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Re-Shaping the Borders for Policy Research : The Development of Specialist Sports Colleges in England.

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Abstract

This paper addresses the complexities of the policy location of Specialist Sports Colleges (SSCs) in England and the issues that arise for educational research. Attention focuses upon the 'dual policy location' of Specialist Sports Colleges, that are now formally established as part of the Department of Education and Skills' (DfES) Specialist Schools Programme but also the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's strategy for sport, 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000). The paper outlines the parallel but distinct agendas established for the Specialist Sports Colleges and points to the tensions that may arise in curriculum development in SSCs as teachers attempt to embrace multiple policy agendas. It is argued that SSCs are sites where there is a particular need for policy research to explore the ways in which different agendas are positioned, and in particular, who and what defines the discourses that are ultimately privileged in school curricula and teachers' pedagogical texts. Exploring these issues is identified as demanding that the borders of educational

research are extended beyond educational arenas to engage with increasingly complex policy networks and with changing policy relations at a national and local level.

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Introduction: complexities of policy.

In the UK and internationally, the 1990s saw work in the area of education policy sociology flourishing and understandings of the processes of policy making and implementation in education being notably advanced. In England and Wales, the Education Reform Act of 1988 and in particular, the development of the National Curriculum, provided a catalyst and focus for studies that pursued the complexities underlying the transformation of policies in the course of their implementation, and thus the relationship (and inherent 'gaps') between centralised policy development and curriculum development in schools. The work of Stephen Ball and colleagues is particularly note-worthy in identifying concepts and providing frameworks that others (including ourselves) have adopted and sought to advance in and through educational research (see for example, Ball, 1990; Bowe et al, 1992; Penney and Evans, 1999). Collectively, studies in education policy sociology have clearly demonstrated that:

- policy development in education needs to be understood in the context of interactions between various policies and political agendas, involving many sites both within and beyond the education system;
- policies issued by central government are subject to various readings, interpretations and transformations as they are adopted but also adapted in sites of implementation, with schools, departments within them, local education authorities, and providers of initial teacher education and continuing professional development, thus identified as sites of 'slippage' in the meanings, understandings and representations of policies (Bowe et al, 1992); and
- only with better understandings of the complex interactions between policies, and between policy sites, can we either appreciate why practice emerges in particular forms, or be in a position to design processes for policy development that are capable of ensuring that the practice emerging in schools will be that intended by policy-makers.

These issues and observations provide an important reference point for our current research interests and plans. Our work is set in ever changing and increasingly complex policy structures and networks, and focuses upon a government initiative that in our view, brings the complexities very vividly to the fore for ourselves as policy researchers, and for the schools and teachers who are the focus and target of the initiative. The initiative is the Specialist Sports College initiative, that is one aspect of the Specialist Schools policy being pursued by the current government in England.

Specialist Schools.

In 1998 the then Schools Minister, Estelle Morris, identified specialist schools as "... a crucial part of the agenda for school improvement.... Their success will be a central part of our drive to raise standards..." (DfEE, 1998a). Later in the same year, and in the context of another announcement of expansion, Morris described specialist schools as "at the heart of our standards agenda in secondary schools" (DfEE, 1998b). More recently, the programme has been accorded the status of "the lynchpin" for Tony Blair's "secondary schools revolution" in his second term of office (Garner, 2001). Since its beginnings in 1994, the specialist schools programme has been progressively advanced to its current position at the heart of the government's policies to raise standards in teaching and learning in England. The initiative was inherited by the New Labour government elected in 1997 and as the above quotations reflect, has since been adopted, adapted and rapidly extended to include not only more schools, but more specialisms. After the introduction of Technology Colleges in 1994, the programme was extended to include modern foreign languages and later, Sport and Arts (West et al, 2000). In the next phase of development it is intended that new specialisms of science, engineering, and business and enterprise, will be added, with mathematics and computing to follow. In terms of numbers of specialist schools, targets have been repeatedly and rapidly increased, to the current figures of 1500 specialist schools to be designated by 2005, "as a staging post for all schools that are ready for it" (DfES, 2001, p.41).

The objectives of the programme are openly acknowledged as having "evolved over the years" (Yeomans et al, 2000) with a notable change coming in 1997 when the demand for specialist schools to benefit other schools in the area was added (ibid, 2000), and a requirement more recently established for this to be directly reflected in specialist schools' spending (Garner, 2001). Schools applying for specialist status are thus now required to produce a school development plan and a community development plan, written to aims specified centrally and featuring measurable performance targets for each year of the four year period of designation as a specialist school. In their community plan schools have to address partnership work with identified 'family' schools and with other partner organisations (including higher education, local education authorities, business partners, and community groups), and must ensure that 30% of annual spending is devoted to the community element.

This expansion and the evolution in the initiative has come despite only limited evidence being available regarding the extent to which, and ways in which, the desired improvements in teaching and learning are being achieved in specialist schools and their associated 'families' of schools. Research addressing the early development of specialist schools (see West et al, 2000; Yeomans et al, 2000) provided an initial commentary on developments and generated provisional data relating to measures established by government, such as the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grade A-C passes. Specialist schools were identified as achieving a higher average improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grade A-C passes in comparison to non-specialist schools, but it was also acknowledged that the averages masked notable variations in the improvements amongst the specialist schools (Yeomans et al, 2000). More recently, much weight has been placed on the data presented in the 'Jesson Report' (2001) articulating the 'value added' by specialist schools in terms of pupils' academic achievements and furthermore, the superior performance of the specialist schools in these terms when compared to the picture in schools nationally. While this data is being used by the government in support of the continued expansion (see DfES, 2001), the statistical basis of the analysis and thus, accuracy of the picture presented, has been questioned (Goldstein, 2001a,b).

A report from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2001), features some similarly supporting data, but also pointed to inconsistencies in some aspects of the performance of specialist schools. The picture of progress in relation to the objectives of the initiative is acknowledged as varying between schools, with OFSTED stating that:

- Four out of five of the well-established specialist schools covered by this survey are in large measure achieving the aims of the specialist schools programme and making good use of the advantage it brings. For these schools specialist status has often been a catalyst for innovation and helped to sustain or accelerate the momentum of school improvement.
- The fact that this is not the case in one in five schools is a disappointing use of opportunities and resources.

(OFSTED, 2001,p.5)

The OFSTED report clearly indicates that further advances are needed if the aims of the programme are to be realised in all specialist schools, and if benefits are to be evidenced beyond the specialist schools themselves. They explain that "With a few exceptions, the community dimension in the schools visited was the weakest part of their specialist schools' work. The majority of schools had found it difficult to define, develop and manage" (p.37).

While the Jesson and OFSTED reports have extended the database in relation to the core performance measures established by the government for Specialist Schools, it is still the case that we lack detailed and longitudinal accounts and analyses of changes made to curricula, teaching approaches employed, and their impact upon learning. In their report of the investigation of 12 Specialist Schools that was conducted as part of the research undertaken for DfEE by the Centre for Educational Research at the London School of Economics (see Yeomans et al, 2000; West et al, 2000), Yeomans et al (2000) specifically identified "the longer-term effects of specialist status on curriculum, pedagogy and standards of achievement" amongst potential future research priorities. The picture on these issues remains far from comprehensive, and as indicated, the initiative is being advanced well ahead of research.

Specialist Sports Colleges.

The pattern of programme expansion and parallel relative absence of research is apparent in the case of Specialist Sports Colleges. Since the first Specialist Sports Colleges came into existence in September 1997 targets for the number of schools to be designated as Specialist Sports Colleges have been regularly increased, while there has been little research addressing the development of those established. The target is for 200 Specialist Sports Colleges to be designated by 2004 (DCMS, 2001). The case study work conducted by Yeomans and colleagues (2000) included only one Specialist Sports College. A report on the development of the first 26 Specialist Sports Colleges during the period 1997-1999 published jointly by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Youth Sport Trust (YST) (OFSTED/YST,2000) provided some insights into curricula, teaching and learning in Specialist Sports Colleges and their family schools, in outlining particular initiatives in some of these colleges. Further reports of achievements of individual colleges have been forthcoming in publications directed towards professional audiences, outlining the ways in which new resources are being utilised to enhance curricula and extra-curricula provision, and how partnerships have a fundamental part to play in development (see for example Neal, 1999; 2000). Houlihan's (2000) investigation of four Specialist Sports Colleges designated in 1997 or 1998 is one of the very few independent studies of development and the findings from this work (see below) have been a key reference point for our current interests.

In part therefore, our interests stem from a recognised absence of in-depth, sustained inquiry into the development of Specialist Sports Colleges. In addition, however, they stem from a need, in our view, for research to directly engage with issues that appear to justify and necessitate focused attention on the particular specialism of sport. In this respect we particularly highlight that:

- The environment in which teaching and learning occurs in physical education is typically somewhat different to that in other subject areas, such that some of the strategies that are identified with innovation in teaching in specialist schools generally may not be directly applicable in the context of physical education. More specific inquiry seems needed to pursue and extend innovation in teaching of physical education;
- For many pupils, the sole experience of physical education is the National Curriculum for Physical Education, for which there are no standard assessment tests or examinations. The adequacy and appropriateness of participation and achievement in *examination* courses as key measures of standards of teaching and learning can therefore be questioned. While examination results remain so dominant as the measure of success in the specialist schools, there seems a danger that there will be pressures for resources and the attention of staff to be focused on this aspect of provision, over and above the provision of core National Curriculum Physical Education. In our view there is a need to establish a range of measures relating to teaching and learning in physical education that may be utilised in the setting and monitoring of performance targets in Specialist Sports Colleges and their families of schools;
- Perhaps most significantly, Specialist Sports Colleges have an explicit 'dual identity' and policy location. On the one hand they are integral to the Department for Education and Skills' specialist schools policy (see DfEE, 2000). In addition, however, Specialist Sports Colleges are now also integral to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's strategy 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000). They have been specifically identified as "key drivers of the Government's vision for school sport during the next ten years" (PE and Sport Today, 2001, p.8) and an integral element of a new infrastructure for elite sport development in the UK (DCMS, 2000).

It is this last point that we see as particularly significant for policy research, and as giving rise to conceptual and methodological challenges for educational researchers with particular interests in physical education and sport in schools.

Complex policy networks and 'crowded policy spaces' (Dery, 1999).

A key issue in relation to Specialist Sports Colleges is that the interests and agendas that they are associated with are not merely multiple, but also openly extend beyond what would be regarded as the normal boundaries of the educational system. In essence, the policy network that Specialist Sports Colleges are located within is an openly extended network, that formally links the colleges into policy structures associated with *sport*, as well as those associated with *education*. As we explain further below, the colleges can be regarded as the targets and recipients of parallel policy agendas and initiatives that we can not assume will be compatible. The relationship between physical education and sport is one of longstanding and sustained contestation (see below). As individual sites, Specialist Sports Colleges thus appear to epitomise what Dery (1999) would term a "crowded policy space" and generate the dilemmas that go with the high density of interest. They constitute a space that is directly linked to the policy areas of education and of sport, and demand that we acknowledge the overlap between these areas, and its potential implications for developments within the colleges. Dery's (1999) discussion of relations within and beyond 'crowded policy spaces' highlights the power-relations at play in policy development. Multiple policies constitute

competing interests and generate a situation of encroachment, such that the actions taken in response to one policy have implications for possible courses of action in relation to another. Thus, "The question of priority is not only which objectives should enjoy a greater share of available resources, but more importantly, which goals shall confine the pursuit of which other goals" (p.164). As Dery identifies, "the question is not whether, but to what extent a certain policy is the by-product of other policy" (ibid.,p.172), and whether therefore, we see clear elements of 'policy taking', as distinct from policy 'making' featuring in developments. Policy taking "denotes the pursuit of a given set of policy objectives, which is primarily or entirely shaped by the pursuit of other objectives" (ibid. p.165).

The issues that Dery raised and concepts that he pointed us towards appear a valuable reference point in our exploration of the inter-relationships between parallel policies, and the inter-actions between the policy areas associated with the Specialist Sports College initiative. The inter-relations and inter-actions with which we are concerned are between *physical education* and *sport*. Our interests are in how this relationship will be played out in schools that have been accorded a privileged position in both educational and sport orientated policy development. We see a need to pursue the power-relations at play here, and thus examine which agendas and discourses will ultimately be privileged or marginalised as multiple interests and different discourses are merged and managed by the colleges.

Although our focus is on a very recent policy initiative, it is important to recognise that the inter-action and overlap between physical education and sport is a longstanding rather than notably new feature of policy development in physical education. Nationally and internationally it is recognised that policy developments in physical education are never confined to education, but attract interest from and are influenced by sites and agendas associated with sport (see for example, Locke, 1992; Penney & Evans, 1997; Tinning, 1997). Schools and teachers within them have long sought to accommodate this overlap in policy networks and therefore, strive in their provision (both within and beyond the curriculum) to embrace multiple and varied interests, agendas and expectations regarding the development of 'physical education and sport in schools'. The relationship is one that remains central to the status of physical education in schools, in public and political arenas. It has also been shown to be an issue of ongoing and at times very explicit tension in arenas of policy and curriculum development in physical education, particularly in recent years in the UK (see Evans & Penney, 1995; Penney & Evans, 1997; Penney & Evans, 1999).

However, it has also been a relationship that has been changing through the 1990s in England and the changes represent an important backdrop to our current inquiry. Specifically, we highlight that the proximity and overlap of policies relating to physical education and sport development in England and Wales, and in the policy sites and structures associated with the respective developments, has become increasingly pronounced. The shifts in relations and in structures have been evidenced in the form and focus of the NCPE, in the text of key parallel sport policy documents (most notably, 'Sport: Raising the Game' (DNH, 1995) and subsequently, 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000), see Penney & Evans, 1997; Gilroy & Clarke, 1997), in the focus and sources of resources used by teachers of physical education in schools and in continuing professional development for teachers, in the criteria utilised in government inspections of physical education (see DNH, 1995) and in new award structures established for provision of 'physical education and sport' in schools. In all of these respects, 'sport' has increasingly come to the fore and has become a critical partner in the development of physical education. It is a changed relationship that was perhaps most vividly reflected in the appointment in 2000 of the chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust, Sue Campbell, as a 'non-political adviser' on 'Physical Education and Sport' to two government departments; the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The relationship is now not merely an established feature of policy development, but as we will see, is embodied in policy development and specifically, in the Specialist Sports College initiative. In our view this gives rise to both notable possibilities for the colleges, but also potential tensions.

Opportunities and tensions amidst overlap.

The mission statement and the aims provided by the DfEE for the Specialist Sports Colleges reflect the way in which the parallel agendas, to develop education, and to develop sport, are embedded in the initiative:

Sports Colleges will raise standards of achievement in physical education and sports for all their students across the ability range. They will be regional focal points for excellence in PE and community sport, extending links between families of schools, sports bodies and communities, sharing resources and developing and spreading good practice, helping to provide a structure through which young people can progress to careers in sport and PE. Sports Colleges will increase participation in physical education and sport for pre and post 16 year olds and develop the potential of talented performers.
(DfEE,2000)

The five aims established for Specialist Sports Colleges reflect the same overlap in policy agendas:

SA1 : To raise standards of achievement in PE and sport through the increased quality of teaching and learning.

SA2 : To extend and enrich curriculum and out of hours learning opportunities in PE and sport.

SA3 : To increase take up and interest in PE and other sporting or physical activity related courses, particularly post 16.

CA1 : To raise standards by developing good practice and disseminating and sharing with other schools and groups, including non-specialist secondary schools;

CA2 : To work with appropriate local partners, including businesses and community groups, clubs, governing bodies and sports development units, to develop sustainable sporting opportunities which promote both participation and achievement in PE and community sport.

Some of the benefits of the close association are readily apparent. In many cases the move to become a Specialist Sports College has been visibly evident to staff, pupils, parents and the wider community, in the form of new and/or improved sporting facilities (Warburton, 2001). Specialist Sports Colleges have also been well placed to bid for national lottery funding and other government funding (specifically 'New Opportunities funding' directed towards facility development and/or to support provision 'out of school hours', see DCMS, 2001) to further boost their resources. In addition, the link with sport may bring further benefits in terms of human resources, with the government having announced a commitment to investing in the appointment of 1000 School Sport Co-ordinators to be based in secondary schools and work "in partnership with primary schools to provide a range of sports opportunities to develop the talents, enrich the lives and benefit the health of children right across the country" (DfES, 2001,p.28). Notably, the intention is that invariably,

Specialist Sports Colleges will be the school sites selected as the hub for the development work (DCMS, 2001). Finally, we can note that the association with sport is one that positions these specialist schools very well in relation to the requirement for development work to benefit the wider community. The recent OFSTED (2001) report specifically highlighted that while "Support for specific groups in the wider community was patchy and was a weakness in many school plans", Sports Colleges had "responded well to this opportunity: the community role is one of their strengths" (p.7).

While the opportunities and potential benefits of the policy links therefore seem very significant, we need to recognise that the nature and strength of the association with sport generates extensive expectations of and for Specialist Sports Colleges that centre firmly upon sport, as distinct from education and/or physical education. The dual agendas faced by Specialist Sports Colleges need to be acknowledged as *dual*, and destined to be not always entirely compatible, particularly in contexts of limited (even if enhanced) physical and human resources. We suggest, therefore, that while the linkage can and has been shown to bring significant investment in the colleges, we need to take a close look at what and whose interests the investment is directed towards, and the implications of the investment for the performance targets established in colleges and their prioritising of resources towards particular targets. The potential tensions arising in developments are ones that in 2000, Schools Minister Jacqui Smith alluded to, in stressing to Specialist Sports Colleges conference delegates that "While you are crucial for sport you are educational institutions....You will be judged by your performances on and off the playing fields" (Smith, cited in PE and Sport Today, 2000, p.45), and that Houlihan's earlier research indicated could surface. Houlihan (2000) reported that all of the four schools in his study appeared to be "generally coping well with the requirement to balance the range of objectives relating to community regeneration, the enhancement of educational standards and the development of sporting achievement" but warned of "emerging problems and conflicts" (p.189). He stated that "...the incipient tensions between 'participation' and 'performance'...between the practice of sport and the pursuit of academic achievement in sports-related GCSEs, and between elite sporting success and vocational training for the leisure industry, *are all unresolved and potentially divisive*" (p.189, our emphasis). Furthermore, Houlihan (2000) pointed to the notably *limited* role that physical education teachers were playing in the development of the Specialist Sports College, "...with decisions about priority sports, curriculum content and design *influenced by external organisations*" (p.190, our emphasis).

These findings may have reflected the then embryonic development of the SSCs. Currently we do not have a clear picture of how the dual agendas are being managed and taken forward in curriculum developments, teaching and learning in physical education and in the provision of school sport in Specialist Sports Colleges. Previous research relating to both curriculum and extra-curricula settings in physical education has shown that marrying concerns to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the diverse needs and interests of all pupils, with expectations that physical education will further the cause of elite sport development is never easy, but also that differing interests are not guaranteed comparable status in developments (see for example, Penney and Harris, 1997; Penney and Evans, 1999). In the light of the relatively high profile of *school sport*, and the comparable lowly position of *physical education as a curriculum subject*, we suggest that there is a particular need to pursue the focus and direction of developments, especially in relation to teaching and learning in physical education. What and whose learning experiences and achievements are being enhanced and how educational interests and interests arising from arenas of sports development are respectively shaping developments, are in our view, key questions for research. They are also questions that return us to the issues raised in Dery's (1999) work and specifically the notion of 'policy-taking'. In addition, they prompt us to pursue the ways in which "slippage" (Bowe et al, 1992) plays out in this policy context, given that the flexibility inherent in the initiative allows individual colleges to establish their own

objectives and associated targets in relation to each of the five stated aims. The impression created by the government is of considerable freedom for individual colleges to determine their particular priorities. With Dery's conceptualisation of policy-taking in mind, we question that freedom. Furthermore we see statements arising from government as indicating an understanding of the policy context and policy priorities as one that defines policy development in physical education as a matter of 'taking' in a context in which policy agendas relating to sport are dominant. For example, last year the then Sports minister, Kate Hoey, commented that devoting one afternoon per week to *competitive sport* may be preferable to maintaining the current structure of *physical education lessons* within the curriculum (Hastings, 2000). It also seems notable that some of the data generated by both the Jesson (2001) and OFSTED (2001) studies can be read as indicating that Specialist Sports Colleges may be effectively utilising sport to lead the field in addressing wider community needs, but are struggling to match the success of other specialist schools in relation to key education policy criteria. For example, the OFSTED (2001) report identifies the annual GCSE average point score for Sports Colleges as below the national average, and that although the Sports Colleges achieved higher than average GCSE results in physical education and sport in 1998 and 1999, the trend of improvement in these results was lower than the national rate. Jesson (2001) reported that "Technology Colleges are improving their results [at GCSE] faster than any other specialist schools (+29% versus 1994) followed by Language Colleges (+ 18%), Arts Colleges (+ 12%) and Sports Colleges (+ 10%)" (p.10), and that "Language Colleges achieve the highest percentage 5+ A*-C with 60% in 2000, compared to 53% for Technology Colleges; 48% for Arts Colleges; and 44% for Sports Colleges. This compares to 43% for all non-selective maintained schools other than specialist schools" (p.10). As emphasised by Goldstein (2001a,b), we need to treat this data with caution, but nevertheless, regard the issues raised as ones worthy of further inquiry. They are issues that we are now actively engaging with in the context of the research project outlined below, that we have established with the organisation responsible for supporting the development of Specialist Sports Colleges; the Youth Sport Trust, and that is endorsed by the DfES.

The partnership project: research and development.

The issues, opportunities, challenges and potential tensions surrounding the development of Specialist Sports Colleges are ones that we are not alone in recognising. Rather, they are ones that many ; 'Directors of Sport' leading the implementation of development plans in Specialist Sports Colleges, and the Youth Sport Trust are acutely aware of. The YST's awareness of the complexities and challenges inherent in the implementation of the initiative is matched by its commitment to support colleges in addressing them. Our research partnership thus reflects a shared interest in establishing research that will actively inform the development work undertaken within Specialist Sports Colleges and across their local networks. Continuing professional development work with teachers and the involvement of teachers as researchers in case study projects are therefore key features of the project. Accompanying survey based work will be undertaken nationally, involving data collection from SSCs but also their family schools and other partner organisations. Questionnaires are being designed with internal and external interests in mind, and specifically with the hope that they can provide a reference point for reflection and planning in individual colleges. Our hope is that via the active engagement of both policy-makers (in our partnership with the YST and with the formation of a project advisory group) and practitioners in the project, the research will inform the future development of the SSC initiative – in both policy and practice.

Conclusion.

This paper has outlined the particular complexities inherent in the Specialist Sports College initiative and has portrayed them as a 'special case for policy research', in substantive and theoretical terms. It is appropriate to conclude by considering whether we should retain a view of these schools as a 'special case' in policy terms. In relation to this matter, we offer a number of observations. Firstly, as indicated from the outset, the relationship that has been at the heart of our discussion, between physical education and sport, is a longstanding and contested one. Furthermore, it is one that is a matter that all schools and all physical education departments within them, face and have to work with. Dual agendas shape the work and expectations of all physical education teachers, not only those within Specialist Sports Colleges. At the same time, however, Specialist Sports Colleges are clearly special in some respects, and most notably, in relation to their resources (see West et al., 2000; Warburton, 2001). Hattersley (2001) makes another important point in relation to perceptions of these schools, and the implications of the perceptions, saying that "Specialist schools are regarded as special. They become the parent's first preference. In consequence the notion of good schools and bad schools is established." In his view, the initiative is destined to be educationally and socially divisive.

Meanwhile, some of the observations made by Finney (2001) in relation to Arts Colleges, have led us to see distinct parallels between that specialism and the specialism of sport. Finney identifies Arts Colleges as "...institutions that are learning how to broaden access to the arts, how to improve participation and performance, how to develop and extend arts curricula and enable the arts to impact on the curriculum of the whole school.... They will be making links with the arts within their communities and discovering fresh opportunities for working with practising professional artists" (p.35). We suggest that similar complexities and tensions to those that we have described in relation to Specialist Sports Colleges could arise in Arts Colleges, if agencies such as the Arts Council show a growing policy interest in the colleges, and if the colleges themselves see closer policy relations with external organisations as a potential source of enhanced resourcing and a means of strengthening the community dimension of their development work.

In the context of our forthcoming work we will be seeking links with research focusing upon other specialist schools and exploring the degree to which our own observations match with or contrast to those arising in other specialist college contexts. As this paper has demonstrated, the research is challenging us conceptually and methodologically, to extend our thinking and our investigations to embrace the complexities that we see as inherent in this initiative. In due course we hope to report data that will further our understandings of those complexities.

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