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Modern Languages in Further Education

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Modern Languages in Further Education

HMI Series: Matters for Discussion No. 12

London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1980

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Department of Education and Science

HMI Series: Matters for Discussion 12

Modern Languages in Further Education (16-18)

A discussion paper by some members of HM Inspectorate of Schools based on a survey of the work of full-time students in 31 colleges in 1977/78

London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office

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The publications in this series are intended to stimulate professional discussion. They are based on HM Inspectors' observation of work in educational institutions and present their thoughts on some of the issues involved. The views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Inspectorate as a whole or of the Department of Education and Science. It is hoped that they will

to go straight to the various sections:

The text of *Modern Languages in Further Education* was prepared by Derek Gillard and uploaded on 25 June 2013.

promote debate at all levels and that they will be given due weight when educational developments are being assessed or planned.

Nothing said is to be construed as implying Government commitment to the provision of additional resources.

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Preface

During the autumn and spring terms of the academic year 1977/78 HM Inspectors with a specialist interest in modern languages visited thirty-one institutions of further education in a survey of modern language courses for full-time students in the 16 to 18 age range. This publication is the result of that survey and constitutes both an

evaluation of the work seen and a means of focusing attention on some of the problems of course management, resources, organisation and teaching style which need to be faced if modern languages are to meet the needs of students in this age range in further education.

The survey is described in detail in Chapter 2 and *those readers who do not intend to read the whole report immediately are advised to start with this Chapter followed by Chapter 3, the summaries of Chapters 4 to 9 and Chapter 10*.

HM Inspectors thank the principals and staffs of colleges for supplying a considerable amount of information on various aspects of modern languages and record their appreciation of the cooperation and welcome which they received. Without such help production of this report would not have been possible.

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1 Introduction

The most remarkable feature of modern language teaching in the further education sector during the 1950s and 1960s was its innovatory quality. A number of circumstances combined to make the field of further education the main centre for some important new departures in objectives and methods. By the early 1950s there was a growing recognition of the need for more immediately usable foreign language skills for professional and personal purposes. Colleges of further education, with their particular emphasis on vocational studies, were the obvious centres to which to look for language courses with a practical application. With no long tradition of academic objectives, further education was free to experiment outside the framework of traditional examinations, building on its experience of adult and some semi-professional work (languages in secretarial courses, for instance). The general expansion of further education in the 1950s made it possible at the end of the decade for colleges of further education to acquire language laboratories, other audio-visual aids and relatively expensive new materials. A broad range of full-time and part-time students, adults with professional and general interests as well as young people, looked to further education to meet their language needs.

The vigour of the creative thinking that took place at this time is attested by the introduction of many courses at all levels. Language options were introduced in full-time course, for the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Studies. Secretarial-linguist courses expanded and became more ambitious. The examinations of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and the Institute of Linguists went through a period of reappraisal and rejuvenation and a new oral examination was introduced by what was then the London and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. A variety of intensive full-time, twilight, or dawn and dusk courses became popular for businessmen. Alongside new types of BBC radio and, later, television courses, demand for adult evening classes increased

substantially. Interest in language learning for professional purposes was given further impetus in the early 1960s by Britain's application to join the European Economic Community. When this failed, interest among some businessmen waned, but the momentum in Full-time courses was maintained throughout the decade.

While some very influential work was done in elementary courses, some of the particularly impressive developments were in advanced work. Towards the end of the 1960s one significant growth was a new type of degree course in modern languages, in which languages were taught in the context of political, economic or social studies rather than in relation to literature. For science and engineering students, too, at this level major or minor language options began to be introduced.

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Developments in advanced work took place in a number of large colleges, in other institutions which became polytechnics and in the colleges of advanced technology which became universities. With the division towards the end of the 1960s into the two streams of higher and further education those colleges of further education doing mainly non-advanced work* tended to be adversely affected by the greater concentration of resources, courses and staff in the higher level institutions.

During the same period other influences were altering the balance of language teaching in colleges concerned mainly with non-advanced work. School-leavers from both maintained and independent schools were beginning increasingly to look to colleges of further education for their post-16 general education, leading to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations at ordinary (O) and advanced (A) levels. In many areas, the number of adult students interested in both examination and non-examination courses was also increasing.

Demand for O-level courses in modern languages in non-advanced further education has declined during the 1970s, while that for A-level courses has increased. The pattern of demand for other courses has been noticeably affected by a changing situation in the schools. While there has been a large increase in the numbers of pupils having some experience of language learning at secondary school level, not all of this experience has been particularly successful: only slightly over one-third of all pupils in secondary schools, a majority of them girls, have continued with the study of a modern language for five years. Few pupils of either sex have continued to study a language in order to develop it as an ancillary skill. In the colleges there has been a decline in recruitment to courses such as the OND in Business Studies (and even more to the HND course, which requires A-level in a modern language as a standard of entry) and to some of the secretarial courses recruiting at post O-level standard. The more ambitious secretarial-linguist courses, however, continue in some areas to attract girls for whom this kind of course is a preferred alternative to academic study. When Britain finally joined the European Economic Community, businessmen did not fully regain the enthusiasm of the early 1960s and the number of intensive courses has not returned to its former level. There is evidence, however, that

adult evening classes in modern languages continue to flourish in many areas.

Language staff in non-advanced further education thus participated in the 1950s in innovations of far-reaching significance for language learning generally. By the late 1960s, the main attention was centring on advanced work, in the larger colleges, polytechnics and former colleges of advanced technology, leaving non-advanced work in colleges which were relatively less well endowed with resources and staff. Since then there has been little growth in non-advanced work and some has indeed declined.

*Non-advanced work is understood to be that which aims at standards up to that of GCE advanced level or its equivalent.

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2 The survey

The importance of language teaching developments in further education during the past 20 years is in itself justification for an exploration of the present situation. As the brief historical sketch in the Introduction has shown, the work which has perhaps been most circumscribed by external influences has been that at non-advanced level. Most full-time students in the 16 to 18 age group are to be found at this level, with an admixture of older students both full-time and part-time. Here too are the widest ranges of ability, of previous achievement and, potentially, of ultimate objectives. It was decided therefore to survey modern language learning in the full-time education programmes of 16 to 18 year old students. Students starting out at 15-plus on advanced courses, with entry qualifications at A-level standard, for example HND or post A-level secretarial courses, were excluded from the survey so as to concentrate attention on language learning up to the equivalent of A-level standard, that is to say on students engaged in non-advanced work.

Within the available time and resources, it was decided to look at the work in thirty colleges of various types in different parts of the country. The number chosen was considered adequate to illustrate a broad range of the ways in which colleges of further education respond to demands for language courses and perhaps anticipate needs. The work of each college was studied in its own context, not as being representative of a predetermined category. It was not assumed that the colleges visited would illustrate all varieties of work. Some enterprising work of high quality was no doubt missed, as well as some which might have been limping along under the handicap of adverse local conditions. However, it was possible to illustrate diversity, to draw out some common problems and achievements, and to focus attention on a number of important issues.

A necessary preliminary was to acquire up-to-date information about the numbers of students in the age group who were following modern language courses of any kind as part of their full-time studies. All colleges of further education offering general full-time education for 16 to 18 year olds were accordingly asked to state the numbers of full-time students who, during the 1976/77 session, were studying

modern languages as part of courses leading to O-level, A-level and OND in business studies, or of secretarial and other courses, for instance hotel and catering. Returns from over nine tenths of the colleges provided the basis for making a choice of those to be visited.

Thirty colleges were chosen in which there appeared from the initial returns to be a reasonable quantity of work spread across the different categories of course mentioned. Geographically, the thirty colleges were widely distributed across the country and included

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institutions providing a varying range of courses: local, area and regional colleges, a tertiary college and some institutions recently redesignated colleges of higher education. At a later stage, because the scale of work encountered in hotel and catering courses was greater than anticipated, a further college which specialises in this field was added.

During the academic year 1977/78, a detailed picture of the work in the thirty-one colleges was built up in two ways. Colleges were asked to complete a written questionnaire, giving information about total numbers of students (broken down into different age groups and full-time and part-time attendance), college organisation in relation to modern languages, accommodation for language teaching, staffing* for modern languages (including any foreign assistants) and any regular links with foreign countries. Details were also requested of all modern language teaching in the colleges in the academic years 1976/77 and 1977 /78, including a brief classification of courses, numbers of students enrolled, length of courses and time allocation and examination results. Then, with this information as a framework, each college was visited by two members of HM Inspectorate (HMI) who, in most instances, spent two days observing work in progress, studying background documentation and talking with staff. During the visits they were concerned with the institutional context and the student population, the organisation of language provision, accommodation and resources, staffing and support for the subject, course development and management and the quality of work.

*Details of full-time staff only were requested. It was felt that, in view of the numbers involved, it would be unreasonable to ask colleges for details of part-time staff.

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3 The colleges and the students

Colleges offering full-time education for 16 to 18 year old students vary considerably in size. The numbers of all full-time students in any one college range from under 100 to over 2,000 and there is a similarly wide variation in the number of part-time students attending day and evening courses. Whether the 16 to 18 year old students constitute a majority or a minority of the students in the college, they

usually form a substantial population in themselves, ranging from under 50 to over 1,500 with an average of about 500. The colleges visited differed from colleges in general in two respects: the size of the total full-time student population and the size of the 16 to 18 age group - both were larger than average. This is illustrated from the November 1976 statistics in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 *Comparison of sample with all colleges: by size*

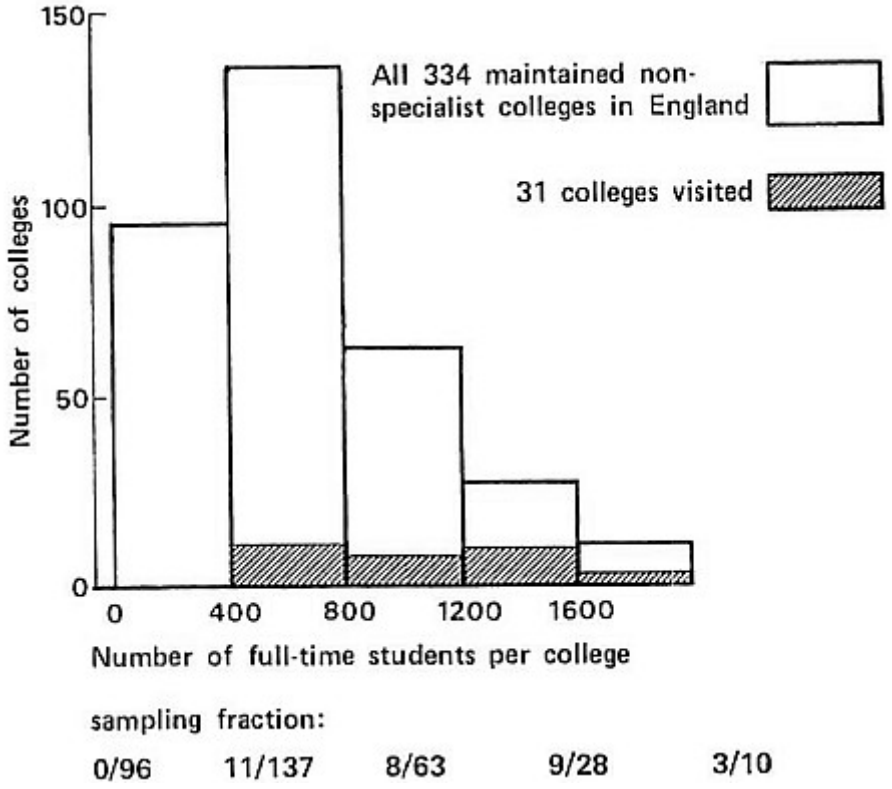

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Figure 2 *Comparison of sample with all colleges: by size of 16 to 18 age group*

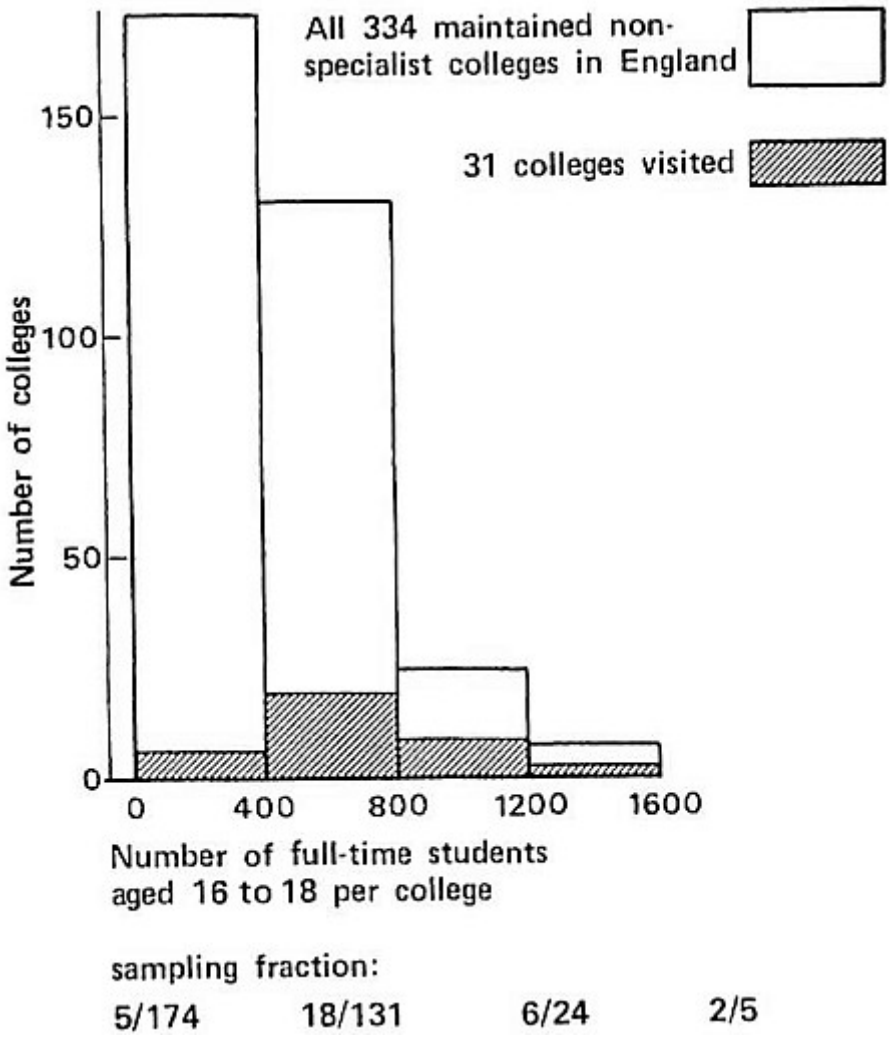

Figure 3 shows the proportion of 16 to 18 year old students in the colleges visited. In only one college does this age-group constitute less than one-third of the total full-time student population; in most colleges it is well over two-thirds.

Colleges vary too in the emphasis of their activity from those whose main concern is with non-advanced courses for the 16 to 18 age group to others where most students are engaged on courses at degree level. The type and range of courses offered in any one college are determined by a number of factors including local circumstances, national needs and the pattern of provision in nearby institutions. Figure 4 illustrates the range of work in the thirty-one colleges visited. The student body formed a heterogeneous population, engaged on courses at different levels from basic craft training to OND or A-level and beyond, leading to a diversity of careers and further studies. Figure 5 illustrates the general level of work undertaken in the thirty-one colleges. The full-time 16 to 18 students were often in contact with and sometimes worked alongside smaller, older groups and part-time students although they were usually in the majority.

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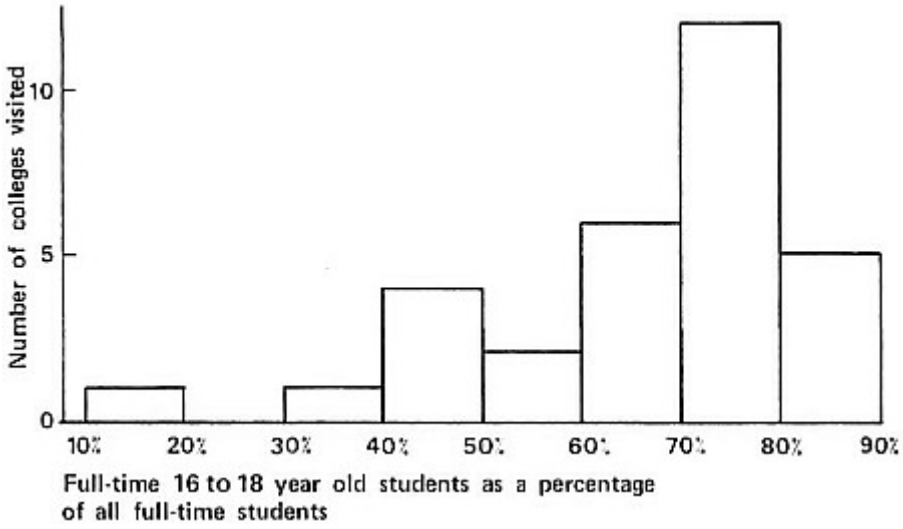
Figure 3 *Thirty-one sample colleges by proportion of 16 to 18 year olds*



In the colleges visited, full-time courses for 16 to 18 year old students which included modern languages were mainly of four kinds: those preparing students for GCE O- and A-levels in languages, and business studies, secretarial and hotel and catering courses. There were also a number of courses at an elementary level as part of an elective studies programme or for specialist groups. The following table shows the number of colleges offering modern languages in the various courses together with the number of students on each type of course. It also shows the proportion of the non-advanced modern language provision and the percentage of the total 16 to 18 full-time student population which this represents.

As Table 1 indicates, the total number of all students taking a modern language as part of a business studies course was small and in several colleges no students on OND courses in business studies were studying a language. Secretarial courses provided greater numbers of modern language students and, in many, language options in post O-level courses were quite popular. There was one college, however, where no secretarial student included a modern language in her programme. In hotel and catering departments almost all students continued modern language study, often at an elementary level but also in OND courses.

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Figure 4 *Range of courses available in the thirty-one colleges*

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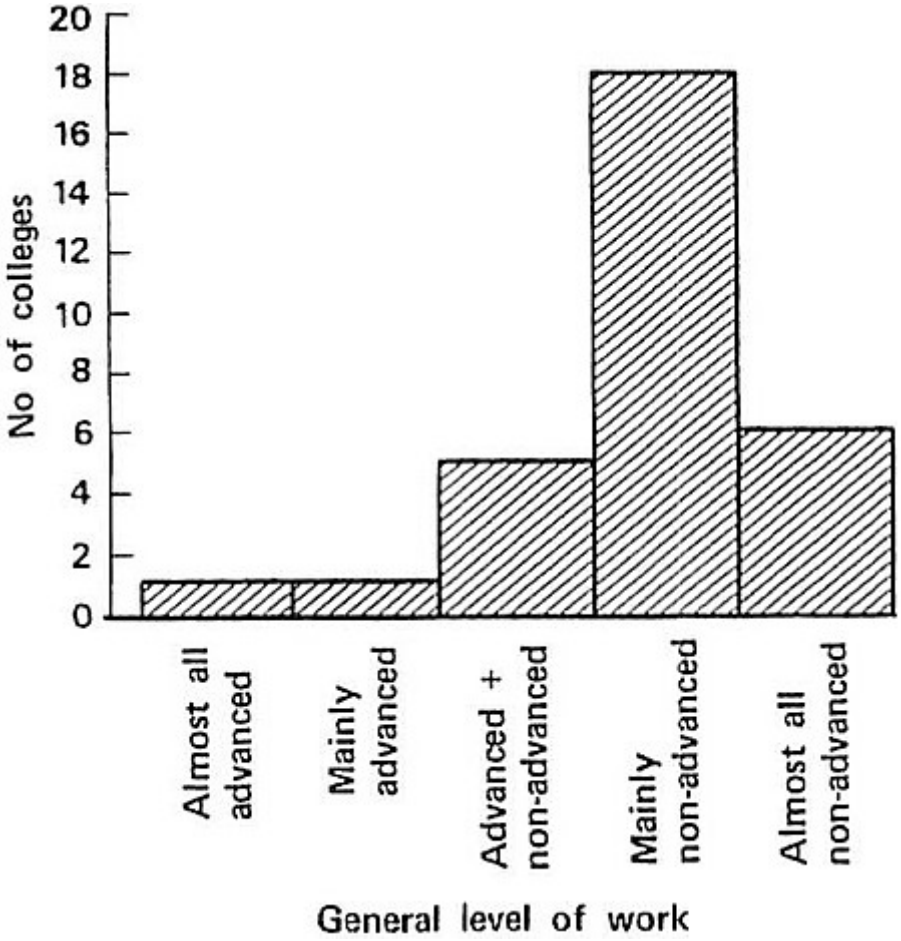
Figure 5 *The general level of college work in the thirty-one colleges*



The separation between GCE, business studies and secretarial courses was not complete. Some O- and A-level students were taking shorthand and typing. Other students, particularly girls, would be combining business studies with secretarial courses. Many secretarial courses prepared students for GCE examinations instead of or in addition to those of the Royal Society of Arts and the Institute of Linguists; in most cases the numbers of students enrolling for language options in business studies courses were so small that they were taught with A-level groups.

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Table 1 *Ranges of non-advanced modern language courses (16-18) in the thirty-one colleges visited*

	Number of full-time 16–18 modern language students	*Total percentage of modern language provision*	*As percentage of all 16–18 full-time students*	*Number of colleges offering courses*
Modern Language courses in:				
Academic and general studies				
to A-level	1,291	17.8	5.0	28
to O-level	1,030	14.2	4.0	24
Total	2,321	32.0	9.0	
Business studies				
in OND	251	3.5	1.0	15
at elementary level	148	2.0	0.6	5
Total	399	5.5	1.6	
Secretarial studies				
at post O-level	645	8.9	2.5	16
at elementary level	685	9.5	2.7	17
Total	1,330	18.4	5.2	
Hotel and catering				
in OND	1,044	14.4	4.1	14
for hotel receptionists	464	6.4	1.8	15
for craft caters	1,127	15.6	4.4	16
Total	2,635	36.4	10.3	
Elective studies	136	1.9	0.5	6
Specialist groups	423	5.8	1.6	11
TOTAL	7,244	100.0	28.2	

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4 Organisation

College organisation

One strong influence on the development of college organisation in further education has been the concept of the grouped-subject course leading to a single qualification. The basic unit has traditionally been the integrated course, not the individual subject discipline. Subjects thus tend to serve the requirements of course objectives and remain subordinate to them. This is reflected in organisational arrangements. Departments are concerned with grouped-subject courses and those subjects which are major elements in the courses have acquired a status and staffing strength commensurate with their role. Subjects which are minor or optional elements in these courses have a relatively low status. They may be serviced by specialist staff from other departments or by full-time or part-time staff appointed to the department itself. Subjects which have a minor or optional role in courses in a number of departments may therefore have no home base and no strong team of full-time staff.

The more diversified educational programmes for a wider range of students have led in many colleges, and notably in tertiary colleges, to some reappraisal of the concept of the grouped-subject course as a unit and of its implications for departmental structure. In a few cases this structure has been considered so inflexible that it has been

abandoned and replaced by one in which subject teams play a more independent part.

The majority of the colleges visited during the survey retained the traditional organisation, although among these were some in which academic networks had been created which crossed departmental boundaries. A few gave a more important role to teams of subject specialists. In one college, where departments were called schools and subject sections were called divisions, the divisions operated on a college-wide basis. Requests for teaching on serviced courses were made to heads of division rather than heads of schools. In other words, sections operated with some degree of autonomy and this appeared to provide a satisfactory basis for subject contributions with teams of staff working together. Similar autonomy for subject specialists was found in a tertiary college where there were subject schools including a school of languages.

Another college replaced its heads of department by directors, each of whom had a college-wide function rather than a departmental responsibility. The college was then divided into a number of sections which were rather more than the traditional section, yet rather less than the normal department. Each section came under the leadership of a senior lecturer. Modern language staff were based in an English and languages section, under a lecturer grade two.

In colleges where there was a high proportion of advanced work subject teams had a more important part to play than elsewhere,

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either constituting their own major sections within departments or existing as departments.

When greater flexibility and independence are provided for individual subjects, care has to be taken to retain what is valuable in the integrated course concepts and in the concept of subjects for vocational purposes.

Organisation of modern languages

In further education, modern languages may cause organisational problems in that they are usually a minor, and often an optional element in courses in one or more departments. As already indicated, languages featured in the thirty-one colleges in at least four different types of course. In twenty colleges at least three departments in the colleges were involved: in only two colleges were languages confined to a single department.

Location

Where modern language teaching occurs in more than one department in a college there may be a difference of interests between, on the one hand, the needs of individual departments which may wish to have their own modern linguists specialising in a particular kind of work and, on the other hand, the desire of modern linguists themselves for the benefits of working with a supportive specialist team, having a single home base and enjoying a variety of teaching experience.

Most colleges sited modern languages in one department, from which base they serviced other departments. Usually the department chosen was the one with the greatest amount or the highest level of modern language work, although there were occasions when these two factors did not coincide. In one case, it was difficult to understand the reason for the choice of department since almost all the modern language work was located in another.

Certainly there were advantages in having all the modern language staff based in one department. In some colleges where this occurred the language section provided opportunities for leadership, delegation of responsibilities, variety of experience, consultation and coordination of work. The section was also in a position to argue for appropriate modern language provision for the various courses and to negotiate the possibility of joint provision for departments whose interests happened to coincide. One or two instances seemed to suggest that specialist linguists working as members of a strong team were providing a better service to other departments than had previously been provided by staff appointed to the departments themselves.

In a quarter of the colleges, however, modern linguists were appointed separately to two or even three departments. When staff were appointed in this way for specialised language functions - in separate departments, often in separate buildings, and in two cases on separate sites - it was hardly surprising to find each section acting independently with little coordination or cooperation. Where efforts towards cooperation had been made or were sought they were often thwarted by circumstances. Location on separate sites was one example of this. Another was of two departments operating different timetables in which beginnings and ends of teaching

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periods did not always coincide. There were particular disadvantages in one case where most part-time staff came under the department of adult studies and had no contact with the full-time modern linguists in other departments.

Despite the difficulties, a number of modern language sections attempted to establish links with other modern linguists in the same institution. In two instances this was made possible by a larger modern language section also servicing a department with a small modern language team of its own. In another, declining numbers were encouraging cooperation because of a decision to merge classes.

In two institutions where there was a substantial quantity of modern language work and where a much greater proportion of the work was advanced, departments of languages had been created in their own right and with a strength equal to that of other departments. Equivalent status with other subject teams was also accorded in a tertiary college and in the college with the unusual organisation in divisions referred to above.

Cooperation

Cooperation in the sharing of ideas, techniques and materials within a modern language section was not always easy, particularly in view of

the need to find common ground between different languages and levels.

In some colleges staff in multilingual modern language sections were working together. In a few colleges, however, there was virtually a separate section for each individual language. Some of these single-language sections consisted of a single member of staff, sometimes inexperienced, perhaps even part-time, and where this was so, coordination of the work of the languages section as a whole was particularly difficult to achieve. Organisation of the part-time staff presented a further complication and considerable efforts were necessary if their activities were to be integrated and coordinated.

Many modern language staff also taught English as a foreign language. The coincidence of interest between the teaching of modern languages and of English as a foreign language was apparent in a number of colleges. One college in particular is worth quoting. Here the teaching of English as a foreign language had been introduced by the leader of the modern language section and had expanded until it warranted a separate team. The two teams worked together in shared facilities with some interchange of staff, joint discussions took place and there was an exchange of ideas on methodology which was mutually beneficial. In some colleges amalgamation had already taken place between the two sections and in others it was being discussed.

Status

Even when the modern language staff servicing several departments were brought together in one section within a single department, its small size and the low level of work made it a rather junior partner in the hierarchy.

This was reflected in the grading of modern language posts to which reference has been made. A position of comparative weakness meant that the effectiveness of the section in its servicing role and

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in the allocation of an appropriate place for modern languages in a variety of courses depended to a considerable extent on the initiative of the section leader. Without such initiative modern language sections were found which did not play their full part in the work of the college. Far from creating demand, they were not exploiting existing interest or satisfying demand already expressed.

Much of the vocational modern language work was in departments of business and secretarial studies. In five colleges the modern language section was based here and in seven these departments employed their own linguists. Often the work of modern linguists in this area was graded at a higher level than in other areas. There was therefore a better chance of career advancement than elsewhere. Thus in one college where modern languages were based in two departments the difference in status was such that lecturers from the academic studies department sought promotion in the department of secretarial studies. This affected the morale of modern language staff in the academic studies department and it underlines the desirability of a unified section in an appropriate department with career prospects and

effective leadership. The status of the different types of work depended largely on their relative strengths within the college. Frequently, however, the lowest status was accorded to language work in hotel and catering courses where it was undertaken by part-time staff who had few links either with the hotel and catering department or with the modern linguists.

Summary

From the diversity of practice seen in the colleges visited the following characteristics emerged. Modern languages featured as a minor or optional subject in several departments. Three-quarters of the colleges recognised the advantage of basing modern language staff in one department. This alone, however, was not always sufficient to ensure a strong section since the status of modern language courses was often low and cooperation among modern linguists was not always established.

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5 Staffing

Not all modern languages staff in the colleges were teaching students in the 16 to 18 age group at the time of the visits although some of them may have done so at other times. It would have been impracticable and misleading to single out only those who taught this age group and so this chapter refers to all full-time and part-time modern languages staff in the colleges visited.

Two of the colleges visited prepared their students for degrees in modern languages validated by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The staffing characteristics of such colleges with a great deal of advanced work differed in a number or respects from other colleges of further education. They are therefore discussed later and separately.

Age and experience

A striking feature of the full-time modern language staff was that they were relatively mature and experienced. Analysis of their ages shows that only 18 per cent were aged 30 or younger while 41 per cent were over 40.

As might be expected, relative maturity of age was also reflected in length of teaching experience, with over 72 per cent having taught modern languages for a period of six years or more. In addition 83 per cent had formerly been employed outside teaching. More than half this experience had entailed the use of foreign languages and it is a source of strength in the colleges that so many of the lecturers had put their foreign language skills to practical use. Occupations included work as a courier, export representative, bilingual secretary and hotel receptionist: work in a foreign bank, with the BBC, in the Foreign Office and translating, interpreting and examining. They also

included one or two less usual kinds of work - as a church missionary, as purser on a Cunard liner and as pianist with a French band.

Occupations not involving the use of foreign languages were even more varied, covering many aspects of commerce, industry and the armed and civil services. They also included the law, nursing, professional football, pig-breeding and fruit-farming.

A high proportion of staff had spent at least six months or more abroad on a single occasion. This may have been as part of their study or as part of their work outside teaching. Two years in Stuttgart as an economist with Daimler-Benz and two years in Teheran as private secretary to the French ambassador were examples of a kind of experience which undoubtedly added considerably to language proficiency.

Over a sixth of the full-time staff were native speakers of a Foreign language. Nearly three-quarters of them were French-speaking and the remainder German-speaking, apart from one Italian and one

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Swede. If part-time staff had been included, the proportion of native speakers would have been considerably higher.

The maturity and length of teaching experience were matched by considerable stability in staffing. Half of the full-time members of staff had been in post for six years or more and 18 per cent for over ten years. While students spend fewer years in further education than in schools, and rapid staff turnover may therefore be potentially less damaging to staff-student contact, stability is nevertheless a very important factor in building up good relationships within the section, between the section and other departments, between full-time and part-time staff and between the college and the community.

A degree of continuity in staffing may make a considerable contribution to good course development and to the establishment of a sense of standards. There is also the advantage that newly appointed members of staff enter a stable situation with a specific role to play in relation to established colleagues. At the same time there are dangers inherent in such a situation if the teaching settles down into an unchanging routine, fossilised through inertia. In one or two colleges there were signs of such a state of affairs.

Training and Qualifications

Some 86 per cent of the full-time staff were qualified in modern languages by virtue of a first degree or its equivalent. These equivalents included such qualifications as fellowship or membership of the Institute of Linguists and foreign degrees such as the *licence-ès-lettres*: over two-thirds of the native speakers were so qualified. Among the 86 per cent were 14 per cent who had further degrees. Of the remaining staff, those who were native speakers were qualified mainly by virtue of this alone, although a number had in addition such qualifications as GCE A-level or associateship of the Institute of Linguists. This left nearly 8 per cent of the full-time staff involved in the teaching of modern languages who were neither native speakers nor qualified by holding a relevant degree. Most of these did very

little modern language teaching, usually between one-and-a-half and three hours per week, and usually at a low level on catering and secretarial courses. The majority had an A-level, an associateship of the Institute of Linguists, an RSA diploma, a certificate of proficiency or similar qualification.

Since professional training is not a prerequisite for employment in further education and in view also of the amount of experience outside teaching, it would not have been surprising to find that a considerable proportion of the modern language staff had no teacher-training qualification. In fact 67 per cent had undergone initial training, although in most cases this was not specifically directed towards further education. A further 11 per cent had undertaken some form of in-service training for a professional qualification.

Status

To a large extent the status of the modern linguists is reflected by their staff grade which is mainly determined by the grade of work which they perform. In twelve of the institutions visited the post with responsibility for modern languages carried the status of

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senior lecturer or above and in nine institutions a grade two lecturer was designated lecturer in charge. Of 157 full-time staff teaching modern languages, four modern linguists were heads of department, two were principal lecturers and thirty-two were senior lecturers. Of these senior lecturers a number were in safeguarded posts for which there was no longer justification, for example following the closure of a course in French for primary school teachers. Over three-quarters of all modern linguists were grade two or grade one lecturers; almost half of them were grade one lecturers.

Size of section is another indication of its status. Just over a third of the colleges employed six or more linguists and the modern language sections appeared reasonably substantial. Further investigation, however, revealed that in 70 per cent of such cases either the linguists were divided between two departments or the sections contained a number of staff who spent very little time on modern languages. They were, therefore, little better off than much smaller sections. A quarter of the modern language sections contained at most three linguists. Such small numbers of staff made it difficult to provide adequate coverage for the range of modern language work. Often it meant that considerable reliance had to be placed on part-time lecturers if any breadth of work was to be offered.

Part-time staff

Many colleges employed substantial numbers of part-time modern language staff. A comparison between the number of full-time modern language staff teaching modern languages for six hours or more per week and the number of part-time modern linguists gave an average ratio of 1:2. The distribution, however, was uneven. In some colleges the ratio of full-time to part-time staff was much higher. Indeed, in two colleges the ratio was as high as 1:7 and one of these employed a total of thirty-seven part-time modern linguists. The average number of part-time linguists per college was ten. There was

thus a substantial task of liaison to be done. In some colleges, efforts at liaison were made by several of the full-time staff but the scale of the task and sometimes the lack of coherent policy often precluded the possibility of success.

In contrast with full-time staff, most of whom spent more than ten hours per week on modern languages, the average contact time of part-time staff was slightly less than four hours per week. Nevertheless the contribution which they made was considerable. This is illustrated by a comparison of their total contact time with that of the full-time staff which shows that they were responsible for one-third of all the modern language teaching in the colleges visited. In eight colleges their contribution was proportionately greater than this and in two colleges they were responsible for most of the teaching.

Foreign language assistants

The distribution of foreign language assistants among the colleges was very uneven. More than half of the colleges had no foreign language assistants. A number had previously been given assistants, but these had been withdrawn in times of financial stringency. Five colleges had three assistants, two had the equivalent of one-and-a-half, six had one and one college had one-fifth of an assistant's

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time. There appeared to be little relationship between the number of assistants and the number of hours of modern language teaching in the college. Thus whereas two of the colleges with three assistants had over 250 staff contact hours, two more had just over 100 hours and one had only 58 hours. This disparity is not explained by the level of work since the college with three assistants and 58 hours of staff contact was concerned only with non-advanced work in modern languages.

Colleges with CNAA degree work

The two colleges preparing students for CNAA degrees in modern languages exhibited a number of obvious differences in staffing from the other colleges. The 69 full-time linguists in these two colleges were generally older and more experienced. Almost a third of them were native speakers and eight out of ten had been in post for at least six years. Over a third had taken further degrees but only one in five had undertaken professional training, which in all cases was initial training. The higher level of work in which they were generally engaged was reflected in their higher status, with well over half of them at senior lectureship level or higher, and more than one in ten at the level of principal lecturer or head of department.

Summary

The modern language staff in the colleges visited were experienced, stable and well qualified. Many had spent extended periods of time in a foreign country and in other occupations besides teaching. Among them were a considerable number of native speakers. Over two-thirds of those doing non-advanced work were professionally trained. In the majority of colleges modern linguists had a relatively low status and worked together in fairly small sections. In many instances they were

without the aid of foreign language assistants. Part-time staff made a substantial contribution.

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6 Support available to teaching staff

One significant factor in the success of any course or subject in an institution is the support for the teaching staff which is provided by the college principal and academic board, the head of department, the head of the modern language section (or lecturer in charge), the local education authority (LEA) and outside bodies.

Head of section

At one college, the senior lecturer in charge of modern languages had developed good links with the local tourist industry, was an oral examiner for the area and hence enjoyed useful contacts with schools in the county. He frequently met heads of modern language departments in schools and the local education authority adviser. He had investigated the entry requirements and examination goals of the different courses before constructing clear statements of aims and objectives in collaboration with junior colleagues. From all students on the language courses he asked for comments on what the college provided which he summarised and circulated to heads of department and language staff. In addition, he controlled the choice of teaching and learning material, worked closely with the college audio-visual resources centre and discussed with part-time staff the availability and use of materials and equipment. In another college, the senior lecturer had forged a strong team with considerable influence on modern language teaching in the area. He was sensitive to the needs of the section as a whole, organised in-service training for local teachers in schools, and had been president of the local junior chamber of commerce. He had set up the local branch of a professional language teachers' association and had been its first chairman. Both these leaders were clearly concerned to continue to improve the quality of the service which they and their colleagues offered to the college.

In a third of the institutions no single specialist lecturer had the responsibility for coordinating work in languages since the college structure required the inclusion of one or more linguists on the staff of different departments. This sometimes led to an anomalous situation: for instance, in one college a senior lecturer was teaching low level language groups, while in another department of the same college lecturers grades two and one were given linguistically more demanding work.

In colleges with a designated senior lecturer or lecturer grade two in charge of modern languages rather more than half gave some positive support to their sections. The two section leaders cited at the beginning of this Chapter were among several who could be described as providing good leadership with careful definition of aims, constructive thinking about the use of resources, discreet

monitoring of colleagues' work and - a rare occurrence - professional guidance to the inexperienced teacher or the foreign language

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assistant. The reasons why active leadership was not more widely encountered lay in difficulties in circumstances or conditions of work rather than in lack of awareness of responsibilities. Some section leaders had heavy teaching loads and a diversity of tasks which hampered their role as leaders. Some younger lecturers in charge were inhibited by their age and lack of status from attempting to persuade older colleagues, who in some cases were of higher grades, of the merits of their own pattern of planned course development. Although the subject leaders themselves often displayed teaching skills of high quality, their colleagues seemed on the whole unaware of these skills and part-time untrained native speakers very rarely received any guidance. The tradition that individual lecturers are entirely responsible for the classes that they teach was clearly illustrated: all too often there was a pronounced reluctance to interfere in the work of a colleague, or guidance was delicate to the point of ineffectiveness.

Head of department

The influence of the head of department in the encouragement and support of modern language staff is crucial to their success. It is he who has the responsibility for developing courses, employing staff, enrolling students and organising the guidance of both. In just over half the institutions visited heads of department whose responsibilities included modern languages showed positive support for the subject. The organisation of several colleges entailed modern language staff being placed in more than one department and in such cases the degree of support given could differ markedly, with sometimes unfavourable effects on the morale of the subject teachers concerned. Several of those heads of department with qualifications in modern languages were - surprisingly perhaps - outshone by some non-linguist colleagues whose insight into the problems and needs of modern language staff was deeper, whose definition of the tasks was clearer and whose contribution to the success of the section was far more significant.

The following are examples of some kinds of the positive leadership displayed by some heads of department. One with a knowledge of the problems of modern language learning, even though not involved in the teaching, coordinated the preparation of schemes of work. The fact that he gave the section every possible support meant that it was held in high regard in the college and enjoyed similar support from the principal. Another head of department, a qualified linguist, encouraged contacts and exchanges of staff and students with foreign institutions and industries. In another college, where the head of section was not a strong leader, the encouragement and advice from the head of department were essential to the functioning of the modern language section. He took care to inform himself of students' needs, of criteria for assessing the teaching and use of equipment and of the strengths and weaknesses of staff. Another head of department strongly supported an initiative to interest local firms in language tuition. In another college a linguist who participated in a number of

the student exchange schemes had carefully considered the purposes of language learning. His contribution to the work of the section was of vital importance.

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The principal and the academic board

The relative status of a course or subject within an institution of further education is ultimately determined by the principal in consultation with his academic board. In response to the needs of the area served by the institution he makes demands which determine a department's contribution to the work of the college and will apportion the funds to support it. In short, the principal and academic board define the task and enable it to be fulfilled.

In nearly two-thirds of the colleges visited the principal gave general support to modern languages and was favourably disposed towards the inclusion of a modern language in the options offered to a substantial proportion of students in the 16 to 18 age range. In a quarter of the institutions visited this support took a variety of practical forms. In one a more flexible framework of organisation had been created in which the contribution of modern languages, in common with other subjects, could be more effective. Elsewhere, financial help was provided to foster work experience and exchange schemes abroad, sometimes with the aid of Rotary Club and other links, and modern language courses for less able students were encouraged. It is perhaps not surprising that a satisfactory organisation linked with reasonable quality of work was accompanied by a positive and favourable attitude on the part of the college principal. Equally, in colleges where modern languages were poorly organised, principals tended to be less convinced of the value of the subject.

Advisory support from local education authorities

By providing equipment and resources for language teaching LEAs usually gave generous support to the colleges. In some cases the retention of foreign language assistants during a period of financial stringency represented positive encouragement and there were instances where financial aid was available for students' work experience or for short intensive language courses held outside the college. Local authority advisory support for modern languages in further education, however, was quite rare. Visits from a specialist modern language adviser were reported in one-third of the colleges. One adviser initiated and acted as chairman of a further education modern language staff association, which met once a term. In a further four instances, in an attempt to establish links between the schools and further education, advisers organised meetings of heads of modern language departments in schools to which further education staff were invited. These figures by no means reflect the number of authorities which employ an adviser with responsibility for modern languages and they must be viewed in perspective because, in some authorities, specialist subject advisers are neither expected to enter, nor are they welcome, in colleges of further education. Even where this is not the case, some advisers may feel that their own lack

of experience in further education limits the contribution which they could make in a college.

In-service training

One college had its own in-service training programmes and three authorities had organised in-service courses for modern language teachers in which further education lecturers could participate, but these were exceptions rather than the rule. Since most courses organised by other external agencies over the past few years had

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been designed principally for teachers in schools, lecturers in further education had found only a few with direct relevance to their work and attendance had been sporadic. Evidence from the survey showed that it was the section leader who had participated rather than other full-time members of staff.

Other agencies

The initiative shown by one senior lecturer in organising a local branch of a professional language teachers' association has already been mentioned, but this was the only college of the thirty-one visited which had group membership of any professional association. The same college made good use of the services of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT). Another had close links with the Goethe Institut and the Institut Français, but generally these sources of contemporary materials were untapped, as were the cultural services of embassies and consulates. Finally, there was very little evidence of modern language staff holding meetings with specialist colleagues, either within or outside the institution, in order to compare notes and profit from the ideas and practice of others working in the same or allied fields.

Summary

The diverse nature of the institutions visited makes it inappropriate to draw final conclusions about staff support but certain points deserve comment. In two-thirds of the colleges the status accorded to the work of the section leader was relatively low and such success as was evident was attributable either to the confidence and vision of the individual lecturer or to the support and leadership available from other sources. In thirteen colleges the head of department gave good or outstanding support to a modern language section in which the quality of work observed was considered at least satisfactory. In all but two of these the principal was similarly supportive. In seven, however, the support given by the head of department, on whose enthusiasm the section was obliged to rely and who proved essential to its success, was not matched by the leadership shown by the lecturer in charge of modern languages. Only two cases were encountered where good work was not accompanied by a supportive head of department and here the decisive factor was the hardworking individual lecturer inspiring the students in spite of an unhelpful organisation. Support at the level of head of department or above might therefore be regarded as exerting a key influence on the quality of work in the colleges visited.

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7 Resources

Resources in this Chapter are defined as accommodation, equipment and materials. These are of course closely linked and cannot be considered independently of each other. They depend also in some measure on other factors such as funding, support services and general college facilities. These factors determine the reliability and availability of equipment and materials, which in turn determine the use which can be made of them.

Accommodation

Whether resources are made available to an individual section or department or are held centrally, provision affects the allocation of accommodation as much as of other resources. The extent to which modern language teaching was considered a practical subject, which like other practical subjects requires specialist accommodation, contributed to decisions about the nature and siting of rooms in which teaching took place.

Most modern linguists would prefer to teach in a modern language suite with equipment and materials readily to hand and would welcome the opportunity to create the atmosphere for a "cultural island" by the judicious use of display materials. General college or departmental policy, however, might necessitate the use of general classrooms in several buildings.

In almost a quarter of the colleges visited there were rooms designated for modern languages, conveniently grouped to form a modern language suite. Some of these suites included facilities such as a staff room, a resources centre, storage for equipment, books, tapes and other materials, a language laboratory, a workshop, a recording room, display areas and adequate facilities for audiovisual playback. To some extent, the facilities provided depended on the arrangements for central resources and servicing within the college. Even so a few modern language sections found it useful to have some of their own resources.

In a small number of cases, while it seemed initially that suitable accommodation had been provided, a closer look at the facilities showed that certain vital factors had been overlooked. Thus in one college with a compact suite of pleasant rooms thin walls virtually prohibited the use of recorded sound. Another included a long echoing room which was quite unsuitable for language work. In another, walls had to serve as projection screens; in other colleges rooms lacked adequate ventilation, blackout, writing boards and even power points. When efforts had been made to provide suitable accommodation, it seemed unfortunate that its use was restricted for want of minor modifications.

Staff in other colleges would no doubt have envied their more fortunate colleagues and regarded such deficiencies as minor irritations. They belonged to that deprived majority whose lot it was

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to tramp the corridors from room to room, from floor to floor, from building to building and even from site to site. They often had their hands quite literally full and it is a tribute to their professional dedication that many of them still used equipment even if more than one journey was necessary to bring it to the classroom.

In such colleges, the lack of suitable accommodation may hinder resource-based teaching and learning. Thus modern language classes were observed in such varied surroundings as a biology laboratory, a computer room, an art room, a windowless lecture theatre, a hall, a research kitchen and even a ladies' changing room.

In one college there was overcrowding and rooms were consequently allocated on the basis of group size rather than subject need. As a direct result of this, a businessmen's course had had to be abandoned since the participants refused to be moved from room to room when other institutions in the area offered more suitable accommodation.

Perhaps the most damaging effect of this lack of specialist provision is not so immediately apparent - that on the morale of teaching staff. The provision of a specialist suite is an open recognition of status and of the value of what modern linguists have to offer. The absence of such a base and the relegation of staff to a nomadic role can have only an adverse effect on their self-esteem.

Equipment

In all the colleges, there was at least one room assigned to modern languages. This was the language laboratory. Even if it served some other purpose it meant that the room in which it was housed had to serve. often quite inadequately and unsuitably, as a base. In a quarter of the colleges this was the only such base. It was not surprising therefore to find that it was usually heavily timetabled and not available on an *ad hoc* basis or for private study. Nor was it surprising to find that it was often used not as a laboratory but for general classroom activity. Unfortunately the laboratories had seldom been designed with such use in mind and the booth partitions often hindered both oral and visual communication. Indeed this problem was so great that it was not unusual to find the booths empty and the class confined to a small space at the front or one side of the room. Obviously it would have been preferable to reduce the height of the partitions or to arrange the booths differently if such multi-purpose use of the room had been planned.

Some laboratories had been designed to cater also for private study and the library use of tape. Thus in one, three minilabs had been added to a sixteen-booth laboratory and. in another, six cassette booths had been incorporated into a sixteen-booth laboratory leaving ten open-reel positions. These laboratories also tended to be heavily timetabled, however, and there was little evidence of the use which had been envisaged. In only one case was the laboratory technician, with 70 per cent of his time allocated to languages, able to organise

private study in the unused booths of the laboratory. Otherwise, where there was individual use of tape. this more usually took place in a resources centre (which may well be a more suitable location).

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Centralising the provision of resources sometimes created disadvantages. In one college equipment was held in a central area, from which staff had to collect (and carry) whatever they needed. In another, with a piped system of relaying video tape-recorded programmes from the resources centre to the classroom, programmes had to be booked a week in advance and, since there was no telephone link between sender and receiver, times of starting had also to be synchronised in advance. Consequently whole programmes had to be taken at a sitting and the teacher was able neither to control the delivery of the recording nor to replay short sections at his discretion.

Most modern language sections had a plentiful supply of equipment of their own or access to a central supply. Video-recorders were usually available and in a few cases had been allocated to the section. Overhead projectors were quite often a normal feature in the classroom. Access to less frequently used pieces of equipment was usually not difficult and a few colleges even had high-speed copiers.

The extent to which this equipment was used varied considerably from college to college. In nearly half the institutions visited equipment was seen in use. In a substantial number of institutions, however, equipment appeared to be little used; this seemed unfortunate when it was readily available and when its use would often have been appropriate. Of all the classes seen across the full range of courses, one in three involved the use of some piece of electronic audio-visual equipment.

Use of equipment varied from course to course as well as from college to college. It was most widespread on secretarial and business studies courses where at least one item of equipment was used in about two fifths of the classes seen; in over half of these the equipment was the language laboratory itself. On A-level courses, on the other hand, audio-visual resources were used in only one in five of all the classes seen. The quality and appropriateness of their use varied considerably and are discussed later.

Materials

The supply of course materials was usually adequate but their use was not always well planned. Occasionally there was a lack of coordination in the section when different lecturers were using different course materials with the same students. In a few cases textbooks were in short supply and this may have been the result of shortage of money, inadequacy of supply, insufficient knowledge of the courses being used in the session or in some cases bad planning. Some LEAs did not supply textbooks for this age group and so some students had been obliged to buy their own books. Sometimes teachers' handbooks for the course in use were not available. In some colleges the suitability of textbooks was discussed annually: in others, reconsideration was overdue.

Sections often had their own library collections and these were well used. no doubt because they were under the direct control of the language staff who were thoroughly conversant with them. These collections usually included dictionaries, reference books and readers together with back numbers of periodicals from the

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main library. In one case, current newspapers and periodicals were housed in the languages area and fourteen titles were counted for French and German alone. This contrasted sharply with another college where all foreign newspapers and periodicals had been cancelled as an economy measure. Few sections had collections of books on teaching methodology although there were some notable exceptions. Material held in language sections had rarely been catalogued systematically. Where this had happened it was usually based on an idiosyncratic system devised by the head of section. Most colleges had the services of a professional librarian and it was unfortunate that the librarians were not called upon more frequently for advice on indexing and retrieval systems.

Duplicated print material often constituted a major teaching resource and was valuable in bringing relevant texts of current interest into the classroom. Photocopies of newspaper and magazine articles were frequently used, as were duplicated worksheets and questionnaires. For a number of modern language sections the cost of stationery constituted a major proportion of running expenditure. In the majority of cases, duplicated materials were retained by individual lecturers for their own subsequent use. One section was a notable exception to this in that it filed and catalogued this contemporary material to make it more readily available to all staff or students for whom it might be appropriate. In many colleges a central print room provided excellent facilities for the production of such material, although in one the potential benefit was limited by a departmental decision to operate the policy of 'first come, first served' until its allocation of stationery was exhausted.

Many college libraries offered pleasant conditions and an attractive working environment and at least one remained open until nine o'clock each evening in order to make its facilities available to evening classes as well as to day students and staff. In a number of cases libraries were beginning to acquire multi-media learning resources and were sometimes part of, or closely associated with, a resources centre. The modern language section of the library was usually well stocked for the study of literature and often there were good collections of contemporary paperbacks in various languages. Less provision was made for the study of language and contemporary social, political and economic affairs. In a number of libraries, for instance, it would have been difficult to find material for the project work required by certain GCE A-level boards and there was little to interest students other than those following literary courses. Even where there was a well chosen stock of other material, storage and classification systems were such that it was not always easy to find. One librarian had overcome this problem by providing the modern linguists with up-to-date lists of relevant books. It was then the responsibility of the section staff to direct students accordingly.

It was surprising to find a number of colleges where the modern linguists took very little part in the selection of books for the library. The library provision in such cases reflected the inspired guesswork of the librarian rather than the thinking of the modern language section. In the absence of a considered contribution from the subject

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team the efforts of the librarian were often commendable. Resources centres occasionally presented the same picture. In one centre a good collection of video and sound tapes for class use and independent study in languages had been built up, more on the initiative of the central support staff than at the request of the modern linguists, and, once more, the linguists were not availing themselves of this facility.

Support services

Maintenance and servicing arrangements for the equipment varied considerably and this was reflected in the condition of the equipment. especially as some of it was quite old. In a few cases there were no regular servicing arrangements. Some colleges relied on a single annual service, supplemented by the work of a college technician. Others relied solely on the services of a technician as and when available. A fortunate few had the exclusive services of their own technician. The type and quality of these services affected the reliability and efficiency of the equipment. One-third of the language laboratories had been installed before 1970 and where these were still running efficiently, much credit was due to those responsible for regular maintenance and servicing.

In a few cases, in addition to specific technical support, there was a laboratory steward or a clerical or secretarial assistant. These made a considerable difference to the availability of equipment and resource material and therefore to the type of work which, could be undertaken. Often they performed simple maintenance tasks, catalogued materials, ensured that equipment and materials were available when required, recorded programmes directly from radio or television and duplicated tapes or work-sheets. One fortunate section had a secretarial assistant with A-level qualifications in French and German who was able to type foreign language material.

Summary

In general, modern language sections were well provided with resources. They had a good supply of equipment, some of it quite sophisticated, and an adequate supply of materials. They were backed by various support services and college facilities and had access, therefore, to an interesting range of resources. The area in which they were least well served was that of accommodation. This in itself was a powerful inhibiting factor, militating against resource-based teaching and learning.

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8 Course organisation

This Chapter is concerned with course management and planning and examines enrolment procedures and qualifications, time allocation, class grouping, course coordination, schemes of work, assessment, testing and contact with Europe.

Enrolment procedures

Rarely did a representative of the modern language staff have the chance to interview applicants. This responsibility was usually discharged by the heads of department concerned, whose order of priorities not infrequently differed from that of the linguists. In a number of colleges intradepartmental consultation was effective and all the students were carefully interviewed and enrolled on appropriate courses. Drop-out rates tended generally, although not exclusively, to be higher in those colleges which had a less rigorously controlled entry to language courses.

Enrolment qualifications

Qualifications for entry to courses varied widely. Several colleges demanded minimum standards of entry for A-level courses as high as O-level Grade B but were nevertheless able to recruit viable teaching groups, sometimes for an accelerated one-year course. In other colleges O-level Grade C or CSE Grade I was acceptable for A-level courses and in a number of instances no previous experience in a modern language was required for entry to OND courses in hotel and catering.

Time allocation

GCE courses usually had a generous allocation of time, with average time allocations higher than those commonly found in schools. The time allocations for secretarial courses varied considerably according to the level and the objectives. For non-advanced courses it was in a few cases very high. Details are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Time allocated to language courses*

Course	Time allocation per language	
	Range (in hours)	Average
A-level	3–7	6+
O-level	1–5	4+
OND in Business Studies	3–4	4—
OND complementary option	1–2½	2—
Secretarial	1–10	Dependent on course, level and objective
OND hotel and catering	2	2
Craft catering	1	1

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It was noticeable that in all types of course the most elementary levels were almost always those which were allocated the least time. In general, the more advanced the course, the greater was the number of hours per week. Where considerations of viability made it necessary for adults to work alongside younger students the course often had to be organised into a small number of extended blocks of time, usually three-hour sessions, as a means of enabling adults to attend on a part-time basis. There was in fact a tendency to distribute time for all the groups in longer blocks than is generally considered desirable for similar age groups in schools.

Group composition

HM Inspectors noted the numbers of students present in the classes they attended. Because of absences or changes in circumstances since the start of the academic year, the numbers of students present were often smaller than those entered on class registers. The average class seen on GCE, secretarial and business courses consisted of eight students with numbers ranging from two to sixteen. In classes for hotel and catering courses the average group size was eleven and the range between five and twenty-two students. Twenty-five per cent of all the classes seen contained fewer than five students and a further 42 per cent between six and ten. The ratio of men to women students averaged 1:5 in all the classes seen but there was considerable variation among courses. On secretarial courses virtually all the students were women. On hotel reception and tourism courses the ratio was 1:6, on A-level courses 1:4 and on O-level and catering courses 1:2. The number of classes in which men outnumbered women was very small.

Course coordination

On certain courses there was some fragmentation in the teaching. Often there was a lack of coordination between the lecturers. In one college the lack of coordination was such that students being taught by two members of staff were apparently following two distinct programmes only slightly related to each other. In another, one A-level class was taught by three lecturers and an O-level class by two, one of these taking the class for only one hour a week. Sometimes this kind of situation is unavoidable; at times when there are particular strengths and weaknesses among the staff it is desirable; but there is always the need to relate one part of the course to another. Regular and detailed consultation is necessary among the members of staff concerned and this may not always be easy, particularly if one or more of them teach on a part-time basis.

Reference has been made earlier in this Chapter to the flexibility of standards of qualification on entry and to the size of teaching groups. In colleges experiencing difficulty in recruiting it was inevitable that there had been a number of class mergers. GCE A-level or secretarial students and OND students were often taught together. The grouping of adult part-time students with full-time 16 to 18 year old students could have a number of advantages not merely in making a group viable but also in creating an atmosphere of maturity, motivation and serious endeavour. These benefits had to be measured, however, against the timetabling constraints which have already been mentioned. Heterogeneous

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groups of mixed experience were also seen in extension* studies, on catering courses and in compulsory options. In a number of other courses where numbers were low viability was achieved only by grouping together students of different ability who were often working towards different objectives. Thus situations arose in which A-level and OND students were taught together in both first and second year classes and A-level students were joined by post O-level bilingual secretaries for some of their lectures. Classes were prepared simultaneously for the Institute of Linguists part one examination and GCE O-level and one class was made up of part-time adult students and full-time students in the 16 to 18 age range from both the first and second years of a two-year A-level course and from a one-year course to A-level.

The preceding paragraphs describe some serious difficulties of course management where groups were made up of students from various linguistic backgrounds and with a variety of goals. Even the less heterogeneous groupings posed considerable problems of course planning and organisation. In these circumstances it was clearly imperative to consider carefully the target populations and to set appropriate aims and objectives within a detailed scheme of work. This happened in only a minority of cases.

Detailed course planning and schemes of work

It is important to consider what is meant by a scheme of work and what purpose it serves. For each individual course there should be a separate scheme of work which includes a description of the target population, realistic aims and objectives expressed in terms of levels of language skills, teaching method and course materials. It is not unreasonable to expect staff, in consultation with each other and the section leader, to produce such a document as an essential part of course planning. In order for the scheme to be of positive use, it ought not to be merely a statement of examination objectives or a list of chapter headings from the course textbook, but a clear professional analysis of who the learners are, what level of linguistic skills and knowledge they should reach at the end of their course, how this might be achieved and with what resources. Regular revision is essential to cater for changes in student population and needs.

In some cases excellent schemes had been drawn up. For instance, a set of schemes for German gave particulars of the area of study, level of work, time available and aims of the students in terms of linguistic performance. It explained the rationale underlying the teaching method, described source materials and included a grid relating the teaching week to learning objectives, content in terms of knowledge and skills, method of work and student tasks. Hotel and catering students in another college were offered a variety of modern language courses depending on their previous linguistic experience and vocational goals. Schemes of work listed in sequence topics, methodology, materials, teaching aids and grammatical structures. In two other colleges, although the schemes were not drawn up in quite the same detail, very careful consideration had been given to the nature of the group to be taught, the linguistic performance to be achieved, method and materials.

*Term used to describe general or complementary studies.

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Such schemes have several advantages. Heads of department and principals have a useful point of reference when discussing the contribution of modern languages. The modern language staff themselves have a valuable instrument for planning and teaching their courses in a way most suitable to the different groups and they are likely to derive benefit from comparing their own schemes with those of colleagues. Finally, the students themselves can see what is planned for them in rather more detail than is normally shown in an examination syllabus.

Schemes bearing some resemblance to the model already set out have been described. More than half the institutions visited had no schemes of work at all. For the rest, appropriate or at least adequate schemes had been prepared in some departments but not in others, or only for particular levels of course. In a few of these cases only brief outlines existed, usually based on the examination syllabus, and the overriding impression was that schemes were produced in isolation by individual lecturers who took the trouble to do so rather than in accordance with departmental policy.

HM Inspectors looked for evidence of relevant thinking about aims, method and choice of examination. Over half the institutions relied exclusively on a suitable text-book and an examination syllabus and did not develop their own course materials to meet the specific needs of their own students. In one or two instances the importance of achieving some standardisation between parallel groups, taught by different lecturers and aiming for the same examination, had yet to be recognised. In a third of the institutions visited certain staff had given some consideration to student goals and appropriate learning tasks. In one college specialising in catering a one-year diploma was offered to two groups of students. Beginners worked towards the Institute of Linguists preliminary examination in French while those who already had O-level or its equivalent did a limited amount of catering French and spent the rest of their modern language time learning German. In another college one lecturer had prepared his own materials for use in conjunction with existing resources in order to develop appropriate skills for OND students while another, who had just been given responsibility for hotel and catering courses, had successfully organised different levels of work and found ways of motivating students in mixed achievement groups who had only one hour of language study a week.

Choice of examinations

There was evidence that insufficient attention had been given to the choice of examinations. For instance, more applicants for GCE A-level courses might well have been offered syllabuses which placed greater emphasis on practical language skills and less on literary appreciation. Such syllabuses had been chosen in a few colleges. The range of examinations available from the Royal Society of Arts, the Institute of Linguists or the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry might offer acceptable alternatives to a traditional O-level course for some students with a CSE Grade 2 or 3 or for other groups

of students. The difficulties of lack of motivation among catering students and others for whom a course

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in a modern language does not lead to an examination and, therefore, in their view, is a less important component of their course could be eased by developing a realistic test with relevant practical objectives.

Assessment and records

One college had a system of recording students' progress which merits consideration. Directed individual study tasks, group work participation, progress tests and student attitudes were assessed on a progress card which was used to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses. The results were summarised on a course progress profile. A continuous assessment form sub-divided each component of the student's performance into such elements as initiative, application and reliability.

About a third of the institutions visited operated some form of continuous assessment leading to fairly detailed reports on students' achievements in modern languages. Most colleges had a system of record cards for pastoral and academic progress, but these usually recorded only the results of internal examinations. A few had no record system at all. Notably absent were departmental policies on marking and assessment. Very few modern language sections had an agreed approach to assessment which would both analyse individual performance in order to diagnose remedial needs and provide a profile of achievement and progress in different language skills in the detail described above. There was a tendency for assessment to be based on the subjective impressions of individual members of staff.

Contact with other European countries

The scale of liaison with other European countries, especially with France and Germany, was impressive. Some colleges had shown considerable initiative in exploiting town-twinning arrangements or other contacts to provide exchanges of staff and students. At two colleges secretary linguists spent their fifth term abroad. At another, exchange secretarial posts for two students a year were highly valued. Some catering students attended wine tasting courses in France as an integral and linguistically valuable part of their studies and there was one example of a week-end course in England open to all students of French in the college. Admirable as these initiatives undoubtedly were, it was disappointing to find that fewer college-inspired opportunities seemed to exist for a nonvocational student aiming for 0- or A-level. Surprisingly, too, some of the exchange schemes were not initiated by the modern language staff at all but rather by specialist departments. In the few instances where modern linguists were not involved it was felt that the linguistic value of the exercise had suffered. The most outstanding example of organisation of overseas links was provided by a college which placed particular emphasis on languages in relation to management and business studies, offering courses over the whole range from beginners to post-graduates. Exchange links had been established with 30 other institutions in no fewer than seventeen countries world-wide, in

which both linguist and non-linguist staff and students were involved. Whilst these links had an essentially vocational basis in export marketing and courses

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for HND in business studies, strenuous efforts had been made to involve students in the 16 to 18 age range in foreign placements and exchange visits to France, East and West Germany and Spain.

Summary

Certain institutions showed an appropriately professional attitude to course planning. The majority of colleges however lacked a systematic approach to course management and did not adequately monitor, assess or record individual students' progress. Too much work in modern languages was fragmented sometimes because of the constraints of college organisation.

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9 Teaching and learning

During their visits HM Inspectors considered the quality of teaching and learning in a number of language courses which varied in length, were pitched at different levels and designed for various purposes. From the work seen three characteristics emerged as central to successful language learning at the post-16 stage: the suitability of the courses in meeting the vocational and educational needs of the students; an appropriate balance of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing); and the opportunity for students to play an active part in language learning and to develop their capacities for independent study. In making assessments HM Inspectors took account of the demands made by examinations and the influence which these might have on styles of teaching, the pressures on individual lecturers required to teach across a wide range of courses and the constraints imposed by lack of time on some courses and by poor facilities in others. At the same time they appreciated the considerable opportunities for teaching and learning made possible by good provision of resources in some institutions.

GCE courses

In approximately two-thirds of all the classes seen following O- and A-level courses students were achieving a measure of success. Much of the work was geared to passing examinations. To that end it was purposeful, often thorough and followed a traditionally formal pattern with a heavy concentration on the learning of grammar and on translation. A typical example would be the reading of a text by the teacher and then by individual students, the teacher correcting their pronunciation where necessary. Obstacles to understanding would be

explained, either in the foreign language or in English, questions on the text would be asked and answered and a written exercise set to test understanding. Written work would consist of essays and translation into and from the foreign language. Within the limits of this type of approach much of the teaching was competent, but it tended to lack pace and urgency and there was at times little allowance for the varied and often inadequate linguistic background of the students. Many learning exercises tended to be examination exercises, rehearsed over and over again. This approach was sometimes the result of a conscious decision to provide, particularly for weaker students, a secure framework for the development of skills but, frequently, insufficient thought had been given to the objectives of the work and success depended largely on student motivation. The response of the students was often somewhat inhibited, however, by this heavy concentration on examination preparation. The majority were working hard and remained content to absorb information and reproduce it at the appropriate time in the appropriate form.

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They were engaged in practising the language skills of speaking, reading and writing in a rather narrow and circumscribed way responding only to minimum demands of the examination. This style of work, which did not necessarily produce examination success, tended to restrict their opportunities to improve their spoken and written performance and to develop wider reading and listening skills.

This was not, however, the whole story. About a quarter of all O- and A-level classes were characterised by teaching and learning of high quality - good pace, an imaginative and varied approach and the use of a range of media as sources and stimuli. In these classes, students were encouraged to participate as fully as they were able in the work, nearly always by the use of contemporary and relevant material collected by the teacher and duplicated for distribution. In one A-level class, for example, students were presented with a large collection of texts from various sources on oil spillages as an introduction to the theme of pollution and technology. The purpose of the class was to introduce the theme by means of discussion mainly in the foreign language, followed by gist reading of some of the texts, This was followed by intensive study of one short section, study of another section being set for homework. In the same college two O-level groups were seen with a comparable approach - interesting texts, with some suspense and humour, good use of the foreign language and frequent contributions from students. In both these classes the intention was to practise certain structures and to widen vocabulary in a well conceived progression to a specific objective (O-level) in a limited time. In a similar class in another college students were invited to recall and extend a story that they had heard and were encouraged to use language with confidence. Teaching of high quality was seen in a class in which the teacher gave an excellent impromptu talk in French to A-level students on the elections which were taking place at the time. Students were absorbed and interested enough to interrupt with questions, to take notes and to comment briefly in French. Where such opportunities for developing skills were offered and greater involvement was encouraged, students were usually responsive and work of high quality resulted.

Qualities of teaching similar to those described above characterised the best of the work seen which involved the use of audio-visual resources. Where these were being used most profitably, it was usually as a stimulus or reinforcement and as part of a more diversified approach. In one college, for example, A-level students were working from a collection of press articles dealing with an aspect of contemporary France. They were being encouraged to exercise the four language skills by listening to interviews and dialogue on tape in the language laboratory, responding orally and in writing, using the material both as a basis for translation and essay writing and as a stimulus for further reading. In another, a discussion in the foreign language on current affairs was well supported by a collection of relevant newspaper cuttings, pictures and maps. Attention was drawn to key structures and vocabulary by the use of overhead projector transparencies and a tape recording

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related to the events under discussion was played in order to direct students' listening and improve aural comprehension. In a third discussion, a theme in the foreign language was reinforced by the showing of a video tape recording of a BBC broadcast, students' attention again having been directed in advance to certain key features.

The quality of the use of audio-visual resources, however, varied considerably. In about a third of the classes it appeared to make little significant contribution to the quality of learning. This was usually because the use of equipment was either inappropriate, unskilfully exploited or technically deficient. In one class, for example, a slide projector was used as a stimulus for discussion but the technique for questioning was so poorly developed that little more than monosyllabic answers were provided and any impact which the material might have had was lost. This contrasted strikingly with a class in which conversation was stimulated by colour slides. Instead of being content with superficial descriptions the teacher asked searching questions to make students draw inferences from what they saw and express them in the foreign language. In another, the impact of a tape recording was lost through the bad positioning of the tape recorder. There was evidence, too, that the potential of the language laboratory was not being fully exploited, often because too little attention had been given to the techniques required for the development of listening skills. For example, when aural comprehension was being practised students were too rarely required to listen initially without the support of a written text and too few attempts were made to check that students had understood the main points of what they had heard. Students' recorded responses were insufficiently used as a basis for further work and it was rare to find listening tasks being set for homework even when the necessary cassette recorders were available for this purpose.

A conspicuous feature of work of high quality was the use of the foreign language in the classroom. The overriding impression gained was that the foreign language was used in a substantial number of the lessons seen. This alone, however, did not guarantee success. More than one class was seen in which the language was consistently used without the students understanding much of what was being said.

Similarly, indiscriminate mixing of the foreign language and English was generally unhelpful where constant interruptions in English tended to devalue the use of the foreign language and prevent any sustained practice in comprehension and response. Although intended to help students, this use of English often did exactly the opposite. On occasion, however, when handled with sensitivity and skill the mixing of the two languages was effective. In a discussion in an A-level class on the theme of sources of energy some introductory questioning took place in English before the main exercise in order to focus students' attention and later to reinforce detailed understanding. In another A-level class students were clearly able, in an extended period of examination practice involving a number of different exercises, to move from the foreign language into English and back again without strain.

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One particularly effective way of making good use of the foreign language in the classroom can be to involve the foreign language assistant alongside the teacher. This was seen to work well on one occasion when the assistant was present as consultant and participant and where the use of the language as the medium of communication was accepted as a matter of course. In another college an exercise with a post A-level class involved the teacher and the foreign assistant in a conversation recorded live in the language laboratory. Each speaking his own language, they played in turn the part of guide and visitor on a tour of the college. Students were first required to act as interpreters and then students, teacher and assistant produced translations which were compared, reworked and discussed. This is a technique which could well be adapted for use with less advanced classes.

Where literary texts were being studied a different approach was usually seen. Most of these classes were conducted in English and involved detailed translation of the text and exegesis by the teacher. One extreme example of poor practice was that of a halting and crude extempore translation into English by the teacher of what he had described as a beautiful piece of Spanish poetry. Another consisted of a lecture in English on a prescribed text which was described afterwards by the teacher as discussion. On occasion there was a good deal of 'spoon-feeding'. In one case students were provided with lists of vocabulary for each page of text since otherwise, it was claimed, they would not read the text at all. In another, students were supplied with a list of quotations to use in the examination. There was also work of good quality, however, where care was taken to preserve the feeling that it was works of literature which were being discussed and analysed. Here, as in language classes, students were involved by being encouraged to develop their own attitudes to the works studied. Thus, in an excellently judged attempt to generate discussion, a teacher deliberately criticised a book which the students were known to have enjoyed in order to provoke a particularly productive exchange of ideas. In another college introductory discussion in the foreign language of a prescribed play was followed by the detailed study of one scene, discussion being led by different students in turn from the group. In others, students were seen to be anxious to put their views and develop their arguments. They were often well prepared and knew what was expected of them.

The achievement of students following GCE courses was higher than those on other courses. Course objectives were also as appropriate to students' vocational and educational needs as the format of O- and A-level examinations allows. As many of the examples of work of high quality showed, an examination focus need not inhibit imaginative teaching and indeed may on occasion give students an added stimulus to study further and pursue their own interests within the subject.

There was often evidence from the inadequate use made of college libraries and other facilities that capacities for independent study were not well developed. In explanation of this, staff and students pointed to pressures of time and the burden of set work

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but where considerable thought had been given to building relevant work tasks into the programme, students were being encouraged particularly to read and listen more extensively and this resulted in work of high quality.

If students are to respond to such approaches the starting-point must be a sound basic knowledge of the foreign language and it is significant that there were usually two reasons for poor achievement. First, students with inadequate qualifications had been allowed to join inappropriate examination groups and had found the work beyond their capacity. Second, in groups of mixed ability and achievement insufficient attention was given to the needs of the individual learner.

Secretarial courses

The main characteristic of the teaching groups in the 16 to 18 age range on secretarial courses was their heterogeneity in language qualification and examination objectives. Many contained students with qualifications ranging from a Grade B at O-level to a Grade 5 at CSE. These students were mostly aiming at general language proficiency and the examinations for which they were preparing were general language examinations at an elementary level rather than those with a more specific vocational application. Not infrequently students in the same group were working for different examinations, some for O-level, some for Royal Society of Arts, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry or Institute of Linguists examinations, others for no examination at all. The difficulties with which the teachers of groups of this kind are faced will inevitably affect the quality of work. In addition to the high degree of professional skill required to teach such groups, the shortage of suitable published teaching materials and the absence of an appropriate examination for those with a relatively low standard of linguistic achievement can reduce the relevance of the work to students' needs and make student motivation all the more difficult.

In those colleges where student achievement on secretarial courses was good, success appeared to be linked with the degree of students' awareness of objectives. Thus in one post O-level Spanish class which involved some simple consecutive translation of a text on social security in Mexico the basic purposes of the exercise - language extension, gathering information and extempore translation - had been clearly explained to the students. In another post O-level

French class designed to practise aural comprehension the purpose had again been made clear to students and, although the work was demanding, concentration and stamina were good. In a third class students' attention was directed to key phrases as an aid to comprehension of a video-recording which was in some ways linguistically too difficult for them. The good effects of student motivation could also be observed. In one group a business meeting, conducted in French, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a recent foreign placement. The discussion was a real one in that the organisation of the next visit would be modified in the light of views expressed. In another, a second year post O-level class, students had started the language the previous year. Almost all had

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achieved a 'pass' grade at O-level and a Grade I pass in Institute of Linguists examination at the end of the first year and the effect of this examination success on motivation for the second year work was very evident.

A significant number of secretarial classes were seen in which the teaching was lively, imaginative and varied and where students were responding well to opportunities to develop appropriate language skills. In general, however, work of high quality was more rarely encountered and these students performed less well than those on GCE courses. The reasons for this have been suggested earlier. The mixed nature of many classes made it necessary to organise group work and opportunities for students to develop the appropriate language skills individually at their own level if worthwhile objectives were to be achieved. This is no easy task and in many cases the work lacked clearly defined terminal objectives and appeared to have little identifiable pattern. Teaching tended to rely heavily on the methods and materials used on other courses and developed for students with rather different aims. Linguistic activities were not always appropriate to these students' vocational needs and student motivation was at times poor. Some students were preparing for examination objectives which were not suited to their linguistic ability and in some groups, although students applied themselves as industriously as they were able, considerable dissatisfaction and resentment resulted in high drop-out rates and unimpressive examination results.

There is clearly a need for closer attention to the requirements of students on these courses. Where the best secretarial language work in the 16 to 18 age range was seen, success was to some extent due to the careful definition of examination objectives in terms of students' language qualifications on entry and in a small number of cases to the development of new courses for the linguistically less able.

Secretarial courses offered to students in the 16 to 18 age range formed only a part of the total work in this area: a substantial number of students were engaged on post A-level or postgraduate secretarial courses and were mainly preparing for examinations with a specific vocational application. Although these courses fell outside the scope of this survey a number of classes were observed during visits. The generally high quality of work provided an interesting contrast with that of the less advanced work. It was clear, for instance, that

considerable efforts had gone into course development and the preparation of detailed schemes of work. Attention was focused on setting specific vocational objectives and linguistic activities were closely related to these. Thus learning often appeared to have a greater sense of purpose, students' linguistic strengths - particularly oral - were fully exploited and individual programmes were designed to give support in areas of weakness. In general students on these courses responded with enthusiasm and enjoyment to the work. It was disappointing that the less advanced courses frequently lacked the advantage of an equally professional and rigorous approach.

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OND in business studies courses

The numbers of students studying a modern language on OND courses in business studies were small and they were often taught together with students on secretarial or GCE courses. It was therefore difficult to assess separately the quality of teaching and learning for this particular course and much of what has been said of the provision for students on secretarial and GCE courses applies also to that for OND students.

Where the students were in separate groups work was closely tied to examination objectives. These included translation from and into English, written comprehension, the composition of business letters, essays in the foreign language and oral work. The following examples reveal an imaginative approach. In one class what might have been a rather dull exercise involving the translation of a business letter was enlivened by being put into the framework of a discussion. Students' responses showed interest and enthusiasm and relationships were very good; the lecturer had accompanied the whole group abroad the previous summer to give students first-hand experience of the foreign country. In one college the lecturer in charge of the course had developed his own materials and these were presented in a varied way involving the use of audio-visual sources. A good balance between fluency and accuracy was maintained.

In nearly half the classes seen in this category, however, teaching did not appear to be as well adjusted to the needs and abilities of the students as it might have been. There were a number of reasons for this. Many OND students were not among the linguistically most gifted and therefore found aspects of the work very demanding. Where they were taught in groups with students on other courses the work was not always geared sufficiently closely to their specific requirements. At times staff were not fully conversant with the aims of the course and the ways in which these could best be achieved. Consequently although many students seemed prepared to make an effort they appeared to be insufficiently involved to produce work of high quality.

Hotel and catering courses

Language study on courses leading to employment in the hotel and catering industry was subject to a number of difficulties. Students were not selected for these courses on the basis of linguistic ability and therefore, as on secretarial courses, teaching groups contained a

wide range of ability and achievement. Very often the language element was compulsory. Moreover, there was also often a discrepancy between the linguistic objectives set by the hotel and catering department and the arrangements under which they were expected to be achieved. Many groups on these courses were taught by part-time lecturers who were not involved in course development. These difficulties combined to produce a situation in which linguistic objectives had little relevance either to students' abilities or to their future occupations. In short, expectations were often unrealistic.

Consequently comparatively little work of good quality was seen on courses of this kind. Linguistic activities were frequently confined to learning lists of words, mastering grammatical structures and translating isolated sentences. Students were exposed to minimal

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continuous use of the foreign language. The only concession made to their vocational needs lay in the choice of some specialised vocabulary, often selected with little consultation with the hotel and catering department. Where video and taped material was used it was often for passive listening rather than as a stimulus for participation and was not presented in a way suitable for a mixed ability or mixed achievement group. Work of this kind was often featured on courses which allowed only a total of one hour a week for language study. Some of the difficulties might have been alleviated if the equivalent time had been allocated in a block or a number of blocks so that more intensive language work could have taken place.

Some examples of good practice were seen. One class began with a talk in both English and French on 'Restaurants in Paris': this evoked professional comment from the students. At the same time they were encouraged to try out words and phrases in French and to use them in context, thereby building up interest and confidence. These students' work for the term consisted of compiling, from a variety of recommended sources, files of information, illustration and comment using as many French phrases as possible. On another course, for hotel receptionists, the work was based on situations. Students had to play the roles of both customer and management in a complaint over a bill. In a third, again for hotel receptionists, the lecturer, faced with a mixed achievement group, had identified four distinct levels. Students were all working in the language laboratory, three groups on different BBC courses, while the fourth worked on a post O-level course. The lecturer dealt with the problems of each group in turn and although the arrangement was not without its difficulties morale was high and students were working hard. There were one or two examples of role-playing and group work simulating the kinds of situations in which students might eventually find themselves. It was apparent that an essential ingredient for success was that students should be encouraged to use the foreign language in realistic contexts, relevant to their vocational needs. Two examples might serve as illustrations. A group of receptionists in their fifth term of German showed a good working knowledge of basic structure and a sufficiently wide vocabulary to be able to converse on a current issue. These students had recently returned from industrial placements where they had become aware of the advantages of foreign language skills and were appreciative of a course geared to the kind of situation

which they knew they were likely to encounter later. In another, craft caterers without entry qualifications, including some with no previous linguistic experience, were being introduced to simple vocabulary and very basic conversation closely allied to the catering trade. This was clearly something of a struggle but progress was being made: students were working and benefiting from the opportunity to learn a language for the first time. In both these examples there was close liaison between the language section and the hotel and catering department.

Other courses

Courses for other groups of students such as nursery nurses or police cadets and general studies courses represented a very small proportion of the whole. Too few of these were seen during the visits

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to make any general qualitative judgement possible. Such evidence as there was suggested that the importance of setting realistic objectives related to students' vocational needs and linguistic abilities was no less crucial than on hotel and catering courses.

Summary

The work observed on all courses shared a number of features related to teaching styles and to the effects of these on student learning. First, a substantial amount of good teaching was seen in which realistic objectives had been set, often in terms of examinations, and where material had been well prepared and imaginatively presented and supported by the good use of resources. This produced conditions for learning in which students, in response, were able to achieve high standards in the development of linguistic skills. Where teaching was more narrowly circumscribed by the demands of examinations, however, there was a tendency to rely on the teacher and the text-book as the sole sources of language with the student remaining in the position of a receiver of information rather than a participant. This approach did not present the student with as full an educational experience as the learning of a foreign language can offer; there were fewer opportunities for developing wider skills, particularly of reading and listening, and the capacity for independent study. Second, within the individual teacher's repertoire more differentiation could have been made in the approach to different courses. While it is recognised that to teach across a wide range of different courses makes considerable demands on teaching skills and often imposes a heavy burden of preparation, it is also essential to isolate and define the specific linguistic demands of the various courses. The diversity of courses on offer did not lead to an equivalent diversity of teaching styles and this tended to reduce their impact and impair their relevance to student's needs. Third, teaching strengths varied considerably from individual to individual. It was a matter for regret, however, that good ideas, successful techniques and stimulating material were not always shared among staff, who tended to work in isolation; this applied particularly to part-time staff. Thus good practice was often confined to individuals instead of being disseminated throughout the section. This was particularly noticeable where two or more staff shared responsibility for a course, since without joint planning the students' experience tended to lack

coherence. Finally, although groups in all these categories frequently contained students of different abilities, at different stages of linguistic development and with varying motivation, most of those seen were small and conditions were such that more examples of individual attention to students' needs might have been expected. Resources were often available for this type of work but were frequently under-used.

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10 Matters for discussion

College practice

HM Inspectors found a wide variation in the circumstances in which modern languages were taught. There were differences in systems of organisation, staffing and resources. The quality of course management, of teaching observed and of students' achievement varied considerably. From this diversity of practice it is possible to focus attention on a number of important issues; important not only to the colleges but to all those concerned with the provision and evaluation of further education, particularly LEAs and examining bodies.

There were a few colleges where strong teams of staff, well-directed by a team leader and well supported within the college, were engaged upon work which was on the whole thoughtfully planned, imaginatively and thoroughly executed, and more than a mere response to existing demand. In other colleges there were individuals or small groups of staff who were achieving success in some aspects of their work despite the handicap of less fortunate circumstances. In colleges where there was less evidence of good practice shortcomings were often the result of fragmentation; fragmentation of the accommodation, in organisation and staffing, in the development and management of courses and at times in the teaching itself.

Colleges need to consider the following suggestions for strengthening their work. A designated subject leader, with specified responsibilities related to his status, might be asked to undertake the detailed thinking on course management discussed in Chapters 6 and 8. If the amount and level of work were not sufficient for the leader to have senior status, some of the responsibility for leadership, guidance and planning might be shared by a member of staff at the level of head of department. whose role would be that of giving active support to a junior team.

It is also advisable for modern language staff to be located together as one section, in the department which provides the best support and the best opportunities for valuable exchanges of views. Whatever the chosen location, finn lines of communication need to be established between the linguists and all the directors of the courses to which they contribute, so that the special needs of each type of course and student can be thoroughly explored.

Working together is naturally easier if there is a suite of rooms which the language staff normally use, where they can arrange displays, organise their materials and make effective use of resources. At times, of course, it is appropriate to locate some of the teaching in the students' home departments, for example a hotel reception or catering area for role-playing or practical work, or a room containing telephone equipment for secretarial students. There is a need for planned allocation of those resources and forms of support

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which can most effectively be made available on a college-wide basis and those which are best provided departmentally.

Within this framework modern language staff need to draw up detailed plans for teaching and learning. This can perhaps best be done, not through asking lecturers to produce independent programmes for each of their classes, but, after the section leader has clarified overall aims, through the interchange of ideas and experience of all the staff involved, including part-time staff whose work may otherwise be carried out in isolation.

Courses should be related to the aptitudes, previous experience and interests of the students, to their educational aims and to their future employment. For each course there should be a written scheme of work, including all those aspects to which reference was made in Chapter 8. The selection of appropriate examinations should be made at this point, in the light of aims, aptitudes and needs. Examinations may well however have been determined *a priori*; in this case, it is all the more important for staff to analyse carefully the requirements of the examination.

The adjustment of courses to groups of students of a wide range of attainment has organisational implications. In hotel, catering and secretarial courses, it can be of great benefit for students to be taught in groups which take some account of previous experience and aptitude. It is never easy to claim that a minor element in a course is a special case and to ask for conditions of work which might adversely affect major elements in that course. Language learning, however, is usually best accomplished in company with other learners of comparable attainment and in a systematic way. With relatively small groups and good teaching it is possible for sufficient individual attention to be given without time being wasted and for some whole-group working to take place which is of benefit to all. Groups of students of disparate experience, however, soon find that they have little in common and the teacher is set difficult problems of arranging sub-groups and divergent programmes. Where groups are large, it is advisable to explore other organisational arrangements, such as setting.

Colleges should ensure that students are not enrolled on courses in which they have little chance of success. Careful selection procedures in which modern language staff participate can avoid some false starts; where a student's weaknesses (or strengths) become apparent only when it may be too late to change courses, staff might bear in mind other examinations for which the student may be entered as an

alternative. A policy which cannot be recommended, however, is to try to prepare students for two incompatible examinations at once.

Course management also involves the coordination of teaching between lecturers and between groups. Where students have several hours of tuition per week in one language it is sometimes desirable for them to be taught by more than one member of staff. This may be particularly so when for unavoidable reasons all the teaching for the week is concentrated into one three-hour period. When teaching is shared, the value of a comprehensive scheme of work for the course is especially evident, as is regular consultation

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between the staff involved. Moreover, once objectives have been clarified in terms of language skills, it becomes possible to draw up a joint scheme for monitoring and assessing students' progress according to common criteria.

Opportunities should be taken to meet other staff in the college who have similar interests for joint discussion of common aspects of work. In addition, meetings of the language staffs of colleges within reach of each other in an area can give encouragement and develop into seminars on topics such as the preparation and use of materials for special purposes. Where circumstances are favourable, expertise available in colleges which have particular strengths could be used to provide in-service training. There can also be benefit to all colleges from contacts with secondary schools and with industrial and commercial organisations in the area and from consideration of ways of providing intensive courses or other forms of additional foreign language experience for students. The LEA has a part to play as a facilitator of contact between its colleges and between colleges and schools.

In all these suggestions there is the common theme of cooperation between members of staff working as a team. The demands made on modern language staff in colleges of further education - like those made on staff teaching other skill subjects of wide application - are diverse and often difficult both to define and to meet. A wide range of professional skills is required. There are also time-consuming tasks of seeking out and building up a large collection of materials, some of which will of necessity be home-made. Exchange of experience and sharing of tasks can increase the effectiveness of every teacher and make it more likely that students will be taught according to their different needs.

Courses

In the colleges visited, the range of modern language courses was broader and more substantial than in many colleges elsewhere. Modern languages are, however, among those subjects which, because they cross departmental boundaries, are especially vulnerable to the defects arising from fragmentation. Colleges need to be aware that, whatever their main organisational structure, it is desirable to clarify the role and position of the subjects taught, especially where they are included in a wide range of courses.

A first step for colleges might be to analyse in some detail the present and future needs of their students. An analysis of the range of courses, students, staffing and accommodation would enable colleges to appraise their present situation in two ways. They might consider whether the range of languages, the levels at which they are taught and the examination and non-examination objectives are always appropriate. They might consider further whether modern languages could usefully be offered to students for whom there is at present no provision.

Attention needs to be drawn to certain limitations in the current range of modern language courses in further education. The first matter of interest is the present scope of courses for business occupations. Languages appear to have established a firm hold in secretarial courses but not, in terms of numbers of students taking

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a language option, in those leading to OND, nor in courses or examinations for any of the professional bodies (for example the Institute of Bankers or the major accountancy bodies). There are some marketing or even overseas trade courses where there appears to be no foreign language element. Two questions might be raised here: first, whether there is not a case for including a foreign language element as widely in business studies courses as in courses for hotel and catering students and secondly, whether more time might be made available for some of the elementary courses, so that more students could achieve useful levels of competence. It would indeed be appropriate for business studies students especially to have opportunities, not available in the present OND courses, to study a language from a low level of initial knowledge to a high level of performance.

In the second place it is noticeable that for electrical, mechanical or production engineering students or for those studying science there is almost no opportunity at this level to follow a language course as an ancillary skill or for personal interest. In both schools and further education only a small number of future scientists and engineers take up or maintain a language as an ancillary skill between the ages of 16 and 18, even though there are students of science and technology in whose future careers language skills may be needed. It is not only the ablest students, who may be aiming at higher education and ultimately at a senior role in industry, who may need to communicate with speakers of other languages. Staff at many levels are increasingly likely to need to understand matters concerning foreign industry and trade, or perhaps to wish to work abroad for a while. At a moment when the structure of technical and business education is changing, under the guidance of the Technician and Business Education Councils, it is timely to consider whether more opportunities might be made available and more encouragement given to science and technology students of varying abilities to follow a language course while at college.

Third, the most notable characteristic of the non-advanced work is its dependence upon the pattern of provision and achievement in schools. In staffing, courses and languages offered and levels of achievement, the majority of colleges exhibit a familiar pattern in which French is

invariably dominant, German and Spanish follow some way behind - although Spanish is perhaps somewhat stronger than in schools - and Italian and Russian are occasionally found where circumstances are favourable. It is appropriate to ask whether there is not room in further education not only for more encouragement of continuation courses for languages studied in school, but also for a wider range of beginners' courses in other languages. Despite the fact that surveys have shown that those languages taught in schools are not needed in the same proportions in industry and commerce, it is noticeable that opportunities for and encouragement to students to take up other languages are as yet markedly limited. Even beginners' courses in German and Spanish appear to be followed mainly as additional languages by students already taking continuation courses in French; that is, students who think of themselves as linguists are likely to add

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another language, whereas students who are studying a language as an ancillary subject are more likely simply to continue with French. Further, whichever language is chosen the objective should not be solely vocational but should be to increase the student's confidence in language learning and thus prepare him for the acquisition of other languages later on, as the need arises.

Where continuation courses are concerned, colleges are naturally dependent upon the languages which 16 year olds have to offer and the levels of proficiency attained. Even so, there is one kind of entry qualification which school-leavers offer for which there are as yet few clear continuation routes. Between 1970 and 1976 the number of pupils achieving Grades 2 to 4 in CSE language examinations greatly increased. For such students the only courses offered are frequently those leading to an O- or even an A-level qualification.

The development of special purpose language teaching has been in some ways greatly assisted by the existence of independent examinations. Although in the past examination bodies such as the Institute of Linguists and the Royal Society of Arts were influenced by the academic thinking of the university examination boards, they have been able in more recent years to adjust objectives and syllabuses to changing needs. Together with the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with its more recently developed examinations, they have given valuable leadership to many language staff in their search for appropriate courses. But these examinations, together with the examinations forming an integral part of OND (and HND) courses and GCE examinations, constitute a multiplicity of provision which has become difficult to manage. The objectives and the standards required are rightly diverse but are uncoordinated and what could be a source of flexibility often causes confusion as staff try to assess the merits and feasibility of one against another. By no means all syllabuses are detailed and precise in describing the standards of performance expected (as distinct from examples of the kinds of test set). The view of many lecturers is that the most fruitful long-term aim would be for a series of well-defined levels of performance to be nationally agreed between examining bodies and for all specialist examinations to be linked with these.

There is in further education a degree of freedom to experiment and to provide courses which respond to needs. A reappraisal of opportunities for language learning for students in the 16 to 18 age range has led to some welcome new departures. The development of a college policy for modern languages, based on an assessment of the current situation and looking ahead to possible changes is an essential first step which cannot be taken in isolation either from the rest of the college's activities or from the circumstances in the catchment area. The planning of language work in many colleges would benefit from more detailed information than was found during the survey about the provision in other institutions within an LEA and about the range of potential support from industry and commerce in the area. This information should be made available by the LEA to all of its educational institutions.

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The individual initiatives of colleges, however, may not be sufficient to develop a coherent pattern of provision. It has been shown in this survey that provision within colleges tends to be fragmentary and to lack an agreed policy. Modern language staff themselves referred not infrequently to the frustration which they felt at their inability to achieve improvements in certain important areas. It is desirable that each LEA should have up to date information about course provision within each of its colleges and schools and be in a position to evaluate their practices and adopt a constructive coordinating role. Progress towards a coherent policy requires guidance nationally if an agreed range of language provision at appropriate levels and with pertinent objectives is to become available.