applying a differential rate to reflect the true cost of an individual course for example if the course requires two tutors.

Undoubtedly one of the most important developments that took place before the collection of data for this study was a successful lottery bid by the Trustees and management of some £1.1 million that was used to develop the

college site with the addition of specialist rooms and a small number of en suite bedrooms. The conditions of the bid included some additional art courses. This has resulted in an increase in the college programme with a resultant increase in revenue.

### **Closed Courses**

Closed courses are not a major feature of the business mix of this college. In fact approximately only 10% of the business is concerned with residential closed courses. Closed day courses are at a similar level of participation.

The college runs at a very small operating deficit. This deficit is covered by bequests and donations which results in a small annual surplus.

The owners, a charitable organisation, have successfully sought substantial investment for the college. This has resulted in improved teaching and accommodation facilities. The seeking of further financial support is ongoing and the college owners have a clear direction for the development of the college infrastructure and the specialist courses offered. The college has clearly defined purposes that are detailed in the objects of the charity and publically available from the Charity Commission.

### **8.3.4 Case Study 4: County Council ACL Department**

As is shown in Table 8.2.1 the college offers Open courses only. As explained in Chapter 4 adult residential education is delivered in a management development centre owned by a local university.

## Open Courses

The programme mix of residential courses could almost be classified as specialist as approximately 75% of subjects fall in the arts and crafts category with approximately 25% of those subjects accredited. 25% of subjects are typical of adult education courses the detail of which can be seen in Table 4.4.1. This college is markedly different from all other cases in that the staff, employed by the County Council, have no input or involvement in the residential aspect of courses such as accommodation and meal arrangements.

Overall there was a decline in bed occupancy but in the second half of the study this decline was reduced and was reflected almost exactly in the number of residential enrolments. The slowing down of the reduction was due, the Manager felt, to an increase in advertising which was bearing fruit particularly in the 2008 – 2009 period which is outside this study. She also pointed out that historically fees have been increased by around 3% but during the period studied fees have been increased by approximately 10% and therefore the level of enrolments was considered to be good and a matter of relief among the management team. There is some capacity in bedroom provision. Day course enrolments have reduced overall only slightly and again the reasons given were by and large the same as for residential enrolments.

The number of courses published has increased and the number of courses taking place increased by the same percentage. Additional courses have been possible due to other venues being available especially during the summer school period. At the end of the study period the increase in courses

has not delivered a subsequent increase in enrolments. This fact was not entirely unexpected by the management team as experience would suggest that it takes at least one year for changes to be accepted by potential learners. The number of cancellations has been static over the study period at a level of approximately 25%. This translates to 328 courses cancelled. The average number of learners per course has reduced to approximately ten from a high of fourteen and confirms the Curriculum Manager's statement that to enable courses to take place, especially new courses, a lower number of learners per courses was inevitable.

The fee charged to students has risen quite steeply over the period of the study, namely by 18%, whilst day course charges over the same period increased by 35%. This is due to the college being required to operate on a 'full cost financial recovery' financial basis. Unlike other colleges studied the management team have no input into fee levels other than the Curriculum Manager being asked for her opinion as to what effect the new levels may have. The effect during the period of this study has been to increase the number of non residential enrolments by approximately 60%.

The curriculum offered by the college is again somewhat different from other colleges in the research. There is a weighting toward art and craft, which is not unusual, but a significant number of those courses attract accreditation which has an impact on the level of business. Learners are committed to a number of linked weekends and although a number of learners will 'drop out' the majority will complete their studies to certification. The Curriculum Manager was quite forthright in her attitude that the driving force behind devising the programme of courses was mainly financial and



unlike other college programmes it was irrelevant if the learner was resident or not.

### **Closed Courses**

As a management development centre the college offers its residential accommodation and teaching facilities to a wide variety of training organisations and is licensed for weddings. This business is managed and organised by the owners of the college, a new university. The management of the adult education provision is completely separate and is a significant part of the business mix of the management centre.

As has been shown the college is different in management structure and ownership from all other ARCA colleges. The authority does not own the college but instead contracts with the owners, a university, to provide residential facilities for the purpose of residential adult education. In terms of investment the authority has provided finance to improve some of the teaching facilities.

As part of the LA adult education provision the college has a clear purpose and a strategic direction.

### **8.3.5 Case Study 5: The college is a Charitable Organisation**

As is shown in Table 8.2.1 the college offers open courses and a very small number of closed courses.

#### **Open courses**

This college is a specialist one in that it has a clearly defined market by being part of a national organisation. The college offers adult residential

courses to the members of the national organisation. Members support the college, for example by providing financial support to improve the fabric of the building.

Open courses are offered throughout the week and most weekends throughout the year.

A wide variety of adult residential courses form the annual programme of this college. Crafts are a significant part of the programme with some 40% in this area, the other 60% being divided between nine other subject areas. The management team endeavours to keep the programme 'fresh' but at the same time recognises that there is a demand for the well established traditional course. The programme is driven by educational criteria and not purely by financial criteria.

At the time of writing the number of en suite bedrooms was being increased. There was very little available bedroom capacity; in fact the figures would suggest that the college is, for all practical purposes, full throughout the year.

This fact is supported by the bed occupancy figures and the residential enrolment figures. The Principal explained the healthy enrolment figures as the result of a sustained and improved publicity campaign that increased awareness of the college amongst the members of the national organisation. As a result the only area for expansion in adult education is in the provision of day courses which has become extremely significant. To cope with the expected increase in the number of 'day' learners a major building programme is underway with extra teaching rooms and a new all purpose lecture theatre. The number of residential courses published increased over

the study period and the number of courses taking place also increased with a declining number of cancellations. The Principal explained that better targeting and being more responsive to learner demands was the main reason. Also being prepared to introduce 'filler' courses at relatively short notice had maintained learner numbers. Consequently the number of learners undertaking an adult education course, including residential and day courses, has increased over the study period. To increase the number of residential courses whilst being constrained by the lack of bedroom capacity, the number of learners per course has been reduced. This is clearly evident in table 4.5.12. The fee rate for a residential course has increased overall by some 17%, but this does not seem to have deterred enrollees. The cost of a day course has been reduced which might go some way to explaining the explosion in day course enrolments. Some learners have access to bursaries and some financial assistance from local groups which are part of the national organisation structure.

The college operates on a full cost recovery basis.

### **Closed Courses**

There are no closed courses offered to outside organisations of the type seen in the other case studies. The national organisation of which the college is a part uses the college occasionally for internal meetings and conferences.

The owners, a charitable organisation, have invested in the college since it was opened. This has resulted in a continual improvement in the teaching and accommodation facilities. The college owners, a national

organisation, have a clear direction for the development of the college and a wide variety of courses on offer. The college has a clearly defined purpose which is detailed in the objects of the charity and is publically available from the Charity Commission.

## **8.4 The quality of the learning experience**

It would appear from the evidence that the experience and opinion regarding the quality and value of studying in residence resulting from the discussions held with active learners, has not altered to any significant extent over the past 60 years. Admittedly there is little substantive evidence from learners participating in the first residential courses, only anecdotal evidence from Wardens and Managers at the time. However the work undertaken by Drews (1995) and others would suggest that studying in residence enhances the quality of the learning experience, an opinion supported by active learners who were members of the focus groups.

## **8.5 A good practice model for the future**

Over the past 60 years Hunter (1952), Harris-Worthington (1987), Leighton, (1991), Drews (1995), and others have addressed the issue of what business model the short term residential college should be developing. They all agree that residential adult education is one main element but differ on what else should be in the business mix. Leighton (1991) summarises the position well:

'The first step in appraising the potential of a residential college is the preparation of a business plan. Since colleges are no longer able to depend on subsidies from LEAs, and could well become an activity of leisure departments, every aspect of college life needs to be examined and costed to see whether its contributions to overheads is satisfactory. It will reveal what activities provide the greatest income and this knowledge needs to be compared with the college's primary purposes. It will also demonstrate what needs to be done to bring about a nil net budget position'.

Leighton, (1991, p.45)

Leighton is proposing that colleges should have a clear demonstrable purpose, a statement that the results of this research support.

#### **8.5.1 What are the components of the residential business?**

Open courses, closed courses, specialist courses, vocational courses, hobbies courses, leisure courses, accredited courses, personal development courses, skills courses and family learning courses held in a residential setting are just a selection of those that have been suggested in this study. It is for the owners to decide what business the residential college is in giving regard to its purpose and bearing in mind what the particular college can offer to the potential learner.

#### **8.5.2 A unique selling point (USP)**

The evidence from the case studies suggests that those colleges that have developed a USP are experiencing growth in their business. All

colleges have one thing in common – they offer residential courses, but those that have developed a nationally known USP would seem to be better placed financially. The managers of two of the colleges studied have developed an expertise in a particular subject area while a third has developed a particular market.

For those colleges offering a generalist curriculum the evidence would suggest there is a need for change. It is suggested that by focussing on one aspect of the curriculum, and becoming nationally known as a college offering advanced high quality courses in that subject area, learners would be prepared to travel to avail themselves of the particular course. This is not to say that the generalist curriculum would be abandoned just that a particular aspect of the curriculum would be developed and promoted.

Alternatively colleges seeking partnerships with a particular market or organisation might also bring benefits in terms of enrolments. A good example would be the Ford Motor Company Employee Development and Assistance Programme (EDAP) scheme where employees were encouraged to take part in learning that is not directly job related and where the company funded the course. Other large organisations have similar schemes and the opportunity for residential courses could be offered to the scheme membership..

Many national organisations have signed up to a Department of Work and Pensions initiative, AgePositive, promoting the benefits of employing the older person. Updating the skills of the older employee may provide opportunities for the residential college by entering into a partnership arrangement with local or national businesses.

### 8.5.3 The residential learner

Evidence from the interviews with college management together with evidence from the learner's focus groups confirms that the typical learner would be 50+ years of age and female. An interesting question would be to discover the reasons as to why this is so. The obvious answer, for which there is some evidence, is that women live longer than men, have disposable income, are ethnically white and are catching up on their education because of lack of opportunity at an earlier age. Evidence from the focus groups pointed clearly to the fact that women found the residential college a safe learning environment where one could enrol on a course on one's own. A non threatening environment was a common comment. As has been stated in Chapter 5 the focus groups were formed in all five colleges at a time when learners were undertaking a residential course. The gender and ethnic makeup of the combined groups was 7% male, 93% female and all ethnically white. Winterton and Winterton (2002, p. 36) evaluating a project on widening participation in residential colleges analysed a population of 427 learners and reported 69% female and 31% male with 12% coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Is this situation self perpetuating? Colleges will be aware of the gender mix and ethnic mix of the learner population. Are courses designed to fit the profile described and therefore will attract more females than males? Are courses designed to appeal to the white female and are they likely to only attract white female learners? These are questions that are beyond the scope of this research but worth reflecting on. They are questions that are extremely difficult to resolve. Are colleges able to experiment by altering their

curricula when they are under intense pressure to keep bed occupancy and thereby maximise income at the highest possible level throughout the year?

#### **8.5.4 Demography**

Related to the profile of the residential learner are the results of an authoritative paper, McNair (2007), supporting the NIACE Commission of Inquiry into a strategy for lifelong learning. In looking forward to the next two or three decades, McNair postulates a growing number of people economically inactive mainly through retirement. He suggests that it is virtually certain that we will see:

- 'Growing numbers of 'young old people' mainly aged 50 to 75, most of whom will be in good health and still economically active:
- Growing numbers of 'old old' people mainly aged 75 to 100, many potentially active, but dependent on others for some aspects of daily life:
- Shrinking numbers of young people entering the labour market:
- A growing proportion of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds'

McNair (2007, p. 8)

He develops his observations by advocating a need for adult learning due to a growth in potential learners mainly from active people in the 'third age' and from dependent old people. He also includes other sections of the community



and in particular highlights those people making career changes in middle or later life.

Leighton (1991) some 16 years earlier also makes a prophetic statement relating to the future demographic patterns of our society;

'Demographic changes in society and politicisation of previously undervalued groups, particularly the increasing population of retired people, could lead to a voice for adult education, and residential work especially, which will have some influence'.

Leighton (1991, p.46)

From discussions with Principals and Managers, there has been a desire to extend the curriculum to attract a younger section of the population. The adult residential colleges have developed a curriculum and an expertise in courses for the older learner. Why change what is already established and will answer the learning demands and requirements suggested by McNair? Why not extend the curriculum for the older learner to include a wider population reflecting the aging and ethnic diversity of our society.

#### **8.5.5 Open courses, Closed courses or a mix of both?**

The *raison d'être* of the short term residential college is to provide adult education courses accessible to the adult population. The case studies differ in what they offer from one concerned with a totally specialist curriculum and no closed courses, two delivering a generalist curriculum with closed courses, one delivering specialist and generalist and no closed courses, and one delivering generalist to a pre-defined adult education

market and no closed courses. Two colleges organise and deliver a variation on the closed course. These courses are designed, and in most cases taught, by college part time tutors for a particular organisation. An example of this type of course was highlighted in Case 1 where the college entered into a contract with a County Council department to design and deliver a residential course in family learning. Parents and children enrolled on the course had been identified by the authority's ACL service and not available to the general public.

One of the most difficult decisions a Principal has to make is regarding the course mix. If the college offers closed courses how many days should be reserved for these courses and at what time in the year? Should all holiday periods be used for open courses? As has been shown in the early days of residential college development this was an acute problem:

'Their central problem, baldly stated, has been to find students from Monday to Friday or go bankrupt. The answer is a short one. Some, industrialist, local authority, government department, must be found willing to release staff for a week or fortnight and to pay their wages... These are courses by vocation; from them many of the colleges make their bread and butter; thanks to them, they are enabled to run weekends on modern poetry or ancient Greece'.

Hunter (1952 – 53. p.8)

The decision whether or not to offer closed courses can only be made by the management of the college under direction of the the owners which in most cases is a county council. If the college is a charitable organisation the Trustees would have to adhere to the charities objects. The main difficulty is that since the 1950s closed courses have been attracted to the modern hotel

with dedicated conference facilities. The residential conference market has over the years become very sophisticated and run by managers trained in the product. As has been seen, conference hotels offer a range of products with many 'extras' at very competitive prices. Closed day courses are an option but once again can space be reserved and if so at what cost? As discussed, the demographic changes that will take place determine that there will be more and more retired people over the next decades. Should the managers of the short term colleges consider increasing the number of residential open courses to occupy mid week days to be available to those not in paid employment?

#### **8.5.5 The Health Agenda**

There is evidence that to keep healthy in later life it is important to be mentally active. The following statements can be found on the Government's website extolling the virtues of staying mentally active:

- 'To maintain your overall well-being, it's important to keep yourself mentally as well as physically fit. It'll make you feel better, improve your brain power and help you to stay independent for longer.
- Studies show that mental decline is not an inevitable part of ageing. People who lead intellectually stimulating lives are more likely to be free of dementia conditions like Alzheimer's disease. It is possible to keep your brain in shape and to cope with changes in your mental ability.
- There's some truth in the saying 'Use it or lose it'. It's a question of keeping your mind in trim to retain your mental abilities'.

Directgov (2009)

The same advice can be found on the many charitable organisations' websites. For example Help the Aged give advice and help to those looking at how to use their time when retired. Part of that advice is to look for courses and activities under a Lifelong Learning section that has as its main sections, informal learning, how to find a course, course providers, higher education and funding. What is interesting is that residential courses are mentioned.

'Hillcroft College is a residential college with the aim of helping women who may have previously faced educational or social disadvantage to progress into higher education or vocational training. It offers free or low cost residential courses to women in a supportive environment, at various levels. Courses include basic skills such as literacy and numeracy; assertiveness and confidence building courses; creative writing; courses for carers; and courses in English if this is not your first language.

The college also runs courses designed specifically for women over age 55, either as an introduction to learning and an opportunity to build on and develop new skills such as reading or computer skills; or an opportunity to carry out a research project in an area of particular interest'.

Age Concern (2007)

Hillcroft college is a long term residential college and the courses mentioned above are either free or a small nominal charge of £15.00 per learner is levied. It must be assumed that Hillcroft has secured external funding.

Should not the short term residential college be seeking external funding to offer similar courses for which it has developed the expertise? The short term residential colleges have experience in securing Government funding for a one off project in widening participation in learning through adult

residential provision. At the time (2002) securing funding for further projects proved unsuccessful even though an evaluation of the 'widening participation' project recommended continuation. Perhaps the time has come again, given the Government's health agenda, for a renewed campaign.

'Being in residence allowed students to 'get to know one another'; it was a 'bonding experience, a sharing of thoughts and ideas and feelings you wouldn't express on day courses'. Friendships were formed which they thought 'would survive the transition back into the community'.

Winterton and Winterton (2002, p. 61)

### **8.5.7 Cooperation and Collaboration**

Throughout this study, mention has been made of the long term colleges primarily to contextualise the development historically of residential education in England and Wales. The Russell Report (1973) drew a clear distinction between the long and short term tradition. The position is confused. Woodbrooke College, one of the first long term colleges is a member of ARCA and at the present time offers many short term courses. At the time of writing the same could be said of other long term colleges for example Ruskin College, Fircroft College, Newbattle Abbey College and The Northern College. Hampton and Ball (2004) describe the importance of short courses when describing the work undertaken at The Northern College.

'From its inception, the ethos of the Northern College has been different from other residential colleges. The existing colleges are mainly concerned with full time courses of one or two years duration, which lead to academic diplomas that often provide access to university

degree courses. While about half the residential spaces in the Northern College are reserved for learners studying for a diploma, the remainder are allocated to learners who come for shorter courses lasting for a few days or weeks'

Hampton and Ball (2004, p.3)

Examining the annual prospectus of the long term colleges listed above it would appear that a number of long term colleges are now promoting short residential courses. As ARCA colleges are in broadly the same business perhaps there could be mutual benefit in working together for the benefit of the learner. Fieldhouse (1998) assesses the contribution of the long term and short term colleges accurately by stating:

'The long term residential colleges have been more successful than many forms of adult education in the twentieth century in attracting working class or underprivileged students, but they remain an expensive mode of adult education with an uncertain future.

The short term residential colleges, which very largely grew up after the Second World War, also face an uncertain future (those that have not already closed). They always existed on a financial knife edge, but their position has been rendered more precarious with the emasculation of the LEAs, many are no longer in a position to continue their support.'

(p.396)

Differences in management structure, accommodation and funding would bring diversity that may strengthen both modes of delivery. Surely

exploratory discussions would be advantageous in sharing ideas in how to secure residential education for the future and may bring opportunities for learner progression into longer courses of study.

Sandford (1964-65) quoted in the Literature Review made a heartfelt plea for co operation between the FE sector and the short term residential colleges in the effective delivery of sandwich courses. Thompson (1972) suggests that an 'excellent way of rounding off a successful year's study is to organise a week-end at a residential college' (p. 3) He describes an association between Grantley Hall Residential College and Swarthmore Education Centre, Leeds, that took place at the end of the centre's sessional class teaching which he claimed was beneficial to the students learning activities. He concludes;

'More of this kind of co-operation between adult education centres and residential colleges should be arranged as it can do nothing but enhance the service provided by each type of establishment.'

Thompson (1972, p. 3)

A suggestion worthy of further exploration as all residential colleges are situated in areas that will have other adult education providers.

## **8.6 The Charitable Organisation**

This thesis has argued that the quantitative and qualitative evidence, and the literature review, points to a number of reasons for the decline in the numbers of short term colleges in England and Wales. The reasons are a lack of clarity of purpose, little or no investment and an apparent lack of

strategic direction. As has been shown these arguments, in the main, apply to those colleges that are not charitable organisations. It is not surprising that the charitable organisation has, as directed by the Charity Commission, a clarity of purpose, and a strategic direction. Another strength of the charitable organisation is that it is obliged to have a number of trustees whose sole purpose is to:

‘...serve on the governing body of a charity. They may be known as trustees, directors, board members, governors or committee members. The principles and main duties are the same in all cases. Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up’.

#### Trustees and their responsibilities (2010)

The charity is required to use any profit or surplus only for the organisation's purpose. Neither can it be part of any governing body, local authority or other statutory body. The Charity Commission provides a list of what are considered to be charitable purposes of which the following is a small selection.

- ‘The advancement of education
- The advancement of citizenship or community development
- The advancement of arts, culture, heritage or science.
- The relief of those in need, by reason of youths, aged, ill health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage’

#### Charitable Organisation – definition (2010)



## 8.7 Summary – The Future

This research has demonstrated from the literature review, the five case studies and information gained from other sources such as the ARCA archives, that the short term residential college has over the last sixty years had a chequered history. The future, as has been discussed, looks no more certain today than it did sixty years ago, particularly for those colleges owned by county councils. Is there a way forward to ensure that these unique residential colleges can play a significant part in this country's adult educational future? If the owners, be they a charitable educational organisation, a private owner or a county council decide to dispose of the college then the only arguments that may dissuade them from this course of action would be to reiterate the value of residential adult education and to demonstrate that the college is financially viable.

When the majority of short term colleges were set up in the 1940s to 1950s the literature suggests that there was no common purpose other than learners would be in residence. Some colleges set out clearly what their purpose was and what they hoped to achieve while others had little or no declared purpose or even future direction. What is significant however is that there is very little evidence, if any, to suggest any financial arrangements or financial planning being considered to secure the future of the college. The financial dilemma that short term colleges face today may be attributed to this lack of financial clarity. The consequence as has been shown, is the steady decline over the past 60 years in the number of surviving colleges. It is to the credit of college management, through developing sophisticated

entrepreneurial skills the short term college is still part of the adult education landscape in this country.

The focus groups clearly demonstrated that for them residential study was a quality experience adding value to the learning journey. Linked to the learning experience is the standard of accommodation and as has been shown, if the accommodation falls below the expectations of today's learner residential enrolments will decline. One exception to this generalisation is the specialist college offering advanced courses. In this case some learners are prepared to accept poor accommodation in order to partake in the course of their choice

It is clear that the short term residential college must have a clear purpose and direction shared with all those involved in the college including county council responsible officers and the trustees of those colleges that are Charitable Organisations. A model would be the 'Objects' a charitable organisation must present to the Charity Commission and which, most importantly, is available to the general public. Furthermore the organisation will have a number of dedicated trustees appointed to oversee the business of the college and support the future direction of travel. This level of participation is not always enjoyed by the county council owned colleges. During the period of this research one County Council ARCA college has undertaken a management buy-out and is now an independent charitable organisation. Although it is early days in its new form the management are reporting increased adult education enrolments. This college is gradually moving from a mixed business model to a business that offers adult education throughout the week, every week of the year.

The case studies indicate that the conference market is very sophisticated and the residential college cannot offer a comparable product. There will be very few exceptions within the ARCA network but the evidence suggests that moving to a position of residential courses throughout the week with a specialism in a particular subject area would be a model worth serious consideration. Furthermore, and accepting that logistically it would be difficult, cooperation between ARCA colleges in curriculum development may have advantages. For example, more advanced courses concentrated on one college would overcome the problem of a small number of learners enrolling at a number of different colleges, with the result that no course is viable.

A number of ARCA colleges have succeeded in securing external funding for supporting particular community groups and this initiative should be encouraged and continued. Without targeted funding it is inevitable that residential learners will be those who have a level of disposable income excluding many others who would benefit from the residential learning experience. A NIACE discussion paper drafted by Stock (1985) cited in Harris-Worthington (1987) sums up the dilemma:

'The pressure on short-term residential colleges to cover all (or nearly all) costs including overheads is militating against their capability to provide a wide general education for all groups, and tending toward their over concentration on exclusive 'contract' provision at high fees or limiting their capability to serve other than high income individuals. The lack of recognition of the colleges as an important national resource of

great potential continues to be a serious impediment to necessary development'

(p. 28)

An example of 'contract' provision would be the acceptance of short term funding for a particular group of learners in the expectation that the funding would continue at the end of the project. An example, already discussed was the funding by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for the purpose of widening participation in learning through adult residential provision. Eleven colleges participated in this project with encouraging results but despite persistent and continued lobbying by ARCA, applications for further funding failed. It would be unwise to form or create a business model in the hope or expectation that after the initial 'pump priming' of a particular project funding from whatever source would be sustained.

It will not be easy for the owners of short term residential colleges to take on board the suggestions to secure the future of these unique establishments and in some cases to change their purpose and direction but if they continue on their present course without taking a hard and detailed look at their business and contribution to residential adult education it is difficult to foresee how any will survive for another 60 years.

## ***Postscript***

### **Case Study 1**

The county council responsible for [name] College issued the following statement to the press on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010

'The [name] county council is fully committed to delivering adult community education, but it has to be relevant to the needs of adult learners in the county and offer value-for-money.

Adult learning is most effective when delivered in the communities where people live. It particularly needs to focus on courses for adults who are least likely to engage in learning, and support them to progress to further learning or employment.

[name] does not meet these needs. It attracts 70 per cent of its students from outside the county and the cost of delivering education is disproportionately and insupportably expensive compared to community-based learning."

[name] Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

**Decision – (a)** That [name] College and all of its associated functions be closed from 31 August 2010.

**(b)** That all options for the buildings and land at [name] be investigated to maximise the capital return for [name] County Council'.

## Case Study 2

The following statement was issued to the press by the city council responsible for [name] on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011

'AN ADULT educational college will close after racking up a £1.6m debt. [name] Council spent £284,000 subsidising [name] last year even though only 158 adult students from the city were taught at the college, which offers residential courses.

It will close at the end of March 2011 after the council told governors it was cutting its budget by 25% in 2011 and a further 25% the year after. Town hall officials will now write to Education Secretary Michael Gove to ask permission for the Grade II-listed building to be sold.

Cllr Nick Small, head of the college's governors, said the decision became inevitable.

He said: "The Government settlement means the council has got no choice. It has to focus on frontline services and unfortunately [name] is not one of them.

"The college has racked up a huge deficit and it is just not sustainable." Closing [name] was repeatedly suggested by council officials each year as they went through the budget-setting process. Supporters of the premises believe it has struggled in recent times because of a lack of investment and unwillingness by city officials to properly use its facilities'.

The following statement was issued to the press by the Friends of [name] on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011

'With the closure of [name] due to take place at the end of March, the room was packed with members, local residents and staff, anxious to hear of any likelihood of the College remaining open.

The Principal of the College, explained the background to the dilemma now facing the venue, which has operated as a short-term adult

educational facility for over half a century. Originally supported by a number of local authorities as far afield as [name], it has, since 1982, been solely in the hands of [name] City Council.

With the Council now facing drastic budget cuts, it is understandable that they consider [name] as a low priority and have decided to close the College and sell the property. However, with a lack of planned maintenance due to budget deficits over a number of years, the infrastructure requires significant investment to realise its true value, which, in the current financial climate, means that the pool of prospective buyers will be extremely limited.

In recent years the University of [name] has expressed an interest in either managing or buying the College. It is already involved in several projects on the site, such as the [name] Coffee Shop and Craft Workshops and the Edwardian Walled Garden and Glasshouse restoration project. Grants have been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund and NWDA to enable these projects to be undertaken and under the terms of those agreements, public access will be a requirement for a number of years to come.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Membership of ARCA**

ARCA is always willing to accept residential learning centres into membership of the Association, provided that a number of conditions are met by the applicant.

#### **Which organisations can join ARCA?**

- Organisations which have shown a commitment to short-term residential liberal adult education for at least three years\*.
- You must be responsible for residential premises where your courses are delivered
- You must be a provider of adult education located in the United Kingdom

\*Associate Membership is available to providers of residential adult education courses who meet the membership criteria but have been operating for less than three years.

#### **What are the benefits of membership of ARCA?**

- ARCA is the only voice that speaks, nationwide, specifically for short-term residential adult education. In addition to being a powerful lobbying body the Association offers many other benefits to its members:

- ARCA produces and distributes leaflets and other publicity material on behalf of its members
- ARCA runs 'in-house' training courses at member colleges on many aspects of residential college management from catering to computers
- ARCA staffs a display stand at major national exhibitions
- The Association is working constantly to gain national media, radio and TV coverage
- ARCA holds a major Conference for College principals and staff of residential establishments throughout the UK. ARCA Members attend at reduced rates
- ARCA employs a part time public relations officer to raise the profile of residential liberal adult education
- The Association collects, collates and circulates information from member colleges
- The ARCA symbol on individual college's publicity is a sign of quality. It tells prospective learners there is a commitment to professional standards of education and value for money
- Each college is surveyed through an anonymous evaluation form completed by all students attending courses during random 'spot checks' carried out by ARCA. The results of the survey are confidential and are fed back to the college in question
- As a member of ARCA you know there is a network of supportive fellow principals and managers who are only too pleased to share, help and advise you

- ARCA represents the Short-term Residential Colleges internationally at conferences, by organising visits and by encouraging exchanges

For full details of membership of ARCA including details of the annual subscription and an application form, please contact:

**ARCA SEC**

**6 Bath Road**

**Felixstowe**

**Suffolk IP11 7JW**

or send an e-mail to the Association Public Relations Officer at

**[arcasec@btinternet.com](mailto:arcasec@btinternet.com)**

**Source:**

**<http://www.arca.uk.net/membership.html> (2008)**

## Appendix 2

### Hansard

#### W.E.A. and University Extramural Departments (Grants)

*HC Deb 11 March 1965 vol 708 cc604-5 604*

§ 14. Mr. Park

asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of the expanding opportunities for work in this field, he will now review the decision of his predecessor to limit the grants to the Workers' Educational Association and university extramural departments and thus make possible an expansion of their activities.

605

§ The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Anthony Crosland)

Yes, Sir. I propose to make additional funds available to the Workers' Educational Association and the university extramural departments for more full-time tutor posts and for the expansion of part-time work and this decision is being conveyed to them today.

§ Mr. Park

Is the Minister aware that his Answer will cause a great deal of relief and pleasure to those concerned with the work on adult education, and that he is now providing opportunities, which the previous Government failed to provide, for the extension of this very important sphere of education?

§ Mr. Crosland

I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. Like many other hon. Members on this side of the House, I have had a long connection with the W.E.A. and I was determined that we should do something for it although it is not all that I should like to do.

§ Sir E. Boyle

Is not it the fact that the previous Government provided 12 extra tutors for the 1963-64 Estimates and that in the course of the last Parliament the amount of extra expenditure went up by some hundreds of thousands of £s, I think by 40 per cent.? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it was our intention to look at the matter again in the coming year?

§ Mr. Crosland

The fact remains that, so far as current expenditure is concerned, 1964–65 saw a complete standstill on the year before and it is that standstill which this Government are now reversing.

§ Mr. Jennings

Can the right hon. Gentleman give any estimate or figure of comparative increases in these extra grants compared with the previous year's expenditure?

§ Mr. Crosland

Yes, Sir. This increased expenditure on W.E.A. and extramural departments will be about £60,000 higher next year compared with this year. Of that, about £30,000 is due to automatic increases in prices and salaries and £30,000 represents a genuine expansion of their work.

#### Source

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1965/mar/11/wea-and-university-extramural>

## **Appendix 3**

### **Long Term Residential Colleges for Adult Education.**

RESIDENTIAL ADULT EDUCATION is already a part of the wider provision of adult education in this country. The first College was opened in 1899, and from that time and at irregular intervals the idea has received successive expressions until, at the outbreak of war in 1939, there were eight Colleges in England and Wales, and one in Scotland.

The following is in the order of their foundation:

- 1899.     Ruskin College, Oxford.
- 1903.     Woodbrooke, Selly Oak, Birmingham.
- 1909     Central Labour College, Earl's Court, London
- 1909.     Fircroft College, Bournville
- 1919.     Co-operative College, Manchester.
- 1920.     Hillcroft College for Women, Surbiton,, Surrey. (War-time address:  
            C/o The Beeches, Selly Oak Rd., Bournville, Birmingham).
- 1921.     Catholic Workers College, Oxford.
- 1925.     Avoncroft College For Agricultural Workers, Stoke Prior,  
            Bromsgrove, Worcs.
- 1927.     Coleg Harlech,, Harlech, N. Wales.
- 1937.     Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith, Midlothian.

These Colleges were started by public-spirited men and women who, in the first instance, raised the money necessary for their work and continuance, from private sources.



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## In addition

1978. The Northern College. Wentworth Castle, Stainborough Nr  
Barnsley

## Source

Ball, M. and Hampton W eds. (2004) 'The Northern College' National Institute of Continuing Education (England and Wales)

## Appendix 4

### List of Short-term Residential Colleges in England and Wales

College	Sponsor	Opened	Closed
Ashridge	Private	1929	1959 *
Lamb Guildhouse - became Holly Royde	University of Manchester	1938 1944	
Pendley Manor	Private	1945	1983
Wedgwood Memorial College	Staffordshire C.C. + WEA	1945	
Lenton Hurst	University of Nottingham	1946	1955
Stafford House	Sussex C.C.	1962	1980
Missenden Abbey	Bucks C.C	1947	
Stoke House	Private	1947	c. 1955
Urchfont Manor	Wiltshire C.C.	1947	
Westham House	Trust	1947	1994
Attingham Park	Shropshire C.C.	1948	1975
Battle of Britain House(later Ruislip College)	Middlesex C.C	1948	1984
Burton Manor	Liverpool Council	1948	
Debden House	London Borough of Newham		1948
Denman College	Nat.Fed. of Women's Institutes	1948	
Dyffryn College	Glamorgan C.C.	1948	1980s *
Hawkwood College	Trust	1948	
Primrose Hill	University of Birmingham	1948	1957
Wansfell College	Essex C.C.	1949	
Belstead House	Suffolk C.C	1949	

Grantley Hall	Yorkshire C.C.	1949	
Kingsgate College	Y.M.C.A.	1949	1974
Braziers Park	Trust	1950	
Dillington House	Somerset C.C.	1950	
Moor Park	Trust(then Surrey C.C	1950	1980
Wrea Head College	Yorkshire C.C.	1950	c.1975
Knuston Hall	Northamptonshire C.C	1951	
Madingley Hall	University of Cambridge	1951	
Avoncroft College	Birmingham Council	1952	
Little Benslow Hills	Rural Music Schools Assoc	1952	
Lambton Castle moved and became Beamish Hall	Durham C.C.	1953 1970	1970 1994
Alston Hall	Lancashire C.C.	1956	
Pendrell Hall	Staffordshire C.C.	1961	
Brant Broughton College	Lincolnshire C.C.	1963	1978
Devon Centre at Dartington	Devon C.C.	1963	
The Old Rectory	Private	1963(Youth) 1969 (Adult)	
Burwell House	Cambridgeshire C.C.	1965	
Huntercombe Manor	Buckinghamshire C.C	1965	1976 *
Rewley House	University of Oxford	1965	
Wensum Lodge	Norfolk C.C.	1966	Late 1990s *
Maryland College	Bedfordshire C.C.	1967	#
The Hill	Gwent C.C.	1967	Gwent Tertiary College (1995)
Grafham Water Centre	Suffolk C.C.	1968	

Horncastle College	Lincolnshire C.C.	1968	*
West Dean College	Trust	1971	
East Hampstead Park	Berkshire C.C	1972	mid 1980s
Losehill Hall	Peak National Park	1972	
Theobalds Park	London Borough of Enfield	1973	1989
Eamley Concourse	Trust	1975	
Higham Hall	Cumbria C.C.	1975	2009 Trust status
Plas Tan-y-Blwch	Snowdonia National Park	1975	
Lancashire College	Lancashire C.C.	1975	
Woodlands	London Borough of Haringey	1975	1980

\* Redesignated as a Conference Centre

# Closed after 1995

Source:

Drews, W. (1995) The British Short Term Residential Colleges for Adult Education 1945 – 1995

## Appendix 5

### ARCA Data Collection

2006 – 2007 and 2007 – 2008

COLLEGE NAME

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

FAX

E-MAIL (for general admin & enquiries)

WEB SITE

OPERATING STATUS (LA, Charitable Trust etc)

#### **PERSONNEL:**

1. NAME & DESIGNATION OF HEAD OF CENTRE (eg: Director, Centre Manager etc)

CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS:

2. NAME & DESIGNATION OF ARCA CONTACT (if different from above)

E-MAIL ADDRESS (for direct contact on ARCA business)

3. NAMES & DESIGNATIONS OF MANAGEMENT TEAM: (please include those responsible for Administration, Curriculum planning, Catering/Hospitality & Finance where applicable)

#### **ACCOMMODATION:**

1. NUMBER OF BED SPACES.....

2. NUMBER OF BEDROOMS.....

### 3. NUMBER OF EN SUITE ROOMS.....

#### ARCA DATA COLLECTION

For the period (please tick)

1 <sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2008 or	
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2007 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2007	

Please refer to notes below

	Open	Closed
<i>Residential</i>		
1. Enter the total number of beds occupied per night over the data period.		
<i>Non residential</i>		
2 Enter the total number of day course enrolments?		

3. What was the total number of residential courses published?	
4. How many residential open courses took place?	
5. What was the total number of residential and non residential course enrolments at each of the data points?	
6. What was the 24 hour rate charged to learners for a residential open course?	
7. What was the day rate charged to learners for an open course?	
8. What was the total number of closed course beds occupied per night?	
9. What was the total number of day closed course enrolments?	

## NOTES

An **open** course is one that was organised and administered by the establishment to include accommodation, food and tutoring. e.g. Watercolour Painting for beginners

A **closed** course is one that is facilitated by the establishment e.g. a local authority training course

Qu 1. How many bed spaces were sold over the financial year. If one delegate/learner stayed for four nights count as four.

Qu 2. Do not take into account the length of the day.

Qu 3. For example brochure, leaflet, Time to Learn etc.

Qu 5 Please include residents and non residents. NB not Day course enrolments.

Qu 6 and 7. Use the basic rate. For some establishments the basic rate may include for example en suite facilities. Do not include items in the basic rate such as en suite facilities if this is an extra charge. For Qu6 please divide the basic open course fee by the total hours of the course and multiply by 24. (total hours is the time from the beginning of the first meeting of the course to the end of the last meeting)

Qu 7. Use the advertised fee for a day course.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Interview Questions - Principals/Managers**

**Case** \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 1:** Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of residential learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

**Question 2:** Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of day course learners attending an open course has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

**Question 3:** Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses published has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

**Question 4:** Over the two data periods can you explain why the number of courses cancelled has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

**Question 5:** Over the two data periods can you explain why the course fee rate has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

**Question 6:** What criteria do you use when devising a programme of courses?

**Question 7:** Has there been any change to the criteria over the data period?

**Question 8:** Are there any curricula constraints you have to observe when constructing a programme of courses?

**Question 9:** Does the college receive any external funding to subsidise courses? If so from where?

**Question 10:** Do individual learners have access to grants/bursaries? If so from where?

**Question 11:** Does the curriculum reflect any particular specialism?

**Question 12:** Do any/all/none of your advertised courses attract a formal qualification?



**Question 13: Could you describe how the college is financed?**

**Question 14: What methods do you use to determine learner opinion of their course and living experience?**

## **Appendix 7**

### **Discussion questions – Focus Groups**

*1. Why have you chosen to study your particular subject by enrolling on a residential course in this college?*

A further two related questions were added at an appropriate time during the discussions.

*2. Have you studied the same subject in a non residential setting, for example an evening class or day school and what were the differences in the learning experience, if any?*

*3. Would there be any difference do you think if the subject you are studying was offered with the same tutor in a hotel?*

## Appendix 8

### Case Study Terminology

The following terminology has been used throughout all Case Studies.

**Residential Enrolment:** Those learners enrolling for a residential course and using the college bedroom accommodation throughout the duration of the course.

**Non Residential Enrolment:** Those learners enrolling for a residential course and **not** using the college bedroom accommodation throughout the duration of the course. For example those travelling home at the end of each day or using bed and breakfast accommodation.

**Day Course Enrolment:** Those learners enrolling for a day course. i.e. a course with no planned overnight stay.

**Open Courses:** Courses for adults that are advertised to the general public.

**Closed Courses:** Events that are organised for specific groups. Courses, conferences or training events. These courses are not open to the general public.

## Appendix 9

### Adult Residential Colleges Association

#### Short Term Adult Residential College Membership at 2009

College	Ownership
Alston Hall	Lancashire C. C.
Belstead House	Suffolk C. C.
Benslow Music Trust	Hitchin Trust
Braziers Park	Oxfordshire -Trust
Burton Manor	Liverpool C. C.
Debden House	Newham
Denman College	Oxfordshire - Trust
Dillington House	Somerset C. C.
Farncombe Estate	Worcestershire – Private
Hawkwood College	Stroud – Trust
Higham Hall	Cumbria – Trust
Knuston Hall	Northamptonshire C. C.
Lancashire College	Lancashire C. C.
Missenden Abbey	Buckinghamshire C. C.
Pendrell Hall	Staffordshire C. C.
Plas Tan Y Bwlch	Snowdonia National Park
Urchfont Manor	Wiltshire C. C.
Wedgewood Memorial College	Stoke C. C.
West Dean College	Chichester – Trust
Westhope Craft College	Shropshire - Trust

#### Source

<http://www.arca.uk.net/colleges.html>

accessed 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009